Curriculum decision-makers on decolonising the teacher education curriculum

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Over 21 years into democracy and the commitment for radical transformation in education, South Africa continues to adopt and adapt international imperatives and standardisations in pursuit of first world rankings. Ironically, notions of indigenisation, decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum have become catch words of the day. In the wake of the #FeesMustFall movement, a rethink of the curriculum for tomorrow, and the manner in which we think and speak about the curriculum, has come to the forefront. Through Pinar's method of currere, this paper demonstrates curriculum decision-makers' thinking about decolonising the curriculum. While some curriculum decision-makers perpetuate Western ways of thinking about the curriculum, others make a shift in their thinking towards a 're-humanising' approach to the curriculum. The present study maintains that curriculum decision-makers are catalytic agents, and are neither complacent nor at the mercy of Western knowledge and ideologies. They continue to be apprehensive on curriculum matters and disrupt entrenched taken-for-granted philosophies. This renders them agentic in their development of, and search for, alternate worthwhile home-grown knowledge, that leads towards a more 'humanised' curriculum approach. This paper further opens up discussions and possibilities around notions of 'indigenisation,' 'Africanisation,' 'decolonisation,' 'humanisation' on one hand, and Westernisation and Eurocentrism of the curriculum on the other, working together as co-existing realities towards transforming the curriculum in colonised countries like South Africa.

Keywords: curriculum; curriculum change; decolonisation; humanisation; indigenisation; intellectualisation

Introduction

The trajectory of teacher education policy development in South Africa in the post-1994 era, described by Samuel (2012:32) as three 'shifting waves,' explains the dialogues around quality teachers and quality teacher education, with the aim of a "renewed radical transformation." The first wave involved a radical dismantling and reforming of apartheid ideas to bring about redress in the teacher education curricula. The second wave embraced the reconceptualisation of teacher identities and the acquisition of proficient practical skills and knowledge to address the discontent with teacher education. This led to deliberations targeting universities for provisioning initial teacher education curriculum that was too theoretical, incoherent and not methodically aligned to the school curriculum (Samuel, 2012). The third wave was a shift from a government led process to a shared democratic and deliberative engagement process with various stakeholders in developing a quality and coherent curriculum policy, such as the National Integrated Strategic Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NISPFTED) and Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) in 2011 (Samuel, 2012). In reacting to changes within the curriculum policy discourse, it is important to understand whose interests changes serve and the purposes for change (Shay, 2011).

Despite teacher education curricula recurrently undergoing change globally, foundational fundamental philosophies have not changed (Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor 2012). Schools need flexible and agentic teachers who are connected to the realities of learners, and the colonising approach is lacking in locating alternate voices to inform teacher education curricula (Sanford et al., 2012).

In South Africa, the call for the Africanisation of universities and the need for them to detach themselves from their colonial and apartheid histories has come to the forefront (Santos, 2014). Within the South African higher education context, decolonisation of the curriculum calls for the dismantling of Eurocentric epistemologies that continue to dominate (Zeleza, 2009), and the reawakening of indigenous knowledges. Le Grange (2016) observes that, Africanisation of education and the curriculum is an overdue conversation, considering the unchanged and unopposed Western influence on many South African universities. Over 21 years into democracy, as Mbembe (2015) put it, we touched a 'negative moment'; a moment when new hostilities arise while others stay unsettled; a moment when old contestations and unresolved colonial and apartheid legacies of the past are perpetuated in universities and through the curriculum. What comes out of this 'negative moment' is uncertainty, contradiction, conflict and to Mbembe (2015), apparently, we are losing the plot in rehabilitating universities.

Student protests in 2015 drew attention to the need for decolonisation of the university and the university curriculum that challenged the dependence on colonial knowledge and thought; calling for the end of Western, Capitalist, and Eurocentric worldviews (Heleta, 2016; Kamsteeg, 2016; Le Grange, 2016; Mamdani, 1998; Pillay, 2015). The reasons for protests were generally around access and fees, and the lack of diversity and slow transformation within the merging higher education cultures in South Africa (Jansen, 2009; Kamsteeg, 2016). However, the very notion of diversity was labelled as cynical; and the foundation of ambiguity, conflict, contradiction and marginalisation that defied a structured unified academic community (Brink, 2010; Kamsteeg, 2016).

Decolonisation is not a new concept. In the context of growing marginalisation and socio-economic imbalances across higher education systems in South Africa, and around the world; it has become an important social, political and intellectual initiative for intellectuals in higher education institutions, in as far as undoing racial and social inequalities and renewing social justice is concerned (Mbembe, 2015). Generally, decolonisation seeks to deconstruct prevailing Westernised Eurocentric practices in the ack-nowledgement and production of intellectual indigenous knowledge systems that have been ignored and obscured by colonialism.

Despite the many educational transformation policies and committed effort at various levels to fast track the radical educational transformation within higher education in South Africa; knowledge systems and the curriculum at most South African universities have not transformed much (Heleta, 2016). Arguably, many continue to be deep-rooted in Westernised, Eurocentric, colonial and apartheid worldviews that continue to reproduce hegemony and fail.

In recent years, there has been much attention on decolonising universities and decolonising the curriculum, with blurred and faded steps outlining a concrete way forward. This raises important questions: What is decolonisation responding to? For what reason, for whom and by whom, should decolonisation be instituted? It is with these questions in mind that the researcher conceptualises curriculum decision-makers' thinking of the possi-bilities for curriculum change relative to the idea of decolonisation, as they engage in the development of the teacher education curriculum framework within the South African higher education context.

Curriculum Change and Decolonisation

There is a perspective that Western, Colonial and Eurocentric knowledge is normative and universal and indigenous local knowledge diverges from this norm; rather than showing how hegemonic, oppressive and suppressive these perspectives are (Andreotti, Ahenakew & Cooper, 2011; Mbembe, 2015). It is difficult to think outside this frame, and it becomes imperative for universities to undergo a change process of decolonising knowledge and the curriculum, i.e. a radical sharing and universal inclusion of various kinds of knowledge space (Mbembe, 2015). One move to decolonise the curriculum involves exposing colonial and dis-criminatory legacies in an attempt to eradicate inequalities in the production of knowledge (Heleta, 2016; Langdon, 2013; McKaiser, 2016). Césaire (2000) claims that decolonisation of the curriculum is about the consciousness and denunciation of colonised ideals, customs, and imperial worldviews. Other scholars put forward the notion that decolonising the curriculum is not about shutting down Eurocentric and Western worldviews and traditions, but positioning Africa at the core of the curriculum space (Mbembe, 2015, 2016).

The way we think about and develop curriculum is ever-changing, beset by major dilemmas and contradictions, socio-economic and political deliberations; and many curriculum changes have been superficial, ad hoc, and responsive to policy frameworks that lack deep intellectual thought and deliberation (Mahabeer, 2017; McDonald & Van der Horst, 2007; Ramrathan, 2016). This results in the recanting of many changes in education and the curriculum. No clear solutions to concerns such as the under-preparedness, throughput and dropout rate of students, and the role of higher education curricula have been presented (Ramrathan, 2016).

For profound curriculum change to occur in higher education and in particular teacher edu-cation, there has to be a deliberate shift away from a position of instrumentalism and reaction, and an exercise of counting numbers; towards a deep intellectualism of the curriculum (Mbembe 2015; Ramrathan, 2016). Change and decolonising of the curriculum necessitates looking at the curriculum in terms of relevance to one's context and under-standing oneself and others (Mbembe, 2015; Wa Thiong'o, 1981).

Decolonisation is a complex conversation with the colonial past and not merely the undoing of colonial heritage traditions, and practices that are imbedded in all aspects of public life such as the arts, languages, socio-economics, politics, and education (Appadurai, 2015). Studies point to the need for a serious rethink of the curriculum through a complex conversation; a conversation that is ongoing, inclusive and shared with all relevant individuals, in advancing emancipatory action (Le Grange, 2016). Current curriculum transformation in South African higher education is missing the point, and Westernised Eurocentric paradigms continue to be embedded in African communities and more innovative ways of intellectualising the curriculum is needed (Ramrathan, 2016). A shift away from an anti-intellectualist position to transforming and decolonising the teacher education curriculum in higher education is needed. This paper argues that despite curriculum changes made in higher education in South Africa, essential curriculum changes have not taken place, and new ways of thinking about the curriculum and a renewal of curriculum intellectualism is called for.

Decolonisation: What, Why? How? For Whom?

Decolonisation should be pronounced at a time of closure; a time of possibilities that necessitates policy making for transformation, in contrast to the replication and imitation of a dominant Eurocentric Westernised model of education, knowledge systems, and the curriculum (Mbembe, 2015). This

change process calls for critical and innovative thought and action in breaking the cycle of dominant Colonial worldviews that are detached from the African realities of many South Africans. Within the context of decolonisation, the role of the new intellectual in the transformation change process is a shift away from being a mere technician of policy to a conversational change agent, being a 'think tank' (Mamdani, 2016). This calls on the intellectual to execute strategy and diplomacy in formulating policy; to critically evaluate and articulate policy alternatives, with the purpose of democratising the curriculum policy-making process.

Through the work of Chilisa (2012), Poka Laenui (2000) offers five phases to the process of decolonisation: rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment, and action. A process where colonised people revive and improve their own indigenous historical culture and mourning is considered crucial to the process of healing and denotes reminiscing the ongoing attack on indigenous people. Dreaming calls forth histories of the colonised to envision alternate possibilities, and commitment to recognise the voices of the colonised in bringing curriculum change through research-driven interventions. Lastly, action transforms dreams and commitments into committed action strategies for social change and in this case curriculum change.

Correspondingly, Smith (1999) identified seven strategies for decolonisation: firstly, *deconstruction and reconstruction* entails forsaking what was misrepresented in the writings of the past and questioning people's misrepresentations and negative classification in imagining the future, which facilitates the rediscovery and recovery process (Chilisa, 2012). Secondly, *self-determination* and *social justice* seek justice for those marginalised by the Western institutions. Thirdly, *ethics* is the construction and regulations of ethical issues of respect and dignity for those marginalised to safeguard indigenous knowledge. Fourthly, *language* is concerned with the importance of teaching and learning in indigenous languages in response to the anti-imperialist struggle. Fifth is the *internationalisation* of *indigenous experiences* and knowledge of colonised people with scholars in the international and national arena. Sixth, *history* is concerned with the recovery of history, philosophy and languages of indigenous/colonised people, for future redress. Lastly, *critique* is the critical review of the Western model of the academy that continues to restrict those historically marginalised from expressing themselves (Chilisa, 2012; Le Grange, 2016).

These phases in decolonisation and the strategies for decolonisation outlined above show that decolonising the curriculum is not a simple process, but one that requires one to regress and reminisce about the past and to be critically conscious in

understanding the present, in order to be able to imagine future possibilities. The aim is to transform the curriculum through deliberation and committed action. This is akin to Pinar's (1975, 2004) method of currere that calls on indigenous people to recognise and draw on their past experiences, knowledge and understandings in becoming critically conscious, while envisaging future possibilities so that they can make sense of transforming and decolonising the curriculum.

What is Decolonisation of the Curriculum Responding To?

The colonial and apartheid curriculum continue to perpetuate Eurocentric supremacy and Westernised dominant worldviews as normative (Heleta, 2016). In South Africa, the call for decolonising of the curriculum speaks to making the curriculum relevant to the social and historical realities of the communities in which universities function (Heleta, 2016). This demands the need to interrogate Western ideologies and colonial knowledge productions that continue to shape academic practices and exclude indigenous knowledge (Dei, 2000). Mamdani (2016) highlights that colonisation brought not only Western theory, but the assumption that theory is created in the West, and that the purpose of the academy external to the West, such as South Africa, is to apply these theories. Debatably, the fundamental beliefs of Western civilisation is based on African experiences and traditions, and have been appropriated and redefined by Western philosophy (Smith, 1999). The problem with the 'appropriating of ideas' is knowledge production is not transparent, it distorts and misrepresents the indigenous and confuses its sources by normalising the indigenous (Nakata, Nakata, Keech & Bolt, 2012). Arguably, dominant Western epistemologies neglect other forms of knowledge and other linguistic forms, and that it is usual to 'manipulate' indigenous realities and portray these as Western ideas (Paraskeva, 2011).

Hence, the mission of decolonisers is to replace Eurocentric prejudice imbedded in the curriculum with non-Western knowledge and works (McCarthy, 1998; Paraskeva, 2011). Andreotti et al. (2011) would argue that it is not about replacing one knowledge for another, rather it is about valuing difference, not reproducing oppression and expanding what counts as knowledge. The snubbing of African philosophies by colonisers, and the struggle against epistemicides opened up a way to understand other knowledge systems, for example, the African philosophy of *ubuntu*, Africans' own ethical views and philosophies (Prinsloo, 1998; Tempels, 1945). The rationality of *ubuntu* shows there is always a 'one-ness' and 'whole-ness,' a link to humanness and ethical values (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009). Recent studies affirm that decolonisation of the curriculum is an emancipating

thought linked to the African concept of *ubuntu* and to the power of currere (a western concept) that celebrates the oneness of the self and others in creating the stimulus for a more humane world for all (Le Grange, 2015). Jansen (2018) emphasises that we cannot underestimate the power of *ubuntu* and the power of pre-colonial and colonial knowledge.

The bias in Western philosophy is linked to its humanist philosophy and pedagogy that portrays it as fundamentally privileged (Peters, 2015). Grounded in the perspectives of Smith (1999), non-Western curriculum ideology is not recognised because it is represented as a symbolic gesture, and even when non-Western philosophy does appear in the curriculum, it is considered as theoretically and methodologically flawed and unreliable. Hence non-Western philosophy remains fundamentally 'othered.'

Paradoxical Expressions within the Decolonisation Conversation

Decolonising of the curriculum is caught between the local (Africanisation, indigenisation) and the colonial (Western, imperial, Eurocentric), and internationalisation and globalisation (Horsthemke, 2017). Indigenous context must become the source for knowledge production in higher education institutions in South Africa (Soudien, 2010). However, Horsthemke (2017) argues that, neither internationalisation nor indigenisation is fully capable of justifying the manner in which culture and identity is transmitted, advanced and changed. While globalisation supposedly thwarts efforts to reclaim and internationalise indigenous voices in the curriculum, there are international projects from outside of Africa run by African intellectuals facilitating programmes to empower indigenous people (Shizha, 2013).

Indigenisation involves a backtracking and sanctioning of traditional values, conventionalism and nationalism provoked by colonial experience and the need for political amalgamation (Horsthemke, 2017). He emphasises that indigenisation is an effective tool for political persuasion, mobilisation and justification, and social and economic transformation that focuses on the local; while internationalisation places emphasis on the global that acknowledges traditionalism, cultural traditions and diversity for the purpose of preparing people for global competitiveness.

African philosophy of education invokes and advocates rational deliberation and argumentation that contributes to respect and acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge systems that interrogates hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge systems, and empowers indigenous communities to participate in their own education development (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009; Waghid, 2004). Africanisation is inclined to abandon any external influence, such as

Western, colonial and Eurocentric influences with a renewed focus on African cultures, values and identities (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009). Arguably, African philosophy of education is in jeopardy of 'self-marginalisation' and seclusion from international interactions, and this has implications for the philosophy of education globally (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009).

Rethinking the Curriculum: Opening Up the Conversation to Consider What Makes Real Change

Le Grange (2016) opens up the conversation on rethinking the university curriculum with a range of possibilities for decolonising the university curriculum in South Africa, such as: making policy work, and encouraging agency against colonial thinking that seeks social justice. As Jansen (2018) in a keynote address observes, decolonisation is not the end but the beginning of an incomplete conversation, raising many questions around decolonising of the curriculum, such as: is decolonisation an incomplete response to a real problem, such as, barriers to learning and dysfunctional schools; and how does one construct a conversation around the decolonising of the curriculum? This to him is a critical and a highly debatable space steeped in conflict and contestation. Clearly, there is an urgent need to move beyond dialogue and deliberation that leads to agreement and disagreement; and although such a step is steeped in conflict, we learn through conflict, difference, and disagreement (Pinar, 2010).

Le Grange (2016) suggests five possibilities to decolonising the curriculum in South Africa: firstly, a 'radical rethinking of Western disciplines' that recognises the pain and antagonism experienced in society is fundamental to the process of decolonisation that goes beyond reflection and listening. The second approach is through 'emerging transdisciplinary knowledge' based on socially dispersed knowledge produced by universities, the general public and indigenous societies. The third possibility is to explore alternatives of improving and planning relevant national curricula wherever Western epistemologies still dominate and imbalanced power relations prevail. The focus is on destabilising dominant knowledge systems that create alternate spaces where contrasting knowledge can be fairly interrelated (Le Grange, 2007). The fourth possibility is for students to acquire knowledge about the genesis and successes of African people to liberate themselves from the dehumanisation enforced on them by Western nations, what Nabudere (2011) refers to as 'Afrikology.' For the fifth approach, Le Grange draws on the work of De Carvalho and Flórez-Flórez (2014), that looks at the three cycles of the curriculum pathway, namely: learning to learn; learning to un-learn and to re-learn; and acquiring the knowledge to move from learning to action.

De-colonial significance in indigenous studies reveal a movement away from the obsession with naïve and simplistic decolonisation of Western knowledge and practices and they now welcome an alternate pedagogical approach (Nakata et al., 2012). Consequently, students might be inclined to understand the parameters of their own thinking by engaging in open, empirical and creative probing, and use critical thinking skills as a way of escaping the narrow-mindedness of intellectual conformism; whether these are articulated in decolonial, indigenous or western philosophies.

Curriculum debates around change have been deliberated for many years, and the question to ask is what makes decolonisation of the curriculum any different? A deep curriculum transformation in higher education will be conceivable only if we deliberately shift our focus to curriculum intellectualism that considers the manner in which we think and act on curriculum change and development issues (Ramrathan, 2016), including decolonising of the curriculum.

Intellectualising the Curriculum through Pinar's Method of Currere

Curriculum studies has over the last two decades extended to include: inter-disciplinary knowledge; autobiographical approaches and complicated conversations; ideas of human liberation; an intellectual awareness that shifted to subjectivity; the humanisation of individuals; social justice; and epistemological and ontological innovations located in indigenous knowledge systems (Pinar, 2004, 2010; Ramrathan, 2016).

Devoted to understanding the curriculum, Pinar (2004) declares that 'patriarchal' and 'Eurocentric' concepts are no longer fashionable, and he invokes internationalisation of the curriculum through a complicated conversation to infer unity and comradeship beyond borders (Pinar, 2004, 2010). Deleuze and Guattari (1994) as inferred by Paraskeva (2011) accentuate how significant it is to shape our own thinking by disrupting and interrogating the dominant traditions inherent in human thinking, which ought to be read as an 'act of becoming' that strives to yield change and articulate new worlds and ways of thinking and feeling (Paraskeva, 2011).

The method of currere opens up alternate possibilities for the curriculum that shift towards understanding the curriculum (Pinar, 2004). The method of currere encompasses four stages to reflect and examine the past and present experiences and future anticipations of individuals (Pinar, 1975, 2004). These include the regressive, progressive, analytical, and the synthetical stages. In brief, the regressive stage examines past and present experiences, insights and means of knowing of the curriculum makers, which enables them to understand their thinking about the curriculum. The progressive stage looks to the future, consciously and deliberately thinking and imagining the future by challenging and disrupting their own thoughts, which will assist curriculum makers on their path to intellectual growth and to envisioning acts of transformation and committed action. The third stage of analysis involves analysing these experiences for meaning-making. The fourth stage, the synthetical moment returns to the past and present experiences, and future expectations for deeper existential meaning and understanding, which is done through assimilation and interpretation of their experiences and thoughts. Currere has been criticised of being too subjective and not practically based (Pacheco, 2009).

In this study, the method of currere was used to explore what and how curriculum decision-makers think about decolonising the curriculum within the context of their engagement in developing the national teacher education curriculum frameworks. Important to consider is articulating between the past, present and future, which is fundamental to the decolonisation of knowledge production and the curriculum, to ensure the devising of a curriculum that is committed to social justice and transformation, and limitless democratic possibilities 'from the top' down and 'from the ground' up (Chilisa, 2012; Horsthemke, 2017; Paraskeva, 2011; Smith, 1999). Through Pinar's method of currere, this study aims to pursue an inner reflection of curriculum decision-makers as a means of understanding and contextualising their thinking, and what it means to deliberate on, and make curriculum decisions in the face of decolonising the teacher education curriculum in South Africa.

Methodology

In the process of decolonising Westernised research methodologies, decolonisation is a process of conducting research, a way of 'researching back' (Smith, 1999). While placing resistance to Western domination to the fore, indigenous research strategies gives those marginalised a space to tell their stories, share their worldviews, and reclaim their past to better understand themselves for change and committed action, and to internationalise their thoughts and experiences (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 1999). This study adopted a qualitative, interpretivist research design, which is phenomenological in its approach (O'Leary, 2005). This study aims to gain a first-hand account, an insider perspective and to provide 'thick' descriptions of curriculum decision-makers' thoughts, intellectualisations and conceptualisations of curriculum change and decolonisation of the curriculum.

Context

As a nation, South Africa is caught up in a never-ending conundrum prompted by the complexities of

curriculum change, from as far back as the colonial and apartheid times to the most recent attempts at decolonisation of the curriculum. This qualitative study uses currere as a lens to explore and conceptualise how decision-makers lead storied meaningful lives, where they present their personal narratives as accounts of their meaningful lives (Pinar, 2004). The study is located in South Africa. It is within the context of this continuous curriculum transformational space that this study aims to explore what curriculum decision-makers at a national level in South Africa, think about curriculum change in relation to decolonising the teacher education curriculum.

Participants

The distinct role of curriculum decision-makers, the participants in the study, is important to their positionality as change agents. As an initial point of entry into the field, a prominent curriculum-maker engaged in the process was identified; one who was knowledgeable which participants would be suited for this study. Thereafter, a purposive sample of six individuals was selected to generate rich trust-worthy information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). This sample was limited to the participants' availability due to their busy schedules and eagerness to participate in this study. The participants rep-resented various constituencies and were involved directly and/or indirectly in the recurriculation process of the national teacher education curri-culum framework, such as the MRTEQ. Given South Africa's history, the willing and voluntary participants in this study were made up of predominantly 'White,' Coloured and Indian participants. However, there were repeated efforts by the researcher to include participants from all the different constituencies including the teacher unions without positive responses. Certainly, the findings of this study has limitations based on race. Further studies that explores African curriculum decision-makers' perspectives particularly on decolonising the curriculum necessitates pursuing.

The curriculum decision-makers shared similar trajectories from entering the field of education as teachers and progressing into academia as lecturers then professors in various higher education institutions, while others moved into leadership positions in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or Governmental organisations. At the time of the research, the sample comprised one female and five males, aged between 47 and 64 years of age, all with a minimum qualification of a Master's degree, with expertise in the disciplines of philosophy, ethics, teacher education and social transformation, maths and science education, history, linguistics, and institutional governance and management.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data is from a larger study that explored the subjective lived experiences of curriculum decision-makers from various constituencies involved in the development of the *National Teacher Education Curriculum Policy* framework processes in South Africa (Mahabeer, 2017). The primary instrument for data collection was in-depth semi-structured interviews for capturing the experiences, inner reflections and thoughts of the participants (Kvale, 1996), with the aim of eliciting information and making meaning out of the data gathered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The semi-structured interviews were conducted as conversations to allow participants to talk openly without fear and obstruction, and to obtain participants' first hand experiences, thoughts, emotions, knowledge and understanding (Patton, 1990). The study enabled the novice female researcher in the field of Curriculum Studies access to influential teacher education curriculum policy-makers in South Africa, the decision-makers were probed to share their subjective and personal experiences and philosophies with the aim of interpreting and understanding their thoughts on decolonising the curriculum. O'Leary (2005) suggests 3Cs of phenomenological analysis: from coding to categorising to concepts. The transcribed interviews were coded and analysed thematically for emerging themes and common patterns (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 1990).

Ethical issues were considered and adhered to through maintaining confidentiality, using pseudo-nyms for participants, providing full disclosure of the study and gaining ethical clearance from the ethics committee (Creswell, 2013). In managing and ensuring trustworthiness, the researcher maintained an audit trail of the research process, consistency of the data was confirmed by the participants, other researchers were used to confirm findings, peer debriefing, and triangulation of multiple data sources ensured trustworthiness (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). This research study was subjective and particular to the context, and so it cannot be generalised.

Discussion

In the ensuing sections, the following themes emerging from the study are discussed:
- Curriculum decision-makers' thoughts on curriculum change and decolonisation;
- Rethinking the curriculum: An urgent holistic over-haul of the curriculum;
- Synergy in curriculum change conversations;
- Looking to Africa: Stuck in a dilemma of change; and
- Re-humanising education and the curriculum: Making better human beings for a better society.

All participants were allocated pseudonyms to protect their identity and to comply with research ethics. The participants (curriculum decision-makers) are referred to as: Benji, Zane, Mili, Golde,

Ruby, and Paige. Their responses related to the particular themes are supported by direct quotations in italics.

Curriculum Decision-Makers' Thoughts on Curriculum Change and Decolonisation

In general, the participants (curriculum-decision-makers) demonstrated diverse thoughts with regard to the curriculum. They were highly cognisant of the link between the teacher education curriculum and the school curriculum, and how change in either of these curriculums should speak to each other: "*we must not confuse the curriculum for teacher education and development with the curriculum from our learners although they are linked*" (Benji).

While some participants' responses can be considered as perpetuating Westernised ways of thinking about the curriculum, others were more inclined towards an indigenous and decolonised way of thinking about the teacher education curriculum. Clearly, colonialism in its many guises, embedded in cultural, socio-economic, political and knowledge-based domination, continues to linger on (Heleta, 2016). Some participants argued for an urgent radical and holistic change in the curriculum requiring a review of the existing curriculum. They emphasised the need to stop "*aping*" Western curriculums and to move away from the "*Elizabethan curriculum* [reading, writing and arithmetic]" (Benji), "*otherwise we will slide into the mediocrity of the western world and again it's because we follow a Western curriculum, almost aping what western societies do although it hasn't produced the kinds of learners that we want*" (Benji). He further makes the following assertion relating to curriculum change and decolonising the curriculum in South Africa:

> *Taking a cue from other countries, curriculum changes in this country have been very reactive. Our premise seems to have been that since apartheid education was bad the whole apartheid curriculum must be ejected and replaced overnight by a new one which actually backfired as we tend to agree now. My view is that we need to get back to the basics of the curriculum and then begin changing that curriculum incrementally.*

Shay and Peseta (2016) suggest a restructuring of knowledge that ensures formal and epistemic access. Thus, universities in a democratic country like South Africa must produce graduates who are socially aware; reflective; participatory; armed with a strong sense of accountability and responsibility, empathy and humanity; and influenced by African philosophy. With the aim of re-centring Africa, it becomes imperative for indigenous people to reflect on and share their stories, histories, language and culture within the higher education curriculum space.

If institutions of higher education want genuinely to bring about transformation in South Africa and the rest of Africa, they have to transform,

profoundly, the way they think about the curriculum; what and how they teach (Heleta, 2016). Benji questions, "*… is this the curriculum? Should we throw this thing away and draft a new one tomorrow?*" Should we merely go back to "*basics,*" back to the drawing board and start afresh when making curriculum changes, "*… my view is that we have lost ground in terms of curriculum changes*" (Benji).

Le Grange (2016) submits that decolonising the curriculum is not an occurrence but a complex process of productively moving forward, being unable to turn back the clock, and beginning with a clean slate to challenge dominant ideologies and knowledge systems. Paige, however, states that,

> *As soon as you talk about curriculum change, you are talking about the restructuring of the whole learning processes and system and very often, that's not what we are doing. I think there is a tension within all curricular [sic], and that is the tension between functionality and civic rights and responsibilities.*

Benji continues to argue for "*a curriculum that re-humanises … make us better human beings for a better society*" (Benji). A shift away from a Westernised Eurocentric curriculum to one that still recognises the "*value dimension,*" "*instilling good values and for showing a disciplined way of life*" (Benji). He suggests a mediation of the 'old' and the 'new' curriculum to enhance human development and to create a well-rounded student who can compete globally. Studies suggest higher education in South Africa is racial and class-centred, with recent student protests being a manifestation of this (Chetty & Knaus, 2016). A large proportion of unsuccessful students at university are products of an oppressive, ineffectual or dysfunctional schooling system, and they are weighed down by their academic unpreparedness, financial drain, and the unfamiliar culture of the higher education institution (Chetty & Knaus, 2016; Le Grange, 2016; Mtshali, 2015).

Benji lamented over the "*negative inferior curriculum*" South Africans have been exposed to, and how this is the cause of many "*woes of this country*" and the world. Despite the attainment of democracy and the various changes and shifts in the curriculum, there is a breakdown in the value system, a degeneration of values, respect and ethics in South Africa and in Western countries.

> *It has degenerated from even the apartheid curriculum with the best intentions that have been involved. I would be bold enough to say a curriculum is called for today that 're-humanises' us* (Benji).

Similar to Benji's response, Mili remarked that despite the "*highly oppressive*" apartheid curriculum, learners and many teachers "*engaged competently in challenging the assumptions of the curriculum*" and teachers "*mediated*" the curriculum which allowed for a "*deep quality of learning*

and experience." Mili is of the opinion that "*we are getting a weaker curriculum experience than the powerful experience that we probably had during apartheid because it taught us to be critical,*" and to engage and challenge taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions despite what the curriculum and education system advocated. "*It taught us to be challenging, it taught us to be engaging*" (Mili). However, Mili is concerned that, "*what's happening is that we are transferring everything into this official version of curriculum and in fact, the opposite is happening.*" Significantly, Mili advocated a shift away from a "*superficial kind of curriculum experience*" and the possibility of being "*multi-disciplinary,*" "*inter-disciplinary,*" "*trans-disciplinary,*" and towards a quality learning experience.

The responses by Benji and Mili hint at an intervention strategy that reconciles the Westernised Eurocentric and the Africanised indigenous curriculums. It can further be inferred from the above reactions that the curriculum should be culturally sensitive and not discount certain components of Western knowledge constructs that benefitted African societies. Instead, it should include integrated histories that are "*conducive to a reconstructed curriculum, that incorporates reality as perceived from different cultural historical moments*" so that learning becomes a meaningful experience (Shizha, 2013:15). Whose knowledge counts and whose reality counts? These are questions that should be reconsidered in reconstructing the curriculum.

While acknowledging the difference between the 'indigenous' and the 'Western,' Hoadley (2010) prefers using the concept 'universal' to 'local,' and a preoccupation with 'what' knowledge is most worthwhile rather than 'whose' knowledge. More importantly, whose reality counts? The question put forward is, does one way of life have to replace another way of life in the fight for decolonising the curriculum? Local indigenous knowledge forms, as local knowledge, must be seen as important within the universal knowledge arena (Barnhardt, 2005; Paraskeva, 2011). From the participants' responses, it is clear that it is not unusual for individuals to be accused of manifesting imperial tendencies because their needs, mindsets, intelligences, and the manner in which they think have been colonised (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009; Le Grange, 2015).

Rethinking the Curriculum: An Urgent Holistic Overhaul of the Curriculum

> *We need a serious rethink of the curriculum that we have, based on the 21st century context and beyond. Need for an urgent holistic overhaul of the curriculum for learners and parallel to that a similar overhaul for the curriculum for teacher education and development.* (Benji)

The participant calls here for a holistic rethink and re-evaluation of the curriculum, notably the "*re-humanising of the curriculum*" (Benji). Knowledge production is a crucial construct in relation to the curriculum. Golde stresses the need for "*knowledgeable teachers*" with strong theoretical foundations; an "*integrated knowledge*" with "*strong theoretical underpinnings*" (Golde). So,

> *the idea of integrated knowledge is important* [...] *so* [is] *the focus on the sociology of education, the psychology of education, the philosophy of education, comparative education, international and local perspectives as content forms that allow integration* (Golde).

From another viewpoint Zane observes how the teacher education curriculum in higher education in South Africa is too "*academic* [...] *too theoretical*" and lacks practicality in not adequately preparing students for realities in the classroom. This is a familiar sentiment shared by Samuel (2012).

Synergy in Curriculum Change Conversations

One of the participants indicated that there was "*a lot of synergy*" (Golde) in the way curriculum decision-makers think about the curriculum making process. However, she painted the conversations around curriculum change as being "*very difficult to get insight into how people think about curriculum*" (Golde), and curriculum makers had a superficial understanding of what transformation of the teacher education curriculum means. Golde further described the curriculum change process as having "*largely been resolved through discussion, justification and evidence.*" In the curriculum debate around change, it is about engaging "*emotionally*" as this shows "*passion and interest*" (Golde); and rationally by providing "*convincing and compelling*" arguments as well as "*listening to the arguments of others*" in the name of "*national interest and social cohesion*" (Golde).

Ruby argued that when speaking about changing the curriculum, it is more "*around the theory of change.*" People need to "*understand why certain changes are being introduced. They need to buy into it and need to find it meaningful.*" The changes cannot simply thrust upon all those affected by the curriculum change. People are tired of been dictated to by policy. All relevant stakeholders must be included in the curriculum change deliberation processes and debates that include decolonising the curriculum. That is, they must feel part of the process, and have the "*understandings*" and "*competence for deep quality engagement*" (Ruby), and the "*possibility of being multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary allows you to create new knowledge*" (Mili).

Curriculum change and innovations are regarded as a privilege of the dominating parties with power and authority in the government. It is also seen as a politically charged and complicated conversation with myriad voices (Apple, 2004; Govender, 2013; Pinar, 2012; Ramrathan, 2016; Slattery, 2013). There are grave implications for

curriculum changes brought about by government initiatives to suit political, economic and social goals (Ball, 2012). These changes have been seen as merely superficial and as serving as political symbols, symbols of power, and they have done little to produce globally resourceful and competitive students (Jansen, 2002; Samuel, 2009).

As Ruby in this study advocated, the curriculum conversation must be more of a "*cross-pollination of ideas*" around the theory of change, and a "*holistic approach*" to the curriculum. Fundamental transformation necessitates academics and those particularly engaged in the development and transformation of the curriculum assuming a 'decolonising' position. In South Africa, academics in this position are still in the minority and so it will take time for decolonisation to take place within higher education (Maserumule, 2015). Heleta (2016) explains the opposition to be within the institutional structures who hold on to power, influence and decision-making, and will do anything in their power to resist change and to maintain the status quo.

In responding to decolonisation as a process of curriculum change, some participants called for the process of decolonising the curriculum to commence with an abrupt departure from the status quo that interrogates and removes colonial and apartheid knowledge systems, and with holding institutions which perpetuate colonial thoughts and ideals accountable. As Benji stated, "*I think the curriculum will have to change more radically informed by a radical shift*" but the curriculum change process should take place "*incrementally.*" The participants advocated for having academics and curriculum decision-makers at all levels taking the lead in engaging critically in decolonising the curriculum and in democratising teaching and learning. This is a process that needs to be done jointly with students engaging with it critically and reimagining the knowledge in the curriculum-making process. Santos's 'ecology of knowledges' (2007 cited in Andreotti et al., 2011), argues for the idea of pluralistic thinking whereby scientific knowledge is not condemned but exercised to oppose hegemonic powers through rational and critical engagement. However, they realise that this idea can backfire and lead to "internalised oppression" and "ethno-stress" (Andreotti et al., 2011:48).

Policy changes in the education system and the continuing changes to the curriculum often side-line key stakeholders' voices in the curriculum change debate (Ramrathan, 2010). Therefore, based on the responses, it is advocated that all stakeholders in the curriculum change process ought to have a voice; a voice that is strong on disciplinary and inter-disciplinary knowledge, is open to the cross-pollination of ideas, and shows the ability to argue rationally and passionately – aspects that are key to

creating a synergy in the curriculum change process.

Listening to the colonised is not as straightforward and simple as it appears to be and the position of the speaker, the position of the listener and the notion of power at play are important considerations. Listening is a political and treacherous space filled with conflict and contestations and shaped by prejudices, keeping in mind that these biases may be unintentional (Razack, 1994). The challenge is overcoming these barriers of difference, and as Razack (1994) mentions, we tend to speak more of ethnic differences and less of deep-rooted class and racial manipulation and domination. Hence, communication necessitates reducing inequities between the dominant (colonisers) and the subjugated (colonised), so that the subjugated can speak and be heard without incurring further marginalisation (Razack, 1994). Andreotti et al. (2011) through the notion of 'aboriginality' advocates ideas of pluralism, openness, reciprocity, solidarity, interdependence and respect for difference that ensures a safe and free space for all to voice their diverse perspectives.

Looking to Africa: Stuck in a Dilemma of Change

"*I think we are stuck in a dilemma, we don't actually have a deep enough, a solid enough understanding of what curriculum means in this country* [...] *We weren't adequately looking at African models. We still tend to look more towards Eurocentric models or Australasian models or American models in preference to more developmental Indian/Chinese/African models. I felt that because we weren't looking at the long term we were missing the key* [...].*" (Paige)

The above excerpt suggests that curriculum decision-makers do not have a strong enough "understanding of what curriculum means in this country" and are indecisive about curriculum matters. South Africa is not adequately looking to Africa or to the East when it comes to thinking of, and deliberating around, curriculum change issues. South Africans continue to perpetuate Westernised Eurocentric approaches to the education system and the curriculum, which registers deep concern. A rethink and reconstruction of the curriculum is needed that bring colonised countries like South Africa to the centre of teaching, learning and research. Importantly, decolonising the curriculum cannot ignore other knowledge systems and the global milieu in its quest to develop graduates with the relevant knowledge, who are globally competent and competitive (Heleta, 2016).

Re-Humanising Education and the Curriculum: Making Better Human Beings for a Better Society

"*My contribution towards intellectualisation of the curriculum is driven simply by a notion that the curriculum should be making better human beings*" (Benji). One of the main aims of humanist educational practices is inspiring the power of critical thinking in students. It should make them

independent thinkers who are proficient in particular mental processes. Such processes include analysing, inferring, synthesising and evaluating information (Khatib, Sarem & Hamidi, 2013). According to Benji, such mental processes require "*a serious and bold thinking about inculcating the appropriate values and attitudes required for our future citizenry for the improvement of the human condition*," which should "*not be confused with social engineering*." Likewise, Zane considers that every individual has the potential to learn and to develop optimum human development.

> *Every child, every person has the potential to develop because of the social, historical and economic circumstances people develop different planning styles [...] Sometimes wittingly and unwittingly the institutions and institutional arrangements prevent the full flowering of development [...] it's our responsibility to find ways in which those blockages can be unblocked and again I am referring to the concept of education for all.* (Zane)

The above responses (Benji and Zane) to education and the curriculum point towards a, "*re-humanised*" (Benji) humanist approach towards curriculum change that is locally and contextually relevant, as Mamdani (2016) observes. Contrasting with the former authoritarian educational traditions is the idea of a 're-humanised' curriculum that is not only dedicated to a social and intellectual environment guarding students against intellectual oppression, physical punishment, and degradation; but also allows students to reach their full potential, championing human dignity over any national, political and economic ideologies (Aloni, 2007; Khatib et al., 2013). The objective of humanist education moves beyond intellectual and cognitive education, and is concerned with the inner world of the individual, and educates the whole person for human development (Khatib et al., 2013; Maples, 1979; Qin, 2007). It is the intellectual, emotional and moral dimensions that promote the growth of creativity and self-directed learning, critical thinking and human potential. Humanist approach, entrenched in the constructivist social perspective has inferences for South Africa's teacher education curriculum; a blend of the cognitive (strong disciplinary knowledge) and the affective (psychological, moral and emotional) in education, and a concern for the relational situations for expediting meaningful learning (Stevick, 1990 cited in Khatib et al., 2013).

Biesta (2016) raises important open questions in deliberating on whether humanism should be denounced or whether it can still be an effective approach at present within the South African context: what does it mean to be human and what is the meaning of humanity? The findings in this study suggest that humanist education should be advocated as a possibility to develop a decolonised curriculum, as it has been instrumental in con-

serving humanity of the human being (Biesta, 2016). A constant tension in the humanist approach is depriving individuals of being creative, spontaneous and containable (Zhao, 2015). Biesta (2012:587) put forward that humanistic education should be attentive to existence and not to the "essence of the human being." That is, "what the individual can do and not what the subject is," in this way the individual's autonomy and individuality will be sustained (Zhao, 2015:958). Education must be a rational process that allows for continual growth and transformation, not focused on outcomes; at that juncture individuals will exercise agency and become self-directed as 'agentic' individuals (Biesta, 2016). Zhao questions whether there is an alternate to humanist approaches, viz. one that escapes the clutches of normalisation and standardisation. A post-humanist expression of subjectivity is unique, open to the world, and it renews "education as the process of subjectification" as suggested by Zhao (2015:960). He advocates that education should not be assessed on the ability to learn, and to make sense and meaning, but on our capacity to receive education and rediscover the meaning of being human.

As suggested by the participants, and as supported in the literature (Chilisa, 2012; Le Grange, 2016; Smith, 1999), conceptualising curriculum change and decolonisation of the curriculum can be characterised as the beginning of a conversation and includes disturbing entrenched taken-for-granted philosophies. A critical review of the whole curriculum should extend beyond reflection to listening to the indigenous peoples' lost indigenous cultures, histories and values. It should take a moral stance through committed action for social and curriculum change.

Curriculum decision-makers must become catalytic agents of change and not be obsessed with Western knowledge and ideologies, nor should they totally discard Western Eurocentric ideologies. Instead, they should make deep intellectual decisions on curriculum matters by exploring local and international imperatives that would generate knowledge that is globally competitive and yet locally mindful. This should not be done in a simplistic and reactive manner but should be done by: deconstructing and reconstructing the curriculum; becoming critically conscious and having the capacity to review and critique the past Westernised curriculum objectively for its worthwhileness; address ethical issues to recover and protect indigenous knowledge and histories; focusing on knowledge produced by the university and the indigenous communities (Smith, 1999). Decolonisation does not suggest the entire denunciation of Western theories but the deconstruction of dominant Western views of knowledge (Smith, 1999). Decolonising the curriculum is about acknowledging diversity, ethics and language,

universalising the curriculum, and creating a synergy between the 'old' and the 'new' curriculum with the focus on 're-humanising' the curriculum.

Conclusion

There are many contestations facing the development of decolonising the teacher education curriculum in South Africa, and curriculum decision-makers are agentic and have a worthy role to play. Through the method of currere, this paper attempted to situate the curriculum decision-makers within the context of teacher education curriculum development for the purpose of understanding their thinking regarding the curriculum and what it means for reengineering the curriculum in light of the current debates surrounding decolonisation. Further studies on decolonising the curriculum could draw on various indigenised research methods and theories, such as anecdotal constructions and stories of colonised people and indigenous communities (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 1999).

Rethinking and restructuring for a decolonised teacher education curriculum is about critically considering the worldwide impact of our local universities on the global markets, standardisations and knowledge. This necessitates a holistic review, a deep intellectual, deliberative and participatory engagement by all stakeholders involved in transforming the teacher education curriculum. Furthermore, a purposeful complicated conversation and a 'cross-pollination' of ideas with strong justifications and compelling arguments that recognise and address past injustices and seek dignity for indigenous knowledge through the process of critical review and renegotiation between the 'old' and the 'new' is required too. It is not about merely being naïve in denouncing the 'old' Eurocentric and Westernised ways of knowledge and education systems, and then assuming a new curriculum. Essentially, curriculum makers have a responsibility to construct pragmatic alternatives for a contextually relevant curriculum that disrupts dominant Westernised knowledge systems and places them alongside indigenous knowledge systems.

Note

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