

# Bringing Africa into New Epistemologies: Rethinking the University in Africa

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Accepted 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2022.

**Abstract.** The concepts *Africanization* and *decolonization* have been stressed in the 1960s by the founder leaders of the free African states. Pan African leaders such as Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere sought to establish truly independent states free from Europeanization and colonialism. The mission was to liberate various institutions from colonial ills. These leaders wanted to transform government institutions including institutions of higher learning. The 1960s witnessed the leaders' search for relevance and liberatory philosophies. Since the advent of colonization, the African continent there has been the gradual alienation that has seen the African lose not only culture but history, language and indigenous ways of thinking. The leaders in newly independent states strived to redress this barbarism veiled as modernism which was widespread in African institutions. This article examines the reasons behind the sustained calls for Africanization and decolonization in higher education institutions in Africa. The following five topics are examined:

- i) Why re-Africanize the university in Africa
- ii) Revisiting and fostering the relevant soul of the university
- iii) New epistemologies and reawakening the renaissance of knowledge
- iv) Research, curriculum and pedagogy infusing the new idea of a university
- v) Rethinking thinking

**Keywords:** Africanization, african institutions, decolonization, europeanization, colonialism.

## INTRODUCTION

The struggle in Africa for establishing African universities continues and this is a struggle that started in the 1960s with the advent of free African states. Fredua-Kwarteng and Ofosu (2018) point out that the university model imitated from colonialist models has been unsuccessful in fulfilling African development. Furthermore, these institutions produce graduates whose knowledge is irrelevant to their communities. The Pan-Africanists, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere are two of the many African intellectuals who have questioned the role of education in Africa. To Africanize knowledge Nyerere (1970:130) pointed out, "Our young men and women must have an African-oriented education. That is an education

which is not only given in Africa but also directed at meeting the present needs of Africa. Nkrumah of Ghana postulated similar thoughts when he pointed out that an African university can never serve the society if it is not embedded in indigenous social structures and cultural institutions (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). Additionally, the African intellectual's mission should be to address colonialism as well as cultural alienation and estrangement which have been abound. Nkrumah had come to see African culture as the basis of African-centered education. He was disillusioned by the set-up of the University of Ghana, which he found was very much like Oxford and Cambridge universities, or "very much like the colonial

culture and he wanted to change it” (Botwe-Asamoah 2005:52). Never have the calls for a Pan-African University been so relevant because Pan-African universities can position African intellectuals as they enhance epistemic freedom, African Renaissance and Africanization. Nabudere (2003), argues that the Pan-African education institutions with new African-based epistemologies should enable students and adult learners the opportunity to acquire and produce new knowledge in the context of the African condition and the planetary environment in which they exist.

Eurocentrism has brought with its academic barbarity in the African academy which has twisted the ontological foundations of education and negatively influenced the role of education. In Africa academic barbarism includes entrenched inequalities as a result of colonialism and apartheid. From the early conquest of the African university, universities in Africa have always been perpetuating inequality and the myth of the might of the empire. In Africa, three trajectories of decolonization are discernible. The first is political decolonization, which Nkrumah articulated in terms of seeking the political kingdom. The second is economic decolonization which was expressed in terms of seeking a new international economic order (NIEO) and various African development plans such as the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the New Partnership for African development (NEPAD). The third is epistemological decolonization which is today represented by such movements as the *Rhodes Must Fall* and *Fees Must Fall* Movements in South Africa (Mamdani 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). While Nkrumah initially thought that attainment of political kingdom was the essential pre-requisite for all other freedoms by 1965 he realized that there was what he termed ‘neo-colonialism’ which compromised African political independence as long as African economies remained chained to imperatives of erstwhile European empires (Nkrumah, 1965). Even though political, economic and epistemological decolonization were inextricably intertwined, seeking epistemic freedom remains primary because ‘ontology is made of epistemology’ and it is through knowledge that history, politics and economics ‘are conceived, perceived, sensed and described’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018:135).

## RE-AFRICANIZING THE UNIVERSITY

It sounds like a huge paradox that in Africa we must debate the re-Africanization of the university. In his book *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) writes of the continued search for African universities that should replace the current “Universities in Africa”. Mazrui (2003) highlights the symbiotic relationship that ought to be evident between the university and the society where it is

situated. “No university is ever able to help develop a society unless the society is first ready to help develop the university” (Mazrui 2003, 135). Back in 1961, Nyerere was talking about the University of Tanganyika when he pointed out that there was a need to build nationhood, as African universities nurtured own educated citizens. He also declared that it was critical for Africa to create own African-oriented education which is not delivered in Africa but also directed at meeting the current African needs. To show this urgency at the time, Nyerere affirmed (1970: 130-131):

We are in the process of building up a Tanganyika nation. Valuable as is the contribution which overseas education can give us, in the long run, if we are to build up a sturdy sense of nationhood...For, while other people can aim at reaching the moon, and while in future we might aim at reaching the moon, our present plans must be directed at reaching the villages.

If African intellectuals can begin with this notion, they can embolden the role of intellectuals in building African communities. Africanization is built on pan African ideals and when Ali Mazrui traces the origins of pan-Africanism, he found that these are intertwined with modern intellectualism (Mazrui, 2005). Mazrui explains that we cannot achieve pan-Africanism without the intellectualization of the African condition. M’baye (2010:1) argues that the term pan-Africanism illustrates an intellectual tradition and a political movement “which examines the relationships among the history, literature, and cultures of Blacks in Africa and the Diaspora. In building a truly effective university, Mazrui (2003) talks of the need for the university to be cognisant of three relationships and these can be found to be useful for Africanized institutions of higher learning in the Global South:

- i. University to be politically distant from the state;
- ii. University to be culturally close to society and
- iii. University to be intellectually linked to wider scholarly values of the world of learning.

Furthermore, Mazrui, like Nyerere and Nkrumah above has decried the way in which the African university has been a conduit of western culture. Mazrui (2003:142) notes:

The original colonial university was so uncompromisingly foreign in an African context, and was transplanted with few concessions to African cultures, its impact was more culturally alienating than it need have been. A whole generation of African graduates grew up despising their own ancestry, and scrambling to

imitate the West. Those early African graduates who have later become university teachers themselves have on the whole remained intellectual imitators and disciples of the West.

It is because of this dependency upon the West that over the decades African intellectuals decided to take on the baton from the 1960s and start reviving the dream of Africanized higher education institutions. The call to Africanize higher education institutions is a call to end dependency on Western agenda and cultural decolonization will bring genuine growth in this regard. The recent student movements in South Africa, which operated in 2015 and 2016 starting at the University of Cape Town where they said Rhodes Must Fall referring to the mining magnate and colonialist Cecil John Rhodes whose effigy, stood at the centre of the University. Yet the call became more than the call of falling the statue, the statue was a representation of colonialism and alienation in a university in Africa. The removal of the statue represented the removal of immense challenges that thwart the universities in Africa. Africanizing education means after removing Rhodes, the patronizing education of the Empire, which dehumanizes will be removed. Yet Africanization does not merely bring back indigenous languages in the curriculum or symbolic breaking with neo-colonialism. It should go further and transform the consciousness of those involved in African higher education. Africanization includes the changing of consciousness. There can be no intelligentsia that supports Africanization when their minds remain in the terrain of the colonizer. The intelligentsia who are manacled in their minds but proclaim to lead through Africanization will mislead the people.

Africanization in Africa is about addressing many of these challenges, which tend to delay the progress of the African. Mazrui (1973) talks of dependency on Europe as well as cultural schizophrenia, which refuse to leave the African consciousness. Today the higher education institutions delay decolonizing and Africanizing because many do not see success outside the model of the colony. Academics, administrators, students and many other education's stakeholders have succumbed to acculturation in Africa. Africanized education needs to combat this detrimental acculturation. Mazrui (1973:106) contends:

The process of acculturation in Africa has resulted in the crisis of psychological inadequacy, sometimes manifesting itself in indiscriminate imitation of Western culture, sometimes emerging in the form of aggressive hostility toward that dominant culture. Both cultural aggression and cultural imitation in contemporary African conditions could be symptoms of an inner dependency complex still struggling with itself.

When intellectuals are in these throes of colonialism, they

will not be able to redeem education from Eurocentric tentacles. Sebola and Mogoboya (2020) argue that a consummate higher education institution will be a hub of Afrocentric knowledge production and this will be reflected by both theory and practise. Re Africanization of the intellectual in Africa can be the solution in shedding the psychological inadequacy as intellectuals move towards Africanized higher education institutions. Prah (2017) in his forthright presentation, *Has Rhodes Fallen?* Uses two concepts and finds nearness between them and they are, *Africanism* and *Africanization*. Prah describes Africanism, as a project of the development of the mass society thus cantering the African culture for development is critical. Furthermore, Prah argues that Africanization needs Africanism and if Africanization does not have cultural reinforcement, it is hollow and would not produce sustained development. Frequently, the Project of Africanization is question and eyes with suspicion by intellectuals including black professors. Prah (2017:3) points out:

Ultimately, what I am saying is that it is possible to have black professors who continue with substantially much of the same or similar pedagogical and epistemologically defective offering that was extended to students under the settler-colonial system. All said, much of our approaches to education in Africa today continue to be deeply marked by the colonial heritage; with the Eurocentric biases which are made to pass as universal knowledge. Too often, without question, we accept Eurocentric cultural hegemony, and a disconnection between contents and local needs. The intimidating question we face as academics in Africa today is, "how do we decolonize the academic enterprise; how do we indigenize knowledge production; how do we usefully domesticate knowledge and its production?"

The epistemological revival that will introduce Africanization needs new intellectual traditions. The movement towards Africanization ought to be planned well by conscientious intellectuals who will realize that epistemologies in Africa cannot be dominated by Western hegemony whilst the African knowledges are marginalized. Prah states that knowledge production about Africa and Africans must be situated in Africa and emphasizes that the Africanization journey can hardly take shape without the "relocation of African languages at the centre "of the movement forward.

#### **WHY AFRICANIZE THE UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA?**

When the MUSTFALLMOVEMENTS in South Africa

raised their voices in 2015 and 2016 their demands and intentions were very clear. Apart from fighting for accessibility and success the students were fighting for affordable university. With the rising costs of education and the unemployment of many parents the student took it in their hands to fight for a free education system hence hashtag #FeesMustFall. Started at the University of Witwatersrand this movement's influence soon spread and became known throughout the world. As it spread at the University of Cape Town there were calls to transform the South African university and abandon its Western hegemony as well as institutional racism. For decades the University of Cape Town has had the statue of Cecil John Rhodes the 19th century imperialist after whom the colonial Zimbabwe was named after, Rhodesia. The black students were opposed to the presence of the statue which represented colonialism, dispossession and imperial conquest. Its presence appeared to remind the students of the reluctance to transform the universities in Africa. The statue of Rhodes was eventually removed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2015. Soon there were call around the world to remove the statues that glorified colonialism and dispossession. In Rhodes' will there was a clear stipulation that called for:

the establishment, promotion and development of a Secret Society, the true aim and object whereof shall be for the extension of British rule throughout the world, the perfecting of a system of emigration from the United Kingdom, and of colonization by British subjects of all lands where the means of livelihood are attainable by energy, labour and enterprise, and especially the occupation by British settlers of the entire Continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the Valley of the Euphrates, the Islands of Cyprus and Candia, the whole of South America, the Islands of the Pacific not heretofore possessed by Great Britain, the whole of the Malay Archipelago, the seaboard of China and Japan ...

The calls by the students to remove the statue from the University of Cape Town was just beyond the call to remove the effigy of Rhodes but a struggle to end colonial institutions in Africa. Soon the students were calling for decolonization of university programs and the need to use indigenous languages as languages of academic discourse. The actions against the statue opened the debate and students posed questions against western hegemonic influences in education. They had strengthened debates that had been happening over the years. As witnessed above, from the 1960s new African independent states on Africanizing the higher education institutions in Africa.

From Africanization, the institutions of higher learning

need a huge epistemological pot that seeks to solidify and affirm the African experience. The leaders of the first independent African states were in search of an independent continent that would engage with the West from a position of strength, "an African position." The epistemological pot will only burn if it is fed with fire and that would be intellectualism. Without the fire the contents of the pot will remain raw. To sustain African universities, the passion and the fire of intellectualism should be stimulated and provoked persistently. When the apartheid government in South Africa assumed power in the 1950s, they obscured intellectualism while promoting docility. The apartheid universities were divided according to tribal and colour lines. The academic IB Tabata (1980) referred to education of the time as education for barbarism. Intellectuals in South Africa were deadened by this barbarism. Divisive, racial and tribal education foisted Western hegemony and apartheid ideologies thus numbing intellectualism. The calls for Africanization of higher education institutions were widespread throughout Africa as a clarion for liberated universities. However, the Africanization project lost much of its impetus as independent African states fell after several military coup d'états. Furthermore, a few African states went through experiences of political and economic instability (Fredua-Kwarteng & Ofosu, 2018). The African university needs to be able to lead in social transformation for the nation as it experiments with research, scholarship and community engagement that would be meaningful to Africans.

There are several aspects highlighted by researchers as to what makes an African university. All have highlighted the need for the institutions to enhance African development as they drive African knowledges ensuring the interconnectedness of indigenous epistemologies with those that come from outside Africa. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) has reiterated how Africa needs to transform the idea of a university and he posits that this transformation would never occur until there is epistemological decolonization and decolonial pedagogy. Furthermore, Ndlovu-Gatsheni maintains that transforming the idea of the university should include addressing culturecidés (killing of cultures), historicidés (killing of history), linguicidés (killing of languages) and epistemicidés (killing of knowledge). In embracing these, Africanization needs to embrace diversity and avoid producing "pure intellectuals" and these are detached from their society. Pure intellectuals may form a different class and society may end up differentiating between those who are manual workers and those who are thinkers. Totemeyer (1987) cites Ali Mazrui who contends that a university in Africa can become intellectually monopolistic instead of being multi-ideological terrain. Mazrui, like Nyerere sought to see intellectuals who have respect for diversity as well as some level of autonomy Totemeyer (1987). With these ideas in practise the African university should reflect three

important factors: relevance, reawakening and revival.

## RELEVANCE

From the beginning when the concept was used for the first time there was an imperative that it should reflect relevance. Several academics over the past decades have argued that for social transformation to occur in Africa, the institutions of education must address the idea of relevant education (Nkrumah, 1965; Nyerere, 1970; Fafunwa, 1974; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Fafunwa (1974) highlights the need for the university in Africa to re-orient the staff and conduct research that would benefit the African people. Fafunwa goes on to argue that the country's challenges cannot be left to chance of the Western institutions hence the fight against ignorance, disease and poverty in Africa should be a concern of all intellectuals. In a speech entitled, "The African Genius" Kwame Nkrumah reflected these ideas as he posited that academics should adjust and reorient their attitudes and thoughts to African conditions and aspirations (Nkrumah, 1979). In his speech Nkrumah was conscious of the changing nature of society hence he stated that institutions of higher learning should reflect the changing societal needs. This then means the changing university will be reflected in its scholarship, its research as well as teaching. Therefore, the role of education to Nkrumah is that it should stand for communal good as it improves communities' development.

## REAWAKENING /RENAISSANCE IN KNOWLEDGE

The reawakening of knowledge in higher education in African refers to the education philosophies that include the indigenous knowledges. Catherine Odora-Hoppers (2001) defines the concept indigenous as referring to the root of things; something natural to a culture. The call for the revival of recognition of IKS is much linked to the need to heed the call of African Renaissance. Berte Van Wyk and Phillip Higgs (2004) argue that what is meant by an African Renaissance in educational discourse is founded on the perception that overall character of much educational theory and practice is overwhelmingly either European or Eurocentric. Furthermore, these writers aver that advocates of an African Renaissance in educational discourse have argued that much of what is taken for education in Africa is in fact not African, but rather a reflection of Europe in Africa. The IKS embedded in African philosophy and the spirit of African Renaissance is crucial for development and learning in African classrooms today. Bitzer and Menkveld (2004) cite Easton, Nikiema and Essama who reported an increased understanding of the various meanings and applications of indigenous knowledge in community development – they highlight

three such areas of understanding; firstly, indigenous knowledge of communities should be conserved and respected, since it represents the accumulated (usually undocumented) wisdom of generations of people living and thriving in a particular community or context; secondly, indigenous knowledge embodies a different-and in their case a distinctly African-mode of thought that might be useful in view of the failure of most current methodologies of development; thirdly indigenous knowledge provides a means and process for the articulation of what local people know while involving them in the creation of the knowledge required for development.

Seepe (2004:10) contends that Africanization and the promotion of IKS demands a re-examination of history, "the interrogation of cultural symbols and the re-configuration of models of intellectual emulation. This process cannot be achieved without critiquing, engaging and analysing values, assumptions, ideologies and interests embedded and reflected in the bodies of knowledge in institutions of learning". The curriculum needs to reflect positive references to Africa. In South Africa, apartheid education's mission was to produce docile and subservient blacks. Seepe (2004) contends that a radical restructuring of education in Africa which makes education relevant to African challenges cannot be complete without significant and serious consideration of the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). This is an educational challenge to all Africans who aspire for the Africanization of knowledge. Furthermore, Seepe states that this educational challenge is not hard to understand considering that it is through education that values, cultural norms and the beliefs of a society are reproduced.

## REVIVAL – INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGIES, CULTURE, LANGUAGE

The revival of the university speaks to the new identity, the new postcolonial image of the university that needs to be engendered. Nothing will be achieved by intellectuals transforming a university if they cannot revive the spirit or the identity of a university. Rethinking of the university forms a huge part of the revival of the university but there is also the rehumanization and revamping programs. Colonial barbarism borne by colonial legacy has destroyed the university in Africa hence the need for reAfricanization and new trajectories. Apart from curriculum, general scholarship and epistemologies universities need to revive African languages. Without African languages there can be no true revival. Hountondji (1983) points out that it will always be a challenge to communicate African philosophies through languages that are not African. As seen above the African languages are at the centre of reviving the African in universities in Africa. The African languages are the soul

and identity of the university. No institutional cultures could be transformed without talking to the soul of the university. Over the decades the university has been made to believe that epistemic violence, elitism, inequality, domination, culturecides, linguicides, historicides are all legitimate aspects of the university; to portray the might of the empire. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) traces the origins of the University of Africa from the first African universities. University of Qarawiyyin (in Morocco), University of Timbuktu (in Mali) were African universities that were tainted by the epistemic violence to become mere universities in Africa with evident European domination in teaching, research and language. The struggle to rethink universities is a historical fact and the cornerstone of decolonizing the university in Africa. It has been a long road to try shed the barbarity of the university in Africa and the epistemic violence that lead to deafness. Throughout the continent we have examples of the university has been used to serve the barbarity of the state and perpetuate social injustices. The paradox of the university in Africa is that it was built to continue the colonial or apartheid project whilst continuing with subliminal project to dominate. The university's role was to educate men who would continue to uphold the whims of the empire and the British image. The idea was also to build "an honest administration, capable of utilizing modern science and technology to sink shafts of modernity deep into traditional African societies. In short, the foundation of such universities as Ibadan and Legon was part of a British strategy for gradual and controlled decolonization (Hargreaves 1973).

When planning the revival of an African university intellectuals should embolden several aspects that reflect freedom and human hood of African people. Scholarship, research and the curriculum should invigorate the African personality which is fundamental in an Africanized environment. Kwame Nkrumah (1970) raised the importance of Pan Africanism and the need to develop the African Personality. The African identity and personality were obscured by colonialism in the decades of conquest. Nkrumah points out that the African personality ignites the consciousness and unites Africans with their historical past and culture. Tobe able to develop and sustain an African university it is necessary to embrace these Pan Africanist ideals that liberate and humanize. Nkrumah's desire to humanize the Africans and their institutions through fostering cultural personality thus reviving the dislocated African Botwe-Asamoah (2005). Botwe-Asamoah (2005:8) opines, "Nkrumah saw the need for resurgence in African culture and personality and the creation of institutions that would give expressions to the intrinsic values of Africa". The Africanized University is one of the ways in which the African regains the African personality eroded by European hegemony. Intellectuals in African universities without this personality will be against the vision to liberate and affirm the African history, culture and epistemologies.

African higher education institutions that are not part of history and African struggles will be divorced from African realities. It was for these reasons that Nkrumah pursued Africanization program for Ghanaian institutions. His call for an African-centred education was a call to strengthen the consciousness and revival of cultural personality.

Three factors are important in revival of the Africa higher education institution and all these are linked. Academic freedom, student freedom and interconnectedness. The Must Fall Movements in 2015/16 in South Africa raised several factors and among these were student freedom which had an impact on academic freedom. Many conscientious university teachers linked this to the project of Africanization and indigenization of knowledge. There was a conscious decision to exclude knowledge that demeans and dehumanizes. The Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa (CODESRIA, 1990) highlighted the need for African intellectuals to enjoy freedom of movement as they grow as intellectuals. Nyamjoh (2015) also argues that for CODESRIA academic freedom demands autonomy of thought and practice "at the service of knowledge production on the African condition and of relevance to African predicaments. Academic freedom in institutions determines what is to be taught and which students will be part of the his/her education institutions (Mazrui, 1975). Furthermore, Mazrui (1975:393) refers to academic freedom as encompassing freedom of expression for lecturers and their students "as a necessary intellectual infrastructure for mental development and intellectual creativity."

## **RESEARCH, CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY THAT SUPPORTS AFRICANIZATION**

Transformed curricula require people who understand the need for epistemic freedom which means that knowledge should be open in what is referred to as ecologies of knowledge. The Europeanization of curriculum was intent on side-lining Africa's knowledges and disregard indigenization. Curriculum that does not take this into cognisance will be missing the mandate of the university under decolonization of universities in Africa. When leaders lead curriculum transformation, they cannot divorce it from pedagogy. Usually in institutions of higher learning faculty tends to recycle old study materials and as such one will still find material that was prepared years before still in use albeit so irrelevant especially now, in times of transformation. Again, this is the unfairness, the academic barbarity of institutions of higher learning. There are quite a number of aspects that we need to look at as we address the epistemes of higher learning in our institutions of higher learning especially in the attempt to build an African university, an enormous but necessary step away from the university in Africa. The curriculum

should respond to the debates on language, a debate that has become almost a taboo in higher education institutions seeking to transform. Throughout Africa conscientious academics have been posing questions on how to bring indigenous languages to the fore. Some African philosophers have argued that without language African thinkers cannot be able to accurately move for their case thinking in exoglossic languages outside their own cultures. Linked to languages is culture; when Western or European knowledges were introduced, they destroyed the cultures of Africans through the domination of non-indigenous languages. It is very difficult to think of a transformed curriculum without thinking about language. However, it should be clear that translating higher education's materials is not addressing language dilemma. Simply replacing languages is also not addressing the language dilemma. Decolonization is not about vengeance, but it is about consciously bringing Africa to the centre, it is about changing the consciousness, enriching the people with skills of reclaiming the higher education institutions.

Important in the debates about indigenizing and decolonizing higher education is the process of doing this. Transforming the curriculum does mean tinkering with the current curricula, it does not mean microwaving what we already have. Decolonization of the curriculum means an overhaul of the curriculum as we have it today. Being tied to pedagogy, it means changing how we teach and how we learn. The present curricula tend to emphasize elitism and examinations frequently disregarding knowledge. The students have internalized this as well. Understanding a decolonized curricula requires people who can grasp knowledge of their disciplines. Decolonized curricula are more rigorous and more determined to liberate the student and the teacher. The classes need to be more liberating and more critical and conscientious. We need to understand the role of the teacher and the role of the student, teaching strategies utilized. There is a difference between the traditional approaches and the new decolonial or transformative approaches. Reading the texts should be investigated as the student and the teacher's experience is enhanced.

If the 1960s were the times of trying to be in the game through Africanization, then the present times are about decolonization which is about learning the rules of the game. Many of us got into the game in the 1960s by playing through somebody else's rules. This was the excitement of freedom, Nyerere spoke of *Ujamaa*, Kaunda spoke of *African Humanism* and Nkrumah popularized his *Conscientism* or *Nkrumaism*. We cannot ignore the ideas of these thinkers because their ideas embraced the Pan-African ideals that the new decolonized curriculum should include. At this day, curriculum that does not include ideals about relevant education would be missing the point of transformation of higher education that seeks to drive

breaking the shackles of epistemic bondage. The decolonized curricula seek to inform the curriculum and bring epistemic freedom as we try to bring Africa to the centre. The new curriculum cannot overlook the indigenous knowledge systems. It is also farcical to think that there are fields that cannot be decolonized, I have heard colleagues asks in a farcical and sceptical fashion as to how can one decolonize pure sciences or even accounting. There are critical areas in introducing a decolonize curricula. Amongst the most important here is the consciousness and re-education. Igniting consciousness means ensuring that people see the need to transform and this is beyond the definition of terms. There has been a tendency to think that people understand the transformation path when they master terms. This is the reason why people may miss the objective of curriculum change.

## RETHINKING THINKING

The Decolonial debates have unmasked several aspects that were concealed and many deliberately. As we discuss new curricula, transformative pedagogies and novel methods in a decolonial milieu we all need to think about the need to rethink the university into the future. The transformative pedagogies can never be realized if we cannot focus on how we look at thinking itself. In fact, decolonization will be unreachable without thinking about thinking and how we look at systems that would rehumanize and bring life and social justice to education. Ronald Barnett and Soren Bengsten (2017) speak of a need for universities to refocus on epistemologies as they adjust their emphasis on pathways from a dissolution of knowledge to the emergence of new thinking. And as demonstrated in this presentation Barnett and Bengsten have highlighted that there is a relationship between the university and knowledge. These authors also offer the idea of an ecological university which they present as an optimistic university which might offer a different way of thinking. This ecological optimistic university is responds to at least seven ecosystems; knowledge, the economy, social institutions, learning, individual persons, culture, and the natural environment (Barnett & Bengsten 2017). The university that has undergone rethinking exists not only for local ontologies, but it seeks inclusion of various epistemologies; it seeks to reflect the ecosystems of the world. The "new university has to be different from its entrepreneur counterparts. Barnett and Bengsten (2017:10) contend:

...knowledge can only be retained for the university—as a defining concept—if it is rethought. Accordingly, thinking itself and a new way of thinking the university at that, has itself to come forward for consideration;

and a thinking into the future and for the future.

It may just be that the idea of the ecological university both furnishes a new way of understanding the university and of calling forth a new epistemology for the university that can serve it through the 21st century.

In Africa the rethinking of the universities can be traced back to the colonial legacy. The university in Africa continues to rethink its role that has long been diluted by colonial and apartheid hegemonies. Rethinking thinking in Africa means dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism (Heleta 2016). Furthermore, Heleta points out that although direct colonial rule might have disappeared colonialism pervades in various guises; furthermore, universities need to completely rethink, reframe the curriculum and the pedagogy discussed above. Thus, leading to the reconstruction of the curriculum. "This in no way means that decolonization will lead to localization, isolation or only Africanization of the curriculum. Africa will not be the only 'focus of the curriculum in the ethnocentric-particularist manner of [*the current*] Eurocentric approaches'" (Heleta 2016: 5). Rethinking of the curriculum means thinking broadly about the planetary nature of the curriculum. It means rethinking ways in which African knowledges can compete equally with the knowledges of the world.

To decolonize teaching and learning entails consistently and systematically 'rethinking thinking' itself and even 'unthink' some inherited ideas, theories, and concepts. Cathrine Odora-Hoppers and Howard Richards (2012:8) defined 'rethinking thinking' as:

The casting of light at last onto subjugated peoples, knowledges, histories and ways of living unsettles the toxic pond and transforms passive analysis into a generative force that valorizes and recreates life for those previously museumized.

Rethinking thinking is directly linked with the difficult but necessary decolonial move of learning to unlearn in order to re-learn. Missionary and colonial education has taught black African distortions including negative perceptions of themselves and the African Continent. At another level, the forcible imposition of colonial languages such as French and English as languages of teaching and learning created an impression that their mastery is a sign of being intelligent. Consequently, many formally educated African people distanced themselves from their indigenous African languages and ancestors whom the Christian missionaries disparaged as 'demons'. This harm that was imposed on African people cannot be reversed unless the African

people deliberately embark on the painstaking process of 'learning it in order to re-learn'. Tlostanova and Mignolo in their book, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* (2012:7) defined 'learning to unlearn' as 'to forget what we have been taught, to break free from the thinking programs imposed on us by education, culture, and social environment, always marked by the Western imperial reason'. Decolonial pedagogy must facilitate this unique pedagogy of unlearning as part of decolonization.

## CONCLUSION

The Africans continue to plod on in search of relevance and epistemic freedom. As coloniality persists in the corridors of power, in institutions and in society. We cannot change institutions of higher learning only and success will be attained when the society defeats the epistemological violence as well. Epistemological decolonization is expected to deliver a new university that is free from the triple crises; crisis of hegemony, crisis of legitimacy and institutional crisis. At least six features of such a university are discernible: a site of multilingualism in which African indigenous languages are used for teaching and learning; a site of cognitive/social justice which fully embraced the idea that all human beings are born into a valid and legitimate knowledge system; a site of 'ecologies of knowledges' where pluralities of knowledges compete and reinforce each other; socially responsive institution that is intolerant of epistemicides, linguicides and cultural imperialism; a re-capitalized institution in which even those without money have access to education: where education is a right rather than a privilege, of the few; and a thoroughly decolonized, detribalized, deracialized, de-patriarchized and de-corporatized home for everyone.

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