

# 4 Decolonising the university

## Some thoughts on recontextualising knowledge

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### Introduction

The university in the Global South is under intense critique for its lack of transformation and the snail's pace of decolonisation (Heleta, 2018; Hlatshwayo and Fomunyan, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). The academy has been accused of resisting transformation by undertaking various processes of 'reform', 'change' and 'adjustment' designed to give the sense that transformation is being enacted – yet which allow its structures of power to remain intact (Hlatshwayo and Shawa, 2020). Underpinning this critique is the assumption that universities continue to produce and reinforce the epistemic and cognitive violence of the colonial project (Kamanzi, 2016; Keet, 2014; Kumalo, 2018). This phenomenon of the university reinscribing structures of power is not peculiar to South Africa, but is often accompanied by protest as groups within the academy attempt to push back.

The irony of using the works of British, French and British-Australian theorists, Bernstein, Bourdieu and Maton, to explicate the ways in which battles for the curriculum occur in a bid for decoloniality is not lost on me. But my project is not to reject or overthrow all that can be in some way linked to the Global North. Indeed this would be futile in a globalised world, as I will argue later. Rather I want to make sense of how the epistemic traditions so long undermined and absent can take up their rightful place and move us forwards and I believe that Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) offers a set of useful insights for this endeavour.

In particular LCT counters the knowledge-blindness of much of the sociology of education (including many of the calls for decolonisation). Knowledge-blindness entails rightly understanding intellectual developments in the academy and beyond as emerging from issues of social power and institutional politics but then being blind to the extent to which the knowledge practices in turn shape social power and institutional politics. Furthermore, knowledge-blindness leads to research which treats all knowledge

as generic with no recognition about how different fields construct different forms of knowledge to different ends. Understanding the struggles being fought over knowledge and education requires a deep understanding of the differentiated and specialised contexts and practices of each field. ‘Knowledge is socially produced by means of antecedent knowledge and how this is done forms the specific (though not monopolistic) concern of intellectual fields’ (Maton, 2014, p. 44). The *epistemic–pedagogic device* (Maton, 2014) allows us to engage with deliberations about how and where symbolic control is created, maintained, transformed and changed in society.

### **The Epistemic–Pedagogic Device (EPD)**

The late British sociologist Basil Bernstein (2000) introduced what he called the ‘pedagogic device’ to trace the different fields by which knowledge is made and transmitted in educational practice. For Bernstein, the pedagogic device comprised three different yet internally related fields of practice: the field of production (the site where new knowledge is developed, such as the laboratory, and disseminated through conferences, journal articles and academic books), the field of recontextualisation (the site of curriculum design, where decisions are made as to which fields of production to draw from, and which issues from the field of production should be selected for inclusion, and how these should be organised, and articulated through syllabus documents, course guides and textbooks), and the field of reproduction (the site of teaching and learning, including assessment practices, where forms of the recontextualised knowledge are presented to students for their engagement). Building on this work, Karl Maton (2014) developed the ‘epistemic–pedagogic device’ (hereafter the EPD) to argue that the fields are not only interrelated but also dialectical. In other words, knowledge does not always or only move from the field of production to the field of reproduction via the field of recontextualisation. New knowledge could move dialectically from the field of reproduction to the field of production, with an agent drawing on their own teaching and learning experiences to contribute to intellectual knowledge-building.

In this chapter, I focus on the recontextualisation field, where the curriculum is constructed. The overarching distributive logics at play across the EPD regulate access to both principled and everyday meanings and then the recontextualising logics at play in the recontextualising field regulate the de-location and pedagogising of knowledge.

Bernstein (1975) suggests that the process of recontextualisation is largely governed by two sets of rules (or logics), which he terms, instructional discourse (ID) and regulative discourse (RD). Instructional discourse focuses on the selection, sequencing, pacing and assessment of pedagogic

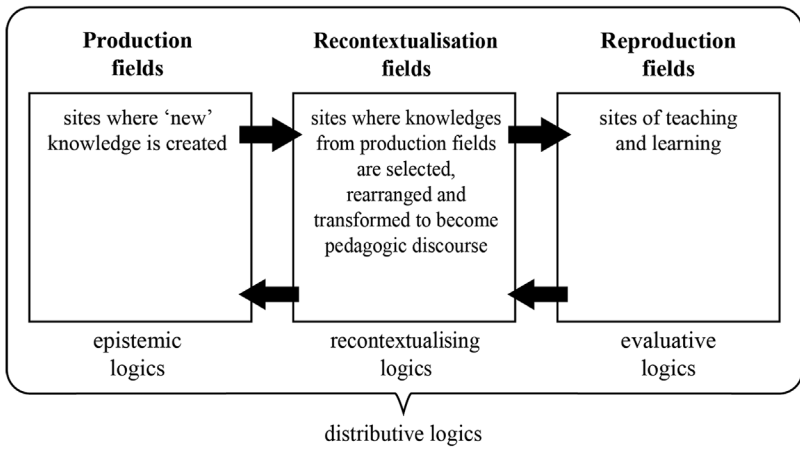


Figure 4.1 The arena created by the epistemic-pedagogic device (EPD) (Maton, 2014, p. 51).

practices. Regulative discourse focuses on the implicit, hidden and assumed morals, ethics and values that shape and influence curriculum design decisions. Academics and curriculum designers, whom Bernstein refers to as recontextualising agents, infuse their own agendas, ideologies and beliefs into the curricula they create (Boughey and McKenna, 2021). This constitutes what Apple (1971) calls the 'hidden curriculum', that is, our taken-for-granted ideologies that we impose on our curricula. In decolonial terms, this could be seen as the site where coloniality most explicitly manifests, in that challenging Western epistemic traditions and calling for the re-centring of African and Global South knowledges and perspectives is seen as contesting 'truth', encapsulated in a 'traditional' and 'well-established' canon. Gordon (2015) and to some extent, Kumalo (2020) challenge organised disciplinarity and the entrenchment of the canon, and propose alternative inter/trans/cross-disciplinaries that draw on different epistemologies from Africa and the Global South in our curriculum imaginations.

While the EPD offers us a 'clean' analytical framework with which to see knowledge being pedagogised across the three different fields, a commitment to decoloniality demands that I recognise the fallibility of this framework if taken literally rather than heuristically. In making sense of the practical struggles for transformation and decolonisation, I argue that they cannot be classified and categorised as belonging in one field only. Struggles for decolonisation in general and recontextualising knowledge in

particular tend to be ‘messy’, complex, dialectical, intersectional and often transcend narrow fields of practice in calling to our attention the need to move beyond formalised disciplines, canons and fields. As Maton (2014, p. 52) indicates, ‘actors struggle over control of the arena as a whole, relations between fields, and relations within fields’.

In this chapter, I use the EPD in general and the field of recontextualisation in particular to bring to light the dialectical struggles that are occurring in South African higher education. This offers a useful set of concepts not only to reveal these struggles, but also to open up opportunities to make necessary decolonial interventions, by interrelating power, knowledge and consciousness. Understanding the EPD is thus useful for exploring colonial domination and control because it allows us to see how power relations are translated into educational practices and how educational practices can be translated into power relations.

I have divided this chapter into two parts. In Part I, I focus on explicating our understanding of coloniality/decoloniality. In Part II, I apply the EPD through our discussion of the emergent calls for transformation in the South African academy. I then move to the heart of the chapter: providing an argument for why I believe a focus on the struggles for knowledge is central to decolonisation and transformation.

## **Part I**

### **Conceptualising coloniality and decoloniality**

Decolonial scholars propose the terms ‘coloniality’ and ‘decoloniality’ to make sense of the enduring patterns of colonial contact and institutionalised entrenchment of the values of the historically colonised world, including in our universities, curricula, teaching practices and knowledge production (Grosfoguel, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). The notion of the distributive logic of the EPD allows us to understand the ways in which coloniality marks who is to be a legitimate knower and who is not, and who is entitled to distribute knowledge; furthermore this logic conditions who may claim what and under which conditions, and thereby sets the limits of what constitutes legitimate discourse. This can be seen to manifest as three dialectical yet interrelated struggles – the ‘coloniality of power’, the ‘coloniality of knowledge’ and the ‘coloniality of being’ (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

The *coloniality of power* focuses on the social, economic, cultural and political inequalities, reproduction and imbalances that continue beyond the formal colonisation and military occupation by the Global North of the Global South. Rodney (1973) in his seminal work entitled ‘How Europe Underdeveloped Africa’, writes about how Europe structurally engineered

underdevelopment in Africa through the extractive, anthropological and colonial nature of African economic development in aiding and supporting Western industrial development. Adopting classical Marxist lenses, Wolpe (1972) provides an alternative conception of this coloniality of power in looking at the apartheid regime in South Africa, where the capitalist class struggled to meet the demand for expanding cheap labour for the industrial economy. This coloniality of power speaks to what Mignolo (2011) refers to as the ‘darker side of western modernity’, that is, the operational logic whereby concepts of ‘universal’ Western modernity and scientific progress were accompanied by the colonial project that sought to ‘civilise’ and ‘re-educate’ the African subjects who were seen as useful labour for the colonial regime. For Césaire (1955) and Said (1978), and more recently Gordon (2011) and Almeida and Kumalo (2018), the colonial project was inherently an existentialist project committed to the ‘thingi-fication’ of the colonised subalterns, denying humanity, culture(s), spirituality, knowledges and modes of being in the attempt to socially re-construct the colonised into useful colonial subjects or ‘things’. Said (1978) writes about the ontological and epistemic death of the oriental *Other*. This goes far beyond excluding people who are not deemed to be legitimate knowers within the distributive logic of the EPD because these knowers are reimagined in the colonial mind as not human, but as a colonial tool and object, needing to be owned, controlled and dominated.

The *coloniality of knowledge* refers to the continuing systemic and institutionalised influence of colonisation through knowledge production, the academy, curriculum design and teaching and learning practices that decontextualise learners and which remain dominant in the university (Hlatshwayo and Fomunyam, 2019; Khunou *et al.*, 2019; Kumalo, 2018; Boughey and McKenna, 2021). At the heart of the distributive logic of coloniality is Kant’s notion of *cogito, ergo sum*, which constitutes a central organising myth of the Western philosophical conception of logic, rationality and reason (Hlatshwayo and Shawa, 2020; Hlatshwayo *et al.*, 2020; Le Grange, 2019). The ‘I’ in this Western epistemic tradition is the colonising European subject who refuses to recognise and acknowledge different beings, knowledges and epistemic traditions outside of the domain of Euro-American thought. Rejecting the Cartesian duality between the individual and society, between the rational and the affective, between body and mind, and between human and nature is central to the call for decoloniality.

The *coloniality of being* refers to the ways that universities in general, and historically white universities in particular, are structurally involved in the social reproduction of ‘natives of nowhere’ who are dislocated from their being, indigenous epistemic traditions, identity and cultural belonging (Kumalo, 2018; Buntin, 2006). Kumalo employs the story of the late

apartheid journalist, Nat Nakasa, who committed suicide by jumping out of a building in New York after banishment by the apartheid regime, to explicate the assimilationist challenges that students have to navigate when accessing historically white universities (see also Alasow, 2015; Naicker, 2016; Open Stellenbosch Collective, 2015). Kumalo (2018) agrees with Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018a) in his suggestion that this coloniality of being presents itself through the ontological (and existential) exiling of the colonised from themselves, their languages, identities, names, spaces, time and socio-spirituality.

The coloniality of power, coloniality of being and coloniality of knowledge are, in our view, central to the distributive logics of the academy. The 2015–2016 student protests organised under the banners of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall re-centred ongoing calls to re-configure the university and reimagine access, curriculum, pedagogy and the broader institutional culture(s) Carolissen & Kiguwa (2018); Cornell and Kessi, 2017). I now turn to the possibilities that the EPD offers in exploring the field of recontextualisation, where knowledge is selected, sequenced and articulated in curriculum documents.

## **Part II**

### **A brief context on the struggles for decolonising the university**

Contemporary transformation struggles in South African higher education have often foregrounded three key aspects that attempt to respond to the calls for transformation and decolonising the university. These are: the purposes of the university; curriculum design and its potential imaginations; and teaching and learning (Booyesen, 2016; Khunou *et al.*, 2019; Mbembe, 2016). One of the significant contributions of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements was to force us to reflect on our understanding of what constitutes the public university in South Africa (see Hlatshwayo and Shawa, 2020; Mbembe, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). A common understanding is that the current university in its constitution and formulations functions at least in part as a neoliberal teaching machine (Spivak, 2012). It ‘economises’ activities, processes and people and disregards that which cannot be counted and its efficiency counted (Boughey and McKenna, 2021). In doing this the university disregards its context and seeks to replicate its Euromodern counterparts in North America and Western Europe. For Mbembe (2016), Kumalo (2018) and Heleta (2016), universities in South Africa value and legitimate curricula and syllabi rooted in a colonial and apartheid logic constructed under the guise of neoliberal strategic reforms. The distributive logics of colonialism have been transmogrified into the distributive logics of neoliberalism.

There are at least two critiques of the current calls for decolonisation of the university. The first argues that the public university is a neoliberal, colonising institution that needs to be entirely dismantled so that in its place a multiversity, or alternatively a pluriversity, can emerge (Mbembe, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2018b). The operational logic is that this pluriversity or multiversity will embrace different epistemic traditions and begin to look at the world from the perspective of Africa and the Global South.

The second critique, largely advanced by Jansen (2017), Habib (2019), and more recently, Teferra (2020), suggest impending doom for the current university in South Africa as a result of a decline of standards that come with the move towards decolonisation. This decline of the ‘South African university’ is driven, at least according to Jansen (2017), by the pressures brought by the 2015–2016 student protests which have challenged the entire repertoire of the EPD and its current distributive logics, including curricula, teaching and learning and institutional cultures, and language in all public universities.

It should be highlighted that central to the recontextualising logic is the reproduction of the coloniality of knowledge through language, with various scholars building on the work of Wa Thiong’o (1986) and Asante (1991) to critique the hegemonic role of the English language. This goes far beyond concerns about the pedagogical challenges brought about through learning in an additional language to the consideration of the discursive limits in making sense of and unpacking indigenous knowledge systems and the nuanced lifeworlds of Africans. For Quijano (2007), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018b) and Hlatshwayo (2019b), this becomes an opportunity to engage in ‘epistemic disobedience’ in moving beyond and ‘de-linking’ from Western epistemic traditions and beginning to re-centre other *Othered* epistemic traditions that enable, facilitate and reinforce us – our ontological and epistemic lives – in all our complexities and diversities.

Recently, Le Grange (2019) and Hlatshwayo and Shawa (2020) have built on the work of Pinar (1975) to re-construct the term *ubuntu currere* (Ubuntu curriculum) to advance a democratic and social justice conception of the academy, where organised curriculum is not *a priori* and rather builds upon student experiences in the university. This concept of curriculum constitutes the rejection of the top-down, hierarchical power relations in curriculum design and calls for an attempt at flattening this curriculum hierarchy through inclusion, diversity and democratic thought in such curriculum spaces. Such challenges to the existing recontextualising logics will need to take very different forms in different fields. In fields with stronger social relations, where being a particular kind of knower is central to success, as is common across the humanities, there may be more cracks to leverage towards recognising the wealth of knowledge(s) long excluded

from the academy. In fields with what LCT (Maton, 2014) terms stronger epistemic relations, on the other hand, such as many fields in the natural sciences, where there is general consensus about the nature of knowledge deemed legitimate and this knowledge is strongly bounded, the process of challenging well-established practices may be particularly challenging, and even the idea that there is always an ideal knower may be contested. The colonial project is strongly evident across the academy but the colonialities of power, knowledge and being manifest in varied ways across disciplinary contexts and attempts to shift the distributive logics of the academy will need to take this into account.

Furthermore, the distributive logics of the academy do not contain themselves only to the formal curriculum. Various institutional mechanisms and structures, such as the hegemonic institutional culture(s), space and spatial justice, university practices and ceremonies, buildings and statues are experienced by many Black students as daily reminders that they are not recognised by and do not belong in the academy (Hlatshwayo, 2015; Mahabeer *et al.*, 2018). Black academics have had to negotiate institutional racism, sexism, harassment, discrimination and epistemic violence in being forced to prove their legitimacy, competence and belonging (Booi *et al.*, 2017; Mahabeer *et al.*, 2018; Nzimande, 2017). Khoza-Shangase (2019), for example, diagnoses herself as suffering from intellectual and emotional toxicity in grappling with the institutional racism and white privilege at a research intensive university, which led to her own depression.

Black working class students who are the first in their family to come to university are especially side-lined by the recontextualising logics of the curriculum (Hlatshwayo, 2015; Vincent and Hlatshwayo, 2018). Epistemic marginality is particularly confronting in historically white universities as they tend to attract, train and retain Black academics from middle class backgrounds who more likely conform to the dominant institutional culture, and thereby leave the distributive logics unchallenged.

This allows these universities to achieve two things. First, they are able to claim, through affirmative action classifications, that their institution and its departments are demographically transforming in light of the post-apartheid democratic order's rainbow nation logic. Second, these universities are able to maintain their dominant distributive logics without being challenged or forced to reconsider or dismantle them. Hlengwa (2019) and Booi (2015) write about this phenomenon in the emergence of the 'grow your own timber' discourse evidenced in various accelerated development programmes in higher education. Hlengwa (2019) refers to this *modus operandi* as the university employing 'safe bets', that is, employing Black academics who meet affirmative action categories but who subscribe to and reinforce the



distributive logics at play. In this way, the curriculum may have small changes made towards decoloniality but the underpinning recontextualising logic remains unscathed.

In the growing calls for decolonising the curriculum, there appear at least two recontextualising logics jostling for power. These are the ‘dismantling’ approach to decolonisation, and the ‘re-centring’ approach. The ‘dismantling’ approach entails not only challenging the recontextualising logic of the curricula and its attendant instructional and regulative discourses, but rejecting Western epistemologies as inherently colonial and racist; and thus as having no theoretical or philosophical value for us to consider (Kamwendo, 2016; Msila and Gumbo, 2016; Samuel, 2017). Madlingozi (2016), advocating for dismantling the conception of transformation and decolonisation, cautions us that we need to resort to the ‘cosmogenic’ approach in our pursuit of indigenous knowledge.

In the other approach, advocated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018b), Le Grange (2019) and Mbembe (2015), the struggles for the distributive logics of the academy could take a ‘re-centring’ approach, which would be seen in the foregrounding of African and Global South epistemic traditions in the curriculum in that the word is read and understood from the position of Africa first and the world second. This can be seen in how knowledges from Latin America, the Caribbean nations, North America, India, Brazil, and Aotearoa, for example, offer phenomenological and epistemic lenses that help us make sense of coloniality and its different contextual manifestations evidenced through power, capital, labour, knowledge, inequality, oppression and so on. Although I am troubled by the monolithic conception of ‘Africa’ often suggested by the dismantling approach to transforming the university, I nonetheless support the argument that African epistemic traditions in all their diversity and complexity need to occupy greater significance in curriculum formulations, institutional practices and other important sites of the academy. For Fanon (1963), Makgoba (1997), Madlingozi (2018) and Kumalo (2020), the Black archive is a crucial reference point in reclaiming ourselves, our identities and ways of being in the world, in accounting for the mis-interpretation of African and Global South epistemic traditions, and re-interpreting them in ways that are authentic, true and complex.

I believe that this will take a variety of forms and will require a complex project of making the distributive logics far more explicit and demonstrating the power of recontextualising in ways that challenge the current hegemonies inherent in the curriculum.

Having outlined the emerging struggles for decolonising the university, I argue that largely missing in these debates and emerging literature is the focus on the politics and challenges of recontextualising this knowledge in the academy within a decolonial worldview (Hlatshwayo, 2019a). That is,

the ideologies, views, beliefs and values that inform what knowledges academics select and construct in their curricula.

### **Recontextualising (decolonial) knowledge in the South African academy**

Recontextualising decolonial and Afrocentric knowledge could be seen as the central core of the mobilisation efforts of the student movements in 2015–2016 (Alasow, 2015; Bosch, 2017; Ngcobozi, 2015). Many students and progressive academics argue that the political economy of the curriculum, that is, the curriculum in all its facets and complexities, is central to the operations of the academy as a neoliberal colonial entity that continues to perpetuate epistemic, social and cognitive injustices (Hlatshwayo and Fomunyam, 2019; Jagarnath, 2015; Kamanzi, 2016). Largely influenced by new materialism as a philosophical discourse (see Vincent, 2018), these researchers have looked at the ways in which curriculum, institutional culture, physical architecture, spatial justice, and pedagogic practices are all dialectically aligned through the distributive logics to marginalise Black beings (Mbembe, 2015). Decolonising the curriculum is an inherently existential and structural process that includes considering what is being taught, who is teaching, what power relations are embedded in the curriculum, and the often-unequal power relationships between students and academics. It requires that all the spaces in which ideology is at play in the curriculum are opened for critique.

For Kamanzi, the colonial operational architecture reproduces itself in curriculum through reinforcing power, hierarchy, domination and submission in ensuring that academic relations are underpinned by boundaries around who is deemed to be a legitimate knower, and who is deemed to be an illegitimate empty vessel in need of ‘training’ and ‘education’. For Heleta (2018), Mbembe (2016), and Gordon (2007), these boundaries are enforced through the teaching of a deeply troubling and colonising canon that seeks to project itself 1) as the only ‘epistemic game in town’, 2) that continues to Other and disregard alternative epistemic traditions as without reason, and 3) that perpetuates and maintains the fallacy of the Cartesian duality in its obsession with separating the knower from knowledge itself. The relationship between the self, knowing and the world is intersectional in the Global South, with the mind/body/spirit/soul as all constituting the metaphysical being who is not only located in the world, but has ties with the ancestral realm as well (Ramose, 2015; Tamale, 2020). The 2015–2016 #RhodesMustFall movement, the Black Student Movement and the #OpenStellenboschCollective have focused on, first, re-establishing the consensus that the academy in South Africa is still largely alienating, colonial and

needs to be transformed and decolonised. Second, the regulative discourse is shaped by the logics of social justice, which in turn shapes particular kinds of pedagogic practices through the logics of the instructional discourse. This manifests variously through calls for removing the ‘dead white men’ from the curriculum (Pett, 2015), and in so doing to epistemically ‘disobey’ the white ‘fathers’ and ‘founders’ of modern thought (Hlatshwayo, 2019b). Responding to this challenge, Kumalo (2020) proposes that instead we need to ‘resuscitate’ and focus on the Black Archive in foregrounding the African epistemic traditions, not to read them and engage them in isolationist and reductionist terms, but rather to relate and compare them with other epistemic traditions in the world. For those in the South African ‘teaching machine’ (Spivak, 2012), important, seminal works such as writings by Sol Plaatjie, Archie Mafeje, AC Jordan, SEK Mqhayi, Lewis Nkosi, Sylvia Tamale, Percy Mabogo More, Omolara Ogundipe-Lesli, Catherine Obianuju Acholonu and others, still remain largely marginalised within the canon; thus they need to be re-centred in curriculum and engaged with as critical texts in teaching and learning.

Building on the need to return to the Black Archive for critical theoretical resources, Matthews (2018) argues that we need to explicate the ‘colonial library’ and its recontextualising logics in Political Studies so as to expose students to epistemologies that do not prioritise Euromodernity. When Matthews teaches African Politics, she prescribes dominant Western texts alongside alternative literature that questions the dominant assumptions around ‘failed’ African states, and in the teaching and learning process, she presents counter hegemonic perspectives on the challenges that continue to confront the continent. This enables students to think critically about the role of authoritative texts in the academy and the need to critique the embedded assumptions that tend to carry that canon. Matthews concedes that merely prescribing the dominant texts next to the ‘hegemonic’ or seminal ones does not necessarily result in a disruptive or decolonial moment, and that more work still needs to be done in ensuring that the recontextualised literature achieves decolonial aims. Building on the work of Matthews (2018), Kumalo (2018) and Hlatshwayo (2019b) have previously called for the re-centring of African philosophy in the broader recontextualisation of political studies knowledge. Ethnophilosophy, Sage philosophy and the Nationalist-liberation philosophy have rich epistemic resources that enable us to think through philosophy, political theory and Africa beyond the restrictive boundaries of the colonial gaze.

It should be noted that academic freedom and the right to choose the kind of curriculum materials to design and prescribe is a crucial component of the field of recontextualisation and the discursive politics involved (McKenna and Quinn, 2012; McKenna and Boughey, 2014). Academic identity,

disciplinary communities, the right to choose which material to include and to exclude, and how (and to what extent) academics can enact teaching and learning practices without undue imposition constitute the very hallmark of the academy. While scholars such as Coetzee (2016), Nongxa (2020) and Sultana (2018) are deeply concerned about what they see as the erosion of academic freedom and the plurality of voices in the academy, I wish to make two arguments in relation to academic freedom and the possibilities for recontextualising decolonial knowledge in the academy.

First, to what extent is true and meaningful decolonisation possible within the confines of institutional autonomy and academic freedom? Simply put, should decolonisation and the ethics of transformation be an institutional choice? Can transformation occur within a neoliberal democratic framework that governs and shapes university management and its policies? Is there any alternative philosophical framework that could be implemented in cultivating a decolonial methodology in curriculum? The answers to these and other questions have an impact on academic freedom and to what extent academics could be incentivised or compelled to recontextualise decolonial knowledge in their curricula. Where such processes are enforced, they can rapidly become a compliance exercise, such as we now see in the inclusion of ‘decolonisation’ as a line item on curriculum templates at Unisa, the biggest university in South Africa.

Second, curriculum decisions tend to reflect and mirror individual academics’ scholarly identities and how they see themselves and their work in relation to their field of research and practice. Hanson (2009), Henkel (2000), and Becher and Trowler (2001) write about how academic identities tend to be shaped and influenced by three key aspects: the discipline, the institution, and a sense of professional affiliation, with Hanson (2009, p. 554) suggesting that ‘academics have far greater allegiance to their discipline, a community that extends beyond organizational and national boundaries, than to their employing university’. Although traditional collegiality to an academic culture is generally seen as being on the decline, Trowler (2020) indicates that there is still an affinity to the academy in how academics choose to retain a measure of control over their work. This is perhaps best captured by the academic quoted here, who draws on her field of practice to inform her identity and what she chooses to teach:

The choices of it, I think as Toni Morrison shows us, language is political, how you frame one’s course. . . . I like that even if I disagree with the heart of the argument I use the very provocative idea of New Wars to enter the debate and it is good it is a white woman who provokes that debate and there has been a lot of intellectual responses to that. She is theorizing war and it forces a student to think in different ways; I sure

hope so. *I can't separate my identity. My African feminism is highly framed by my African reality so it is allowed intellectual devotion to thinking about this place, this continent in serious ways, women's work and women's ways of thinking are fundamental to that.*

(interview, from Hlatshwayo, 2019a, p. 99; emphasis added)

In terms of the recontextualising logic, academic freedom and academic identities have material implications for the kinds of knowledge that is recontextualised in curriculum. Both the regulative and instructional discourses underpinning the recontextualising logic are largely shaped by the concepts of academic freedom and the personal and institutional autonomy that academics enjoy in selecting, sequencing and pacing the curriculum for their different course offerings. The promotion of decolonial knowledge as fundamental to the recontextualising logic will need to grapple with the challenges that academic freedom brings, as well the individual identities that academics have, alongside the nature of the target knowledge.

### **In lieu of a conclusion**

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide preliminary thoughts on recontextualising decolonial knowledge into curricula within the South African academy. Through the use of the EPD, I have attempted to theorise and explicate the struggles that are currently taking place in South African higher education. I suggest that foregrounding the recontextualisation of decolonial knowledge should be seen as an epistemic prerequisite to engaging with the critical issues of academic freedom, academic identities, and the constraints on achieving decolonial aims within a neoliberal university.

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