The Contemporary Politics of Knowledge Systems: A Critical Reflection through the Decolonisation Lens

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Abstract. This reflection piece critiques the contemporary politics of knowledge systems, exploring the contestations of power dynamics between hegemonic and marginalised knowledge systems and the decolonisation of the curriculum. Societies or economies are anchored by production, distribution, and consumption systems, fundamentally and historically shaped by power and contestations. Notably, colonialism and modern knowledge systems displaced and marginalised local and indigenous knowledge systems in favour of industrialisation and market-oriented economies. We believe pre-colonial African systems harmonise human and ecological values, whereas post-colonial policies tend to prioritise modernisation. However, hegemonic (modern) knowledge systems' dominance displays significant flaws, including ecological imbalance, sustainability issues, and social inequality, among other societal ills. These contemporary challenges not only pose a threat to humanity but also to planetary health. On the other hand, the local and indigenous knowledge systems resemble local development, historical profundity, and adaptability, which offer a sustainable alternative to hegemonic knowledge paradigms rooted in local ecologies and long-standing innovation. An epistemological critique of the hegemonic knowledge systems is a necessary battle to harness local and indigenous knowledge systems effectively. The need to document and preserve local and indigenous knowledge forms systematically while integrating them with modern technologies where possible and developing supportive policies is paramount. Again, engaging local communities will be critical to incorporating local and indigenous knowledge systems and providing education to ensure local knowledge transmission. Further research and innovation should focus on local and indigenous knowledge systems' contemporary challenges and opportunities, including market opportunities for local and indigenous knowledge systems-based products and services to warrant economic sustainability. Addressing inherent social inequalities within local and indigenous knowledge systems and fostering collective grassroots movements are essential for their comprehensive integration. Again, decolonisation of the curriculum will be vital to unlocking the potential of local and indigenous knowledge systems.

Keywords: Ecological Balance, Knowledge Economies, Modernisation, Sustainable Development.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background and context

Knowledge refers to awareness, experiences and world understanding [1]. Knowledge can be acquired through formal education, social interaction and communication, experiences and practices, observation and culture. It involves facts, information, and skills acquired by a person understood and believed to be true and often overlaps with memory and intelligence in complex ways. In different communities or societies, knowledge systems – a structured framework or processes influence the collection, organisation, analysis and sharing of knowledge [2]. Therefore, advancing knowledge systems involves a rich educational foundation or curriculum. This premise brings in the long-standing debate on curriculum. Booyse & Du Plessis [3:2] broadly define curriculum as "all the learning that is planned and guided as a body of knowledge in order to achieve certain ends (outcomes) in a teaching-learning process as realised in praxis." However, the term curriculum has different meanings or views for different people, contexts (background), and experiences. Generally, a common understanding would be about what the description includes or excludes. As cited in Booyse and Du Plessis [3:2], Eisner depicts curriculum "as a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more learners." Yet, Fraser, cited in Booyse and Du Plessis [3:3], provides an extended view of curriculum as "the inter-related totality of aims, learning content, evaluation procedures and teaching-learning activities, opportunities and experiences that guide and implement didactic activities in a planned and justified manner." It is pretty evident with an array of literature that new working definitions of curriculum, continue to emerge. These definitions do not emerge from academic scholars only, but "every pedagogue, parent, pundit, policy maker and politician has one too" [4:2]. The varied definitions of curriculum reflect diverse vantage points, philosophies and foci concerning the connection between knowledge and society. Knowledge and its systems are not without politics. Indeed, Banerjee [5] asserts that knowledge constitutes philosophical constructions contested in society and the economy in the domains of historical perspective, national sovereignty, markets, and collective action. In today's modern economies, critical concerns are being raised about the hegemonic (dominant) knowledge systems that are not sustainable and showing faulty lines of inequalities and ecological imbalances mainly driven by the markets and the Eurocentric views [6; 7]. A review of the hegemonic knowledge systems alongside the decolonisation discourses, especially for Africa post-colonial times, is apparent to integrate indigenous or local knowledge systems or perspectives into global knowledge frameworks.

Higher education (HE) often is seen as the microcosm of society. In that regard, the HE sector plays a critical role in the politics of knowledge systems, primarily in creating, validating, and disseminating knowledge. Therefore, universities and other HE institutions influence research through funding, whose perspectives are amplified or marginalised, and how knowledge is structured and taught, ultimately shaping societal norms and power structures. This paper critiques the contemporary politics of knowledge systems, exploring the contestations of power dynamics between hege-

monic and marginalised knowledge systems through the lens of decolonisation and transformation, drawing insights from the literature, practice and experiences. The paper's rationale is to unveil the inherent power dynamics and how they shape inequalities in local and indigenous knowledge systems, emanating from dormant knowledge systems (production and dissemination), enacted information controls and how they suppress the perspectives of the marginalised. A critical reflection on the politics of knowledge is paramount to fostering inclusive and equitable knowledge systems, diverse perspectives, and a more accurate reflection of global realities. To achieve the paper's broad objective, we explain the different types of knowledge systems, briefly, unpack the decolonisation and transformation movement within the HE sector through equity and redress in South Africa, demonstrate the need to decolonise the dominant knowledge systems and revitalise the local and indigenous knowledge systems and offer some insights on how to effectively revitalise local and indigenous knowledge systems broadly at macro-level. Lastly, we discuss some thoughts on incorporating local and indigenous knowledge systems, emphasising the decolonisation of the curriculum in the context of HE in South Africa.

2   The different types of knowledge systems

Knowledge systems can be classified into, for example, scientific, local existing, and indigenous frameworks with varying methodologies and epistemologies. Scientific knowledge systems typically emphasise empirical evidence and reproducibility and, in most cases, incorporate various methods and discipline-specific approaches. Scientific knowledge systems claim to be objective, produce universal truth and often have marginalised other forms of knowledge because of their rigid frameworks [8]. The criticism of scientific knowledge stems from its biased exclusivity and the marginalisation of alternative epistemologies. In the main, scientific knowledge systems value empirical and quantifiable data, dismissing or lessening the power of rich, qualitative insights from indigenous and local knowledge systems. The dominance of scientific knowledge systems has often perpetuated power imbalances anchored in Western paradigms that have shaped global research agendas and policies overlooking diverse, rich cultural contexts. Arguably, the commodification of knowledge resonates with scientific knowledge systems, such as patents and proprietary access to knowledge restrictions, which tend to benefit a few, further entrenching inequalities [9].

On the contrary, local existing knowledge systems are culturally situated in practical, lived experiences and action-oriented recognition to respond to constantly changing social and natural environments [10]. Local existing knowledge provides rich insights into sustainable practices and environmental stewardship [11]. Again, indigenous knowledge systems deeply resemble the cultural heritage and native traditions, often holistic to understanding and connecting with the natural world, yet often suppressed by the dominant scientific paradigms [12; 13]. Therefore, it is critical to recognise and integrate diverse knowledge systems to provide a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to emerging and complex global challenges. Indeed, Gómez-

Baggethun [14] states that indigenous and local knowledge epistemologies are extending attention to science, policy-making and the political landscape.

A critique of the impact of colonialism in disrupting local and indigenous knowledge systems, resulting in the undermining and displacement of traditional practices and wisdom with Western scientific paradigms, is presented by Parashar & Schulz [15]. The historical suppression arguably highlights the contemporary issues and challenges of epistemic injustice, where the local and indigenous perspectives were marginalised in societies, including academia and policy-making. Landström [16] argues that epistemic injustice and oppression suppress epistemic freedom that encompasses epistemic endeavours, ways to attain them, and meaningfully participate in collective action to redress and overcome the epistemic oppression brought by coloniality. If not arrested, the situation further perpetuates socio-economic disparities for achieving inclusive and equitable development. Addressing the epistemic injustices, therefore, would require a concerted effort to decolonise knowledge systems and empower local and indigenous communities in knowledge production and dissemination.

3   The decolonisation and transformation move of the higher education sector through equity and redress

The most challenging dilemma is how society is well positioned in the fast-paced, changing world and the twenty-first century, which relies heavily on knowledge economies. In the context of the HE sector, South Africa post-1994, the period has been followed by the euphoria of transforming and rebuilding significant institutions, including the HE sector, in addressing enormous societal ills such as inequality and poverty through widening participation and responsiveness to the socio-economic needs [17]. Since then, the government of South Africa began efforts to overhaul the disjointed and unequal apartheid education system to enact an effective role of education in contributing to the economy, thus reducing social disparities [18]. Access to HE is crucial in determining social and economic opportunities. Equally important is the race and gender disparities in the labour market and its relationship to qualifications. The gap in employment trends in South Africa between non-Africans and Africans generally explains the differing access to education and HE. Evidence shows that many African students mainly gain access to HE through distance education [19]. Another challenge is that although African students have increased in HE institutions, they primarily remain in the humanities, with fewer enrolment (mainly women) students in science, engineering and technology, business/ commerce and postgraduate studies. Although efforts are being made to address equity and redress, gender equity remains problematic [19].

Hay & Monnapula-Mapesela [20] point out that several academics in the HE sector feel frustrated and powerless because of the complexities of the contexts in which they work. Indeed, a decolonisation policy becomes crucial in the HE sector as it steers and influences the operations of universities. Torres Rivera [21] refers to decolonisation as deconstructing colonial ideas and systems, thus reclaiming and re-

enacting indigenous knowledge systems to attain intellectual sovereignty and equity in local cultures and society, including the educational domains. For example, when South Africa entered a new dawn of democracy in 1994, the HE sector and other critical areas received immense attention for transformation [20; 22; 23]. This move is also evident in many African universities undergoing significant transformations or contextual changes following a period of colonial liberation. Hay and Monnapula-Mapesela [20] state that over 30 HE policy initiatives were promulgated post-1994 in South Africa. This shift in policy has seen a rise in significant trends that include widening and diversifying teaching and learning, heterogeneity, the integration of information technology, governance and finance systems, and the rethinking of graduate competency [24]. Additionally, the increasing demand for accountability and the interconnectedness of global networks, student mobility, partnerships, and inter-agency collaboration within the conceptions of Internationalisation or globalisation have become more common [25].

However, despite the voluminous nature of the HE policy amalgamation in South Africa, it is arguable that in some cases, there has been a lack of clarity concerning implementation, coordinating bodies, and the assumption that institutions and academics have sufficient capability to support and thus implement the policies. This challenge has and continues to impede stagnation in HE policy implementation, as noted by Hay & Monnapula-Mapesela [20]. Nonetheless, Blamey & Mackenzie [26] contend that despite the slow policy process, the cumulative benefits are significant over time.

4   Why decolonise the dominant knowledge systems and revitalise the local and indigenous knowledge systems?

Ndlovu-Gatsheni [27] argues that the 21st-century battle is an "epistemic one" in which Africa's encounter with colonialism needs a restorative agenda that will tackle the ontological and epistemological issues that persist in Africa. In this view, a critique of hegemonic knowledge structures is necessary for sustainable alternatives. Because of the rich and complex interrelation between social, cultural and ecology, if the continued erasure of local and indigenous knowledge is left unchecked, the implication would be a grave threat to effective biodiversity conservation, especially in local community-based conservation efforts [28]. Local and indigenous knowledge systems offer a different epistemological approach to balancing both ecology and economy. Therefore, 21st-century politics and future development must integrate local and indigenous knowledge systems and practices for a sustainable future. Historical context is critical to understanding local and indigenous knowledge systems' material basis, evolution, and ecological balance. As already explained, the local and indigenous knowledge systems have, over time, been churned through structures of power and contestations. Through power and contestations, some knowledge systems, such as the scientific knowledge systems embedded in Western epistemologies, have become hegemonic (dominant) or overtaken the local and indigenous knowledge systems in favour of industrial efficiency. Therefore, power dynamics such as coloni-

sation brought a shift towards market-oriented economies. We argue that pre-colonial systems, for example, in Africa, tended to have a balanced approach to meeting human and ecological needs. Despite the post-colonial hegemonic (modern) knowledge systems and policies that have continued to prioritise modernisation over local and indigenous knowledge systems, they show fault lines where ecology and equity are neglected. This situation is unsustainable for the planet and a threat to humanity. Therefore, alternatives to hegemonic development paradigms are critical, and the solution already exists in the local and indigenous knowledge systems, which are locally developed based on local ecologies, adaptable and practised over time, demonstrating a rich history of innovation and adaptation by the natives.

5 Some thoughts to effectively incorporate local and indigenous knowledge systems at the macro-level

To effectively incorporate local and indigenous knowledge systems for sustainable production, consumption, and distribution in the knowledge systems, we discuss some ideas in the broader scheme of things.

5.1 The need to document and preserve local and indigenous knowledge systems

Buthelezi *et al.* [29] report that about 80% of Africans view indigenous knowledge, such as medicinal herbs or traditional healing methods, as solving many problems, whereas modern knowledge falls short. However, a gap in developing robust validation frameworks for indigenous knowledge systems is a concern. Therefore, HE institutions have a significant role in developing and documenting indigenous systems. This mandate could, for example, manifest through indigenous knowledge centres instituted by universities to document and disseminate it. Systematically documenting traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices will preserve them for future generations.

5.2 Interfacing local and indigenous knowledge systems with modern practices

Infusing local and indigenous knowledge with modern practices such as science and technology, where appropriate, could enhance their relevance and applicability. Local and indigenous knowledge systems are critical for maintaining the livelihoods of many local communities [30]. However, whether local and indigenous knowledge systems could provide a solution for the problems of the future remains uncertain. Prioritising local and indigenous knowledge does not necessarily mean doing away with modern/Western scientific knowledge. Instead, we believe that these knowledge systems could complement and not compete with each other. For example, scientific knowledge could be incorporated into local and indigenous knowledge systems in the process of decision and policy-making to supplement what is already known to the local indigenous communities.

5.3   Community engagement and education

Community engagement and education are paramount to engaging local communities in incorporating, promoting and preserving cultural knowledge, heritage and traditional practices [31]. To be effective, involving community members and leaders in educational initiatives and training would be vital, thus advancing a sense of ownership and pride. Additionally, infusing local and indigenous knowledge into formal education curricula could bridge the gap between traditional and scientific knowledge [32]. Community engagement is an inclusive approach pivotal for addressing epistemic injustices and enabling the recognition of diverse knowledge systems in contemporary society.

5.4   Research and innovation

Linked to our earlier point on the significance of documenting local and indigenous knowledge, there is a need to research further, innovate, and adapt it to contemporary challenges and opportunities. We strongly view research and innovation as presenting a robust platform for interfacing local and indigenous knowledge systems with modern scientific methods, which can foster mutual respect and collaboration. Further, research and innovation could help validate and preserve local and indigenous knowledge, thus making it recognised within the broader academic and policy frameworks [33]. Besides, research and innovative participatory approaches empower local and indigenous people to co-create knowledge, enhancing its impact and relevance and bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary epistemologies [34].

5.5   Market creation for local and indigenous knowledge products and services

Every society or economy thrives on producing and consuming goods and services with processing and value-adding in between. We believe that creating or developing a market for products and services based on local and indigenous knowledge products and services will guarantee economic sustainability and incentive for the continuity, preservation and transmission of traditional practices. This market incentive constitutes the cultural and practical benefits of locals and indigenous knowledge and embodies sustainable development by promoting local economies and livelihoods. A market demand for local and indigenous products and services could also initiate innovation, blending traditional techniques with modern methods to address contemporary challenges [35]. Further, the amalgamation of local and indigenous knowledge in economic transformation will earn it a spot and respect within global markets and policy frameworks.

5.6   Addressing social inequalities

Tackling inherent social inequalities is essential for advancing local and indigenous knowledge systems, as systemic disparities often disregard communities, including their knowledge contributions, causing a socio-economic crisis [36]. Addressing the

socio-economic inequalities creates a more inclusive and equitable platform for indigenous perspectives that ensures local and indigenous knowledge is respected and valued in broader academic and policy considerations. Again, it legitimises local and indigenous knowledge and empowers communities, fostering resilience and sustainable development. Addressing social inequalities also ties with dismantling historical injustices for a more just and diverse knowledge landscape.

5.7   Collective grassroots movements and social action

Collective action, grassroots movements, and social action are significant in integrating local and indigenous knowledge systems into mainstream economies. Grassroots movements and action tend to preserve and revitalise traditional practices and wisdom more effectively as they are community-driven. Grassroots movements are often authentic as they function outside of conventional institutional arrangements, allowing a direct representation of local and indigenous voices and priorities. Recently, indigenous people and communities have organised themselves nationally or globally as civic or activist movements to reclaim and preserve their culture, heritage and knowledge systems [14]. This movement is evident in various calls to challenge dominant knowledge paradigms and advocating for policy change that recognises local priorities and indigenous knowledge, for example, calls for land rights/ ownership, access and control to natural resources, autonomy and sovereignty, and the preservation of cultures, among others.

5.8   Massive policy support

Efforts to revitalise local and indigenous knowledge systems will require developing and implementing policies that recognise their value and support them in critical sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, education, and other vital sectors. Policy support is paramount to institutionalise the recognition and integration of local and indigenous knowledge forms within the national and international frameworks [37]. The policy support may involve making available funding, resources and legal frameworks that empower indigenous communities, thus safeguarding their intellectual property rights. Moreover, robust policy will encourage collaboration and amalgamation of scientific and indigenous knowledge systems, resulting in more inclusive and sustainable solutions to current and future global challenges. However, achieving a meaningful policy direction will need ongoing advocacy and active participation of indigenous voices in policy-making to incorporate diverse needs and perspectives.

6   Some thoughts on ways to incorporate local and indigenous knowledge systems through decolonisation of the curriculum lens

Following some relatively recent #FeesMustFall, institutional racism and Eurocentrism in universities, student protests or movement for change discourse is the decolo-

nisation of the curriculum [38]. Decolonising the curriculum has since become a slo-
gan and probably a demand of the day. There have been discussions and debates on
decolonising the curriculum, with almost every academic wanting to know what it
means. On the other hand, "Students themselves do not know what decolonising the
curriculum means; they do not know what they want." [38:3]. There seems to be no
straightforward meaning of decolonising the curriculum, but several scholars have
tried to unpack this discourse from different perspectives.

From an epistemological and knowledge systems view, Heleta [39] argues that
South African HE institutions arguably are entrenched in apartheid and colonial
(Western worldview). Heleta [39] indeed contends that the curriculum, therefore, is
mainly Eurocentric (reinforcing white monopoly capital). Heleta [39:1], hence, con-
tend that South Africa needs to "dismantle the epistemic violence and hegemony of
Eurocentrism, completely rethink, reframe and reconstruct the curriculum and place
South Africa, Southern Africa and Africa at the centre of teaching, learning and re-
search." Le Grange [40] explains decolonisation as transforming the university cur-
riculum, arguably a microcosm of and impetus for societal transformation. Chilisa,
cited in Le Grange [40], indicates that decolonisation entails five phases. The first
phase is rediscovery and recovery, where the colonised attempt to rediscover and
recover their culture, history, identity and language. The second phase involves
mourning, which entails lamenting the continuing assault on the oppressed peoples'
identity and social reality. The third phase entails dreaming – invoking the history,
worldviews, and indigenous knowledge systems as alternatives. The fourth phase is
commitment by intellectuals (academics and students) as political activists to give
voice for the colonised. Lastly is action, when dreams and commitments lead to social
transformation. Ndlovu-Gatsheni [41] mentions that students' view of decolonisation
entails altering the idea of a university to embrace the black consciousness principles
of Steve Biko and Franz Fanon's ideas of an African university from being a Western-
ised one. Mbembe [42] views decolonisation as synonymous with "Africanisation"
and the handover to native people of the unjust gains of the colonial era. Therefore,
the call for the decolonisation of the curriculum is varied, and it is not always based
on parallel concepts and ideologies. On one extreme, it is viewed on a broader grasp
of the curriculum (a fundamental dismantling of the nature and identity of a universi-
ty).

On the other hand, 'curriculum' is viewed as the content or knowledge taught, ne-
cessitating the Africanisation or indigenisation of the curriculum to be more meaning-
ful or relevant to students. A fundamental question arises: Is the curriculum's call for
changes and revisions educationally and socially genuine? With varied understanding
and perspectives on what decolonisation is, for this paper, we borrow the Council of
Higher Education (CHE) [43] view that the decolonisation of the curriculum is fun-
damentally grounded on radical questions such as its intended goal/ purpose, how it is
enacted, its evolution, relevance, and mostly whose curriculum it is and interest it
serves?

In the decolonisation discourse are questions like 'what does it mean to be a uni-
versity in Africa?' One answer to this question would be the concept of relevance,
relevance in the sense of what is being taught. South Africa, for instance, is a devel-

oping country, and most developing countries' primary sector is agriculture. It is essential to mention that the authors of this paper are agriculturalists. Therefore, some examples we give will be inclined or biased towards the agriculture curriculum. Besides this point, agriculture is central and key in advancing the transition from a traditional primitive society to a modern commercial one ideal for poverty alleviation and sustaining food security. Therefore, the decolonisation of the curriculum may imply using relevant local agricultural concepts and practical examples and reorienting the content to tackle local circumstances and problems. For example, the emphasis could shift from large-scale (commercial) farming to sustainable local small-scale farming enterprises.

Mitchell, cited in CHE [43:4], profoundly advances the curriculum content debate by stating that it needs to be more appropriate for its purpose, as argued by the international Rethinking Economics network (a network of students calling for curriculum change) that "an economics education that positions a plurality of economic theories within a historical context, applies these to the real world and emphasises an understanding of other social sciences, including the political and ethical dilemmas within economics". Decolonisation of the curriculum in the context and nature of the content of the curriculum, therefore, would imply infusing different economic schools of thought into the South African historical and political dilemmas.

The decolonisation proposition entails how students' learning needs are construed. This entails a shift from emphasising what is taught to apprehensions of how academic literacies are experienced (how knowledge is taught) to create meaning and understanding for students. Student learning is socially entrenched; thus, academic literacies are not value-neutral skills. Therefore, the realisation is that codes, meanings, norms, practices, and values of education and different disciplines be made explicit to students. Decolonisation of the curriculum, therefore, would require devotion to debugging and meaning-making of various epistemologies, allowing students to co-create knowledge instead of merely being on the receiving end.

Within the decolonisation discourse, there are questions like whose knowledge forms the curriculum? Who researches and teaches it? It can be argued that indigenous people have an authentic cultural history that is rich and material to the well-being of its people. Therefore, recognising authentic knowledge and history in HE curricula is fundamental. The current problem in African universities, as indicated by CHE [43:8], citing Ndofirepi, "the problems of aping and educational borrowing growing out of globalisation and the global forces for convergence to neo-liberal norms and competitiveness as enshrined in the global university rankings offer significant threats to values and cultural norms and the knowledges produced by African people…" In this view, the decolonisation of the curriculum may suggest tapping into the local indigenous knowledge to be part of the curriculum (including the content and teachers/ educators – for example, inviting indigenous knowledge experts as guest lecturers).

A shift in the understanding of knowledge and whose knowledge it is closely linked to the previously explained point. Underpinning the decolonisation arguments is the notion that challenges the Western scientific paradigms that posit the superiority of empirical and rigid ways of knowing at the expense of non-Western ways of learn-

ing and the subsequent downgrading of local and indigenous knowledge systems. It is opined that Westernised knowledge systems have enjoyed privilege in African universities. Therefore, decolonising formal education would involve accepting and finding other alternative ways of seeing the world, such as integrating the local indigenous knowledge systems into the curriculum. This integration, however, does not mean that decolonisation will lead only to localisation (Africanisation of the curriculum). The decolonised curriculum should not abandon other knowledge systems or global contexts, as universities must develop globally competent graduates prepared for the complex and connected world [39].

Changing how learning is assessed is another cited aspect of decolonisation. Here, the concern is the alienation of South African students from the content taught, whereby it does not narrate lived, real-world experiences and the practicality of the knowledge developed in solving the contemporary South African challenges such as poverty alleviation, addressing inequality and the development of the economy. One way of addressing this mismatch can be through assessment. Assessment in education is essential for student learning and societies at large [44]. Decolonising the curriculum would imply challenging the current assessment practices in place, such as student examinations that are merely continuous and more formative and problem-based learning designed to foster student learning and reflecting on societal needs and ills.

7 Conclusion

For many years, the Western Eurocentric approach to knowledge and curriculum has been tolerated and accepted in most parts of the world, including South Africa. In the Western Eurocentric view, knowledge and the curriculum have been dictated and prescribed, and predefined standards of curriculum planning have measured its quality. Colonialism and apartheid brought about injustices to local and indigenous people, stripping them of their dignity. The oppressive results have been an imbalance in ecology and human equity. Similarly, learning institutions have been bureaucratised to the extent that learning is comparable to manufacturing (commodification of knowledge) rather than treating students as human beings. Arguably, the Westernised curriculum has been a vehicle to transmit the Eurocentric views of modernisation at the expense of local and indigenous knowledge systems. Oppressors/ colonisers have used Western epistemologies in the curriculum to reinforce the notion that power lies with the political and financial rich and that the less rich should only follow established rules/ regulations. However, the world is beginning to challenge this view and breaking away from this paradigm. Although the debates around this have been going on for a long time, this shift or idea to decolonise the hegemonic knowledge systems and the curriculum in South Africa has become apparent in many ways: radical calls to decolonise knowledge systems and the curriculum, the transformation and activist rights of recent student movements #FeesMustFall protests, calls to restore and return the land to natives and addressing colonial injustices among many. In this paper, we described and interrogated (critiqued) the various forms of knowledge systems, how they are churned into the power dynamics, and how they have shaped the dominant

knowledge systems that favour industrialisation and markets and Western curriculum, perpetuating further disparities in the socio-economic status of the local communities. The paper further prompted the need to revitalise the local and indigenous knowledge systems with some insights into the decolonisation of the curriculum debate. The decolonisation of the curriculum debate is, however, a complex but necessary one, just as the curriculum is viewed differently by many people or groups. What we make from this debate is that the modernist view of the dormant knowledge systems and curriculum is becoming less valuable in the new world order, where universities are increasingly being seen as macrocosms of society. The idea of curriculum is to be responsive to society. New political powers, cultures, technologies and problems are emerging, hence the need to rethink the current worldview, especially embracing the local and indigenous knowledge concepts of "Ubuntu" – (I am because we are) and "currere" – the oneness of humans (more-than-human-world). We conclude the paper with thoughts on incorporating local and indigenous knowledge in the mainstream knowledge economies and decolonising the curriculum.

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