

# CONCLUSION

## Decolonising for higher education excellence

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Decolonisation, especially educational decolonisation, is a complicated subject with a variety of tantrums, arguments and counter-arguments on the subject. Although the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa in particular and in Africa as a whole is a tough call, it needs to happen. The chapters in this volume have explored a wide variety of issues concerning the decolonisation of higher education, particularly in the era of globalisation and internationalisation. The decolonisation process requires constant interrogation and engagement. This will ensure that the higher education system rids itself of all the influences of colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and the nuances of neoliberalism. These influences tantalise the higher education landscape with promises a global utopia; however, they negate the concerns of the local people and the challenges that necessitated the call for decolonisation.

Globalisation and internationalisation are neoliberal forces reordering the process of higher education in the global South and dictating its research agenda, management mechanisms and quality frameworks, amongst others. The decolonisation of higher education would ensure that it becomes responsive at all fronts – economic, cultural, disciplinary and pedagogical.

Economic responsiveness deals with the ability of the higher education system to train skilled professionals in the different sectors of the economy. It goes beyond offering a degree in a particular field of study and also aims at ensuring that professionals are skilled and ready for the job market. If these professionals are able to move beyond dabbling with the difficulties in the field or society to developing solutions, then higher education can be said to be economically responsive.

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## CONCLUSION

To this end, economic responsiveness would address the wanton exploitation of resources of the global South by the global North. It would ensure that the global South shifts from being administrators or consumers to manufacturers and inventors. Decolonising higher education would create revolutionary individuals who would not only be fit for the job market but will be able to respond to the economic challenges of the local society by creating jobs and by inventing and innovating to transform both the society and the lives of the people living in it. Responsiveness from an economic perspective would be about creating sustainable solutions to future challenges as well as the growth of the economy (Fomunyan & Teferra, 2017).

The decolonisation of higher education would produce cultural responsiveness, which relates to the ability of higher education to respond to the cultural dissonance in the classroom. This is the dissonance in terms of ethnically diverse students, racial profiles of the students and lecturers, and to a lesser extent, gender. In a nation like South Africa with a corrosively discriminating past, higher education needs to not only respond to cultural challenges but also to recognise the diversity within the classroom. This recognition empowers the teacher to enhance the learning experience by tapping into the diverse social and cultural capital within the classroom. Cultural responsiveness is the lecturer's ability to demonstrate knowledge of the cultural characteristics of different groups within the classroom and be aware of how these cultural differences affect the teaching and learning process. Knowledge is built on experience, which is itself culturally shaped. It must be added that a culturally responsive higher education system has been a problem in most parts of the world, especially in recent times where globalisation and internationalisation increasingly determine the direction of higher education. The competitiveness within the knowledge economy has provided little space for higher education to be culturally responsive. This is because cultural responsiveness requires knowledge of human projects aimed at dominating other human beings and how the people being dominated respond to subjugation. Cultural responsiveness also requires knowledge of democratic ideal and constitutional principles that pertain to the people, and knowledge of the teachers' cultural roots and complexities. The weaving together of these different aspects would result in a more culturally responsive higher education system. This can only be possible through the decolonisation of the system (Gay, 2010).

Disciplinary responsiveness is the ability of a discipline to be up to date with the research in the field and to promote new discoveries within the discipline from a contextual perspective. A higher education system is intricately bound up with a community of scholars or scholarship who produce new knowledge according to the dictates of the discipline. However, most academic disciplines are often highly systematised forms of inquiry that evade everyday life practices. Education is supposed to prepare people for these life practices; to inform and challenge. For higher education to be disciplinary responsive, it should not only be up to date in relation to research in the field but should be structured in ways that are applicable to everyday contextual life, especially since knowledge is largely for application. Disciplinary responsiveness concerns the underlying knowledge of the discipline; there is a close coupling between the way in which knowledge is produced and the way students are educated and trained in the discipline area. Disciplinary knowledge is at the centre of the decolonisation project since decolonising higher education is primarily about knowledge ownership and production (Moll, 2004).

The decolonisation of the higher education system would produce pedagogical or learning responsiveness, which centres on the ability of the higher education landscape to respond to students. Every course or discipline has different student teaching and learning needs. If higher education did not respond to these needs, there would be no meaningful learning or value for money in the process. The one-size-fits-all approach has failed and continues to fail in addressing student needs. This is because most students entering university are disadvantaged one way or another, especially since they have to adapt to an unfamiliar institutional and epistemic context. Making higher education pedagogically responsive can only be possible through decolonisation, especially since decolonising the mind is the first step to ensure freedom and critical engagement to whatever material it receives (Ferdinand, 2009).

Decolonising higher education in the era of globalisation and internationalisation is about making it responsive in a variety of ways. Responsiveness is not possible with the dilapidating influences of colonialism and the neoliberal forces fighting to choke the life out of the education system. This volume, *Decolonising Higher Education in the Era of Globalisation and Internationalisation* concludes with four key thoughts.

Firstly, decolonising higher education is about the shift of power and influence from a colonial hegemonic higher education structure which seeks to glorify the

West and follows its dictates against the mitigating circumstances ravaging the local context. The decolonisation of higher education offers the local population the opportunity to construct knowledge and meaning based on a set of rules that speak to the social and cultural values within such a society. This will ensure that the knowledge constructed is powerful enough to produce a responsible citizenry that would think global and act local. The higher education landscape has been held sway for years by colonial references such as the statues of Cecil Rhodes and King George, as well as knowledge structures and principles, which sort to ensure the continuous colonisation of the mind. The shift in power and influence, as well as the empowerment of local stakeholders to control the higher education systems and its agendas, constitute decolonisation.

Secondly, decolonising higher education is about enforcing previously discarded knowledge and reconstituting who the knower is and what the known is or should be. For centuries colonialism has ensured that the knower was always the foreign one, with the local being the one to be taught or fed by the knower. The local's epistemology was disregarded and systematically destroyed by the colluding influences of colonialism and neoliberalism and its market forces, which have incessantly dictated to and provided direction on the subservient path education in general and higher education, in particular, must take. Decolonisation means giving voice to and articulating previously epistemic ideas, knowledge and knowing traditions. On this platform, stakeholders in higher education would control what is considered worthwhile knowledge from a contextual standpoint and ensure that such knowledge not only addresses the concerns of the local population but cogitates the reverberations of the common man and his needs in the society.

Thirdly, decolonising higher education is orchestrated by the creation of educational encounters on the platform of the plurality of voices enshrined in complicated human experience, social and cultural capital and the socio-political landscape in which such education is taking place. Such plurality is only possible if curricula charges such as responsibilities, consciousness, commitments and projects are rid of ideological nuances that make them unhealthy for academic discussion. Such ideological nuances have led to a higher education unable to offer value for money or be fit for purpose. Decolonising will puncture such dehumanising systems, which have ensured that education remains partial with little or no transformation in the life of an individual and fails to speak or respond to the realities of such a person. Decolonising higher education would produce educational encounters

powered by plurality of voices, not of the coloniser, but of the previously colonised as they re-emerge to function on the platform of curriculum charges to reorient and reconstruct the higher education landscape in which they find themselves.

Finally, decolonising higher education in the era of globalisation and internationalisation is about reorienting institutional apparatus, which includes educational discourse, curriculum encounters, language philosophical propositions and morality. Knowledge, which is a product of this apparatus, is enmeshed in the dynamics of power because of its constant application to social conduct and relation in practice. This power is what is used to silence the plurality of voices, which is supposed to characterise the higher education environment and ensure that the mind is free from colonial gibberish. Once the institutional apparatus is re-oriented to produce an environment conducive for higher education, previously silenced voices would begin to emerge in the articulation of what it means to know in the society and what constitutes knowledge in that society. Decolonising higher education is riding the higher education landscape of denting those proclivities that had hitherto held higher education agents sway to technocratic imbalances, which seeks to not only debase but to erode all values associated with the local, thereby keeping it unresponsive.

## References

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