Toward a Relevant De-colonized Curriculum in South Africa: Suggestions for a Way Forward

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Abstract
The debate on the de-colonization of universities in South Africa gained momentum after protests by students through the #FeesMustFall (FMF) and #RhodesMustFall (RMF) movements. At the center of these protests were issues like free access to education, accommodation, removal of apartheid and colonial statues, and the Africanization of the curriculum. Thus, revisiting and reimagining curricula offerings is an important aspect of the current debate on the de-colonization of education at South Africa’s educational sites. To add to the de-colonization debate, this article discusses the concept of relevance in (re)curriculum. The article will discuss the concepts of de-colonization and relevance, readiness in the implementation of new curricula offerings, challenges, and hurdles in curriculum change and important points of reference in achieving a de-colonized curriculum. Literature review and document analysis will be used to shed more light on this topic.

Keywords
de-colonization, relevance, (re)curriculumation

(Curriculation is) a field that looks pretty much like a complex set of tectonic plates in permanent ebullition – a multiplicity of ideological volcanoes spewing lava that smothers a myriad of epistemological impulses while simultaneously paving the way for many other perspectives—Paraskeva

Introduction
The debate around the de-colonization and Africanization (referred to as re-Afrikanization and indigenization by other scholars) of the curriculum in South Africa’s institutions of learning gained more momentum after the students’ protest movement that began in 2015. These protests centered on free education, but students had other demands too including matters of access and chance, racism, and social inequalities and they insisted on offerings that move away from the Western approach (Sayed et al., 2017). In this regard, Mpofu (2017, p. 2) observes that, “the students’ protests that started in 2015 made visible the violences and injustices of the Westernized University in Africa and made urgent the need to decolonize knowledge, knowledge making and the University at large.” Mpofu and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020a, p. 21) summarize the stance of students as follows:

Students demanded change of curriculum, decommissioning of the offensive colonial/apartheid symbols, the right to free, quality and relevant education, cultural freedom, and overall change in the very idea of the university from its Western pedigree of “university in Africa” to an “African university.”

This disquiet of students, especially on curriculum reform referred to above, led to questions about decision-making in curricula matters and the content taught to learners in institutions of learning. The issues mentioned here are regarded as timeless, and their timelessness is supported by literature on curriculation (Klein, 1991; Pillay, 2016; Reynolds, 2016). The question of the relevance of content in (re)curriculum matters is at the center of most of the discussions of de-colonization and it is the focus of this article.

Mpofu (2017) sees the struggles experienced by students and scholars at institutions of higher learning as having “made visible what was invisible” and claims that such a “disorder” has become an excellent and fertile ground for reflection and further engagement on the topic of de-colonization. In the context of the current discussion, the de-colonization of curricula offerings is regarded as a significant aspect of de-colonization. Using literature review and document analysis, this article

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focuses on relevance as an aspect of the de-colonization project of curricula offerings.

The opening quotation by Paraskeva (2016, p. 4) accepts the view that in a debate such as the one on the de-colonization of the curriculum, interested participants should be allowed space to advance different views on any given topic in order to shed more light on it and improve the possibility of it being implemented for the good of the community. In addition, Kruger-Ross (2015, pp. 8–9) argues that debates of this nature constitute the type of a “many-sided question” giving room for more questions to illuminate the topic under discussion rather than trying to provide firm and direct answers to the topic from one angle. This article should be seen therefore as an attempt to contribute to the continuing and life-long discussion about de-colonizing the curriculum in South Africa’s institutions of learning. As such, it follows Paraskeva’s (2016) approach that sees a discussion like this as indeed a part of a “myriad of epistemological impulses while simultaneously paving the way for many other perspectives.”

Context

The Black majority in South Africa had high expectations after the dawn of democracy as the new democratic government was expected to bring significant changes to the educational system by doing away with the system that the apartheid regime designed for the country’s Black majority. Some commentators on education have noted that the new political dispensation has failed to meet its mandatory agenda to commit to equity, social justice, dignity, inclusivity, and respect for all. Pillay (2016, p. 539) paints a dim picture in this regard, noting that, “. . .19 years into the democratic dispensation. . .substantive change regarding the regaining of our humanity and the destabilization of the apartheid-designed Black subaltern has been minimal” (emphasis added).

Again, with the introduction of different versions of curricula by the democratic regime, it is still widely assumed that these models were not homegrown and therefore failed to respond to the challenges facing society today despite government’s efforts to introduce new aspects to existing and known curricula content. According to Mangena (2017), it seems that the South African society is unable to deliver education that is stripped of the ethos of the previous colonizers and it is therefore always prone to answer to the previous “masters” with the desire for approval by and association with the colonial past and comments thus, “. . .we got a democracy in 1994, but we did not get a decolonized society, and the rate at which we are going does not suggest we are about to get one any time soon” (p. 3). It comes as no surprise that students, who felt excluded from the education system due to financial constraints and a curriculum that is based on Western thought, consequently revolted against the system.

In light of the above, the debate on the introduction of relevant curricula offerings in South Africa should be pursued in all earnestness to avert future disruptions and the perpetuation of education in its Western mold to the detriment of the communities for which it is designed.

De-colonization

De-colonization, Africanization, and indigenization are terms used interchangeably to signify the desired and envisaged change in the culture of institutions of learning, particularly in university education. De-colonization presupposes a conscious drive by institutions to transform institutions on different levels. Mention is often made of the following challenges in the context of higher education: the rising cost of education, declining completion rates, increasing privatization, new methods and curricula, the role of the university and the loss of civility, academic plagiarism, and increasingly intrusive institutional analytics (Van der Merwe, 2018).

In their article on how to change the university in Africa, Mpofu and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020a) differentiate between the “university in Africa” and the “African university.” The latter, which is Afro-centric, is the preferred model as its generation of knowledge is from the African reality. As such, it positions itself to be “a site of multilingualism and that African indigenous languages, cosmologies and ontologies would become a central part of its identity and soul (Mpofu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020a, p. 28). On the contrary, a “university in Africa” is Euro-centric, boastful of what it regards as truth to the exclusion of others and foreign to Africans.

Curriculum change also features prominently in issues of de-colonizing education and the relevance of education to citizens. In his speech at the opening of the 2018 academic year of the University of South Africa, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Makhanya (2018), commented on curriculum change and Africanization of knowledge as follows:

This entails re-assertion of African identity and re-founding of knowledge on African cultures and values. It is a recovery process predicted on ideas of indigenous (sic) knowledge as ‘an internal product drawn from given cultural background, as opposed to another category of knowledge which would be imported from elsewhere.

So, the purpose of any de-colonization project is to re-examine the culture of an institution, to change the Western approach of doing things to a more localized approach according to the aspirations of the community, and in this case, an African community. Curricula offerings are crucial to bringing about such a change. It is in this sense that this article focuses on curricula offerings that are relevant to students in an African setting.

The following section will reflect on the concept of relevance in curricula.
Relevance in Curriculum Development

Bringing the question of relevance in focus in the development and design of any curriculum or program implies taking a conscious position that ensures that learners are taught offerings that will benefit them in their studies and later in their world of work.

The Glossary of Education (2014) defines relevance thus:

In education the term relevance typically refers to learning experiences that are either directly applicable to the personal aspirations, interests or cultural experiences of students (personal relevance) or that are connected in some way to real-world issues, problems, and contents (life relevance).

One of the post-modern scholars on curriculum development, Slattery as quoted by Masenya (2014, p. 76), asserts that a well thought of curriculum should allow learners “to listen to their own voices and implement their curriculum programs.” This is particularly the case when teachers adapt the theories and philosophies of educationists, academics, and specialists to the local needs of learners in schools. A reconceptualized curriculum allows education to address pertinent issues in the life of learners as it responds to the needs of communities—economic, ecological, social, health, and theological (Masenya, 2014, pp. 75–76).

Graham (2017, p. 4) is correct in postulating that a relevant curriculum should connect with the spiritual and material histories of a people. The African philosophies and their being should underline any curriculum that is designed for Africans. Derrida’s concept of the “tain of the mirror,” which means the back of the mirror, depicts a curriculum that does not and cannot reflect the image of that which looks into it (Pillay, 2016, p. 528). While the community defines what it regards as normal, on the other hand, the curriculum should “look like it.” In conversation with Unisa E-news’ Bettman, Dei rightly suggests that for a curriculum to be relevant and to serve the interests of its owners, it must offer homegrown indigenous solutions to problems of the indigenous community (Bettman, 2011). Black South Africans should design and teach curricula offerings to their children by looking at it from a “black perspective” (Asante, 2003).

The facts mentioned here should be considered in the process of curriculum planning to ensure that it is relevant and therefore will advance the course of the South African society which is in transition. The brief discussion above on a wide and contested topic like the concept of relevance cannot be exhaustive, but it is an attempt to give a basic understanding of what relevance in (re)curricularization is about.

The following section will highlight the de-colonization agenda of curricula offerings. This will be a discussion of pointers that are regarded as important for advancing the de-colonization project of curricula offerings. A discussion of this nature is necessary because as already indicated in the preceding paragraphs, the discussions around the de-colonization of curricula offerings is at its very beginning and already brought with it several challenges.

De-colonization Project in (Re)curriculation

It is evident from the introduction of this article that the transformation enterprise at institutions of higher learning in South Africa was either forgotten or lulled until the students protests “brought about an awakening” and revived this important agenda. Policy issues, power dynamics and struggles, resistance, poor leadership, confusion among community members and the like are critical to any curriculum change. In the context of the current debate, curricula issues are more complex and touch on all aspects of the learners’ lives and the communities they live in.

The following section will propose pointers which could assist in enhancing the de-colonization process. The pointers discussed here are merely guidelines and should be treated by those involved in the de-colonization debate as such. Some of these guidelines stem from observations and experiences from debates, workshops, and colloquiums arranged by institutions in a bid to promote the de-colonization enterprise in general and of the curriculum in particular. The following pointers will be discussed: commitment and proper policies from government, purpose and willingness from all stakeholders, the language question, leadership, academic cooperation, and mobilization.

Pointers for a Relevant De-colonized Curriculum

The following pointers need to be considered when the de-colonization of the curriculum is under discussion especially in a bid to produce new curricula that move from the influence of the Western way of thinking to more relevant offerings for African communities.

Commitment and Proper Policies From Government

There is a general perception that the government of South Africa is not doing enough to advance the transformation agenda. Commenting on the question of commitment to the promotion of multilingualism by the South African government, Skovsholm (2000, p. 5) argues that though the government took an ambitious step at the dawn of democracy to adopt eleven official languages, it does seem that “the current rules are not as onerous on the South African state as they may seem as a first reading.”

Scholars also warn against neoliberal hegemony as a more subtle and real danger to transformation. Neoliberal hegemony is the current dominant ideology governing the capitalist economic system globally. It is based on a Westernized
project of profit, free market economy and competition. When imposed on countries like South Africa, it is a continuance of colonial dominance. Davies, whose views of neoliberal hegemony are widely cited by Pillay, sees neoliberal hegemony as violently oppressive and feeding on exclusions and exploitation. It produces a situation where students are still forced to engage with curricula that are silent about alternate epistemologies, and that still assume an uncritical approach to Eurocentric theories and philosophies about Western supremacy and the Eurocentric foundations of the sciences, while biased quests for truth remain unquestioned (Pillay, 2016, p. 541).

With this line of thinking, many consider that South Africa is replete with tell-tale signs of transformation, albeit variously conceptualized (Naidoo-Hoffmeester, 2018a). As the debate on de-colonization continues, there is a general feeling that the political emancipation in South Africa in 1994 did little to address the effects of colonial education on its Black majority. The newspaper headline in the Pretoria News recently reported that, “Despite the 1994 political victory against apartheid, victory against colonial higher education is still far from being achieved” (Dibakwane, 2019).

In Boossabong’s view, it is important to call for academics and those in the policy world to redefine national education philosophy, to reconsider higher education strategies and to redesign the quality assurance system for the whole de-colonization agenda to succeed (in Mpofu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020b). Those in educational circles should heed the call by Alvin Toffler who already warned about the continuing change in all facets of life and urged communities to “learn, to unlearn, to relearn” (Rapitsi, 2018) in order to produce curricula that are relevant and functional to communities.

**Willingness and Purpose From All Stakeholders**

Students took to the streets to address pertinent issues in education while “most academics have been complacent and complicit” (Mpofu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020b, p. 4). Resistance to change by some of Africa’s professors and other academic elites stems from the fact that they are afraid of dismantling colonial education which helps to shield their positions of privilege and power. Mpofu observes that, “every university is busy decolonizing in urgency, so that we can bury it and grow flowers on its grave” (Ravhudzulo, 2018b). The perceived “hurry” to engage in reform follows students’ actions which found the academic community in some sort of “sleeping mode and negligence” regarding pressing issues in the academic arena. Some commentators, like Mangena (2017), however, believe that academics and the country’s intelligentsia are not responding well to crises in the educational sector due to the wrong wiring of their minds which cause them to engage in protracted debates with no practical solutions. One may add that perhaps their unpreparedness for the change that happened suddenly further complicates the situation for these scholars.

Such groups of stakeholders in the academy may also be likened to those referred to as having a chained mind by some scholars like Graham (2017). He observes that there was no transformation of minds among theological scholars in Australia and New Zealand who were colonized by Britain. He picked up the following in informal conversations at a conference that he attended in Australia:

A ‘proper’ education and public display of that education, in theology had to have a Western imprimatur. Paper after paper, dissertation after dissertation, book after book, I listened to or heard about dealt with or referenced or developed ideas on the basis of significant theologians and philosophers from the European and Anglo-American tradition (Graham, 2017, p. 3).

It seems normative that wherever there was colonial rule in the world, the power that the colonial rulers exert on their subjects lasts long and it becomes difficult for the colonized to unshackle themselves from it. Nyoni (2018) also adds his voice to the debate about colonized minds and draws attention to what he terms the chained mind of African communities through the concept he refers to as a Caged Colonial Mentality (CCM). Nyoni further sees the CCM as failure to unchain the colonized mind of Black South Africans, especially among academics. In other words, despite gaining independence, the African mind remains stuck in the colonial past.

Thus, an element of insincerity can derail the de-colonization agenda or keep it in its tracks. Insincere engagement is prevalent when institutions are engaged in the debate about de-colonization in order to appear to be doing something about (re)curriculation matters and to be relevant while there is no change of heart. This happens when such institutions tenaciously cling to the Western mold of curricula without even trying to infuse any aspect of African knowledge systems in their teaching, the use of indigenous languages being a case in point. In other words, there can be much talk about de-colonization, while what is done essentially replicates colonial assumptions and so becomes a fad (Naidoo-Hoffmeester, 2018b). Like fundamentalists in curriculation matters who normally resist change, the naysayers in the de-colonization project may display much activity, rhetoric and buzz words such as “transformation,” while no real change takes place in practical terms.

Lip service can also betray the de-colonization agenda. In his address at the Es’kia Mphahlele Memorial Lecture held on the 28 September 2018, the Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa, Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng stressed that the time for lip service regarding transformation is over (Ramotshela, 2018, p. 1). When there is much talk but no change on the ground, the colonial past is enabled to usurp struggles and discourses against it, adds Mpofu (2017, p. 4). Mogoeng emphasized the importance of radical change in curriculum development, saying, “Curriculum development must at every level of the system be geared toward de-colonising the mind. The self-hate systematically infused in the
African people’s way of life must be neutralised and ultimately rooted out” (Ramotshele, 2018).

It is therefore important for de-colonization programs to demonstrate honesty of purpose and progressiveness in order to bear fruit.

**The Language Question**

While the de-colonization debate continues, Knaus and Brown (2017) lament the absence of indigenous higher education in African countries. In their view, this is so because there is “at the core, the continued commitment to devaluing African knowledge, languages, and experiences” (Knaus and Brown, 2017, p. 285). This must be halted to enable de-colonization and particularly of the curriculum to succeed. They drive their point home with the statement in Audre Lorde’s poem that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”

Writing on curricula challenges in Turkey, Cayir (2010) argues that in effecting curricula changes, every effort should start within the local context. He says that it would be wrong for “textbook authors to reconstruct local history in the mirror of the West and to imagine a homogenous ‘Us’ which is presented as a source of modern universal values.” In the words of Mpofo and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020a, p. 28), to have a de-colonized university with curricula offerings that are relevant and that speak to the hearts of the leaners, such an institution must be “a site of multilingualism and that African indigenous languages, cosmologies and ontologies would become a central part of its identity and soul.”

Language learning and indigenous knowledge systems should thus be at the center of the de-colonization agenda. However, in the current sad scenario:

Though the government attempts to empower and embrace the languages of nine oppressed South African groups, power structures (e.g. government, commerce, and higher education) continue to primarily utilise English (framed as the language of liberation) and Afrikaans (framed as the language of domination) (Knaus & Brown, 2017).

Lack of African content is seen when schools in a country like South Africa teach their young content that is foreign to them, for example, from US-based or UK-based literature which has minimal relevance or contextual congruence to traditional or contemporary South African populations (Knaus & Brown, 2017, p. 274).

**Leadership**

More often than not, the transformational endeavor at universities tends to be leaderless and uncoordinated. This happens when stakeholders try to push own agendas and at pains to protect their ideological stance or when leaders tend to repeat past experiences with the hope of turning things around in their institutions. According to Bolman and Deal (1991), no change will be accomplished when leaders “do not know what to do” in challenging situations and they “simply do more of what they do know” (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 4). The perpetuation of education in its Western mold in Black communities may be regarded as or likened to just adding on and simply doing more of what is known. This idea resonates with the thinking that if clearly identified, values and goals are missing in curriculum planning, whoever is involved will be seen to be “effectively doing things (they) should not be doing at all” (Fraser, 1964, p. 217).

Masenya (2020, p. 179) recommends that a transformational leader as a change agent should drive a venture of this nature with purpose and understanding. Such a leader would be conscious of the pertinent course and avoid being a “hero-innovator” but would be an effective leader who is able to organize stakeholders to unite behind a common cause like curriculum change.

**Academic Cooperation**

It is not uncommon to find writings or speeches that are replete with emotional outbursts which border on some type of “ideological warfare.” In the article written by Ravhudzulo (2018b), Mpofo confirms that, “the rhetoric of decolonization could be used to mask the logic of hate and violence.” The following are recent examples of utterances at meetings on the de-colonization debate:

- “...colonialists... attaching themselves to Afrikan environments, to Afrikan land and attaching themselves to whom they cannibalised, sucked and exploited in the colonial horse-and-rider relationships (Naidu-Hoffmeester, 2018b);

- “...we call for the space to breathe. (Naidu-Hoffmeester, 2018a); and

Although the colonists might have considered themselves to be human and to be civilised, they were beastly and animalistic in the colonial frontiers, were as savagely as to murder, plunder, rob, loot and suck the blood of their victims whose skulls were shipped to metropolitan centres (Naidu-Hoffmeester, 2018a).

It is important for all participants in the de-colonization agenda to work together because both the colonizer and the previously colonized need each other for the de-colonization agenda to succeed. Graham (2017, p. 3) confirms this stance, saying, “hegemonic power has to be critical of its hegemony - in the name of justice.” For the colonizers of today or descendants of colonizing powers to participate in the debate, stakeholders should handle the debate in a more objective way and balance emotional outbursts with fact and sound academic judgments. This approach should stop scholars from engaging in what some refer to as “anti-intellectualism” (Reynolds, 2016, p. x) which may lead to name-calling and
othering of other participants instead of focusing on the more pertinent issue of de-colonizing offerings.

**Mobilization**

Parents are torn between what the “awakening” program in their communities suggests and what takes place in the real world of work (e.g., preparing their children for the corporative world of work) as well as the expectations of the international community. In addition, their lore and knowledge do not seem to matter. For any de-colonization agenda to succeed, it is imperative for it to make sense to all—parents, academics, learners—in fact, to the whole community. The clash of cultures between the Western and African life-worlds still causes confusion in the de-colonization debate.

The following anecdote buttresses the fact that education which was offered to Blacks has crippled and hobbled minds to the extent that it has become difficult to do things differently and have an education that is different from the one conceived through the influence of colonialism.

**Anecdote**

At one of the seminars organised by the University of South Africa’s Change Management Unit, the discussion veered to a school that decided to teach through the medium of all the African languages represented at the school. The school made all arrangements and even hired a full component of staff to handle the classes. At the beginning of the year, learners had the liberty to choose to be taught in languages spoken at their homes. Unsurprisingly, all learners chose English as their medium of instruction.

This stance points to the perception of parents who believe that their children will not excel in life and in the world of work should they be taught in their home languages.

De-colonizing the curriculum to make it relevant therefore discourages schools from sticking to the old ways of doing things without deviation, for example, to the belief that European languages are superior to indigenous African languages. That is the reason scholars in the field of curriculum studies today agree that education should be “a quest, a series of turns, returns, and detours, not a forced march, not a series of tests, pretests, and measurements of the acquisition of skills” (Berman et al., 1991, p. viii).

It is thus important for all stakeholders in the de-colonization project to be intentional in their efforts and to try to bring everyone on board—learners, teachers, parents, and communities.

**As the Curriculation Debate Continues**

The de-colonization project is ongoing and cannot be a once-off achievement. This is especially the case because the de-colonization project in the South African context started in earnest after students’ protests and it is already confronted by a myriad of challenges as outlined in the preceding section. The following statement attests to the fact that curriculation is supposed to be a continuing process locally, nationally, and at the international level. As Masenya (2014, p. 73) notes, “Theories on curriculum reform are tied to continuing changes in society and are adjusted to meeting the changing needs of the communities they are designed for.”

While the de-colonization and Africanization debate continues, the teacher or tutor on site is expected to follow the curriculum provided by the relevant government agency. The discussion here stresses that it should be possible for any tutor or teacher to think aloud and infuse some trends of a de-colonized curriculum in his/her offerings.

De-colonizing the curriculum should help teachers to be open, be flexible, and allow materials that make sense to the learners in their teaching. In the context of previously disadvantaged communities, this approach should be a conduit to channel and infuse learning materials that are relevant to the life-world of learners who are not given space to learn in traditional syllabi. The more open and accommodative teaching approach advocated here agrees with two recent studies which advocate a similar approach.

The following contributions add to the idea of infusing additional material to curricula offerings in a bid to make present teaching more relevant to learners. First, Kumar (2013) advocates that a curriculum be a meditative inquiry that provides self-transformative educational experiences to students and their teachers. His approach stresses elements such as openness, personal responsiveness, freedom, esthetics, love, playfulness, meditative thinking, imagining, transcendence, centering, awareness, listening, seeing, and dialog. All these aspects allow participation and the addition of materials to the learning process where it would not necessarily be the case in a rigid, old colonial teaching approach that remains a hangover.

Further, Corbett et al. (2016) introduce to the field of curriculum the question of improvising the curriculum in a bid to pave way for alternatives to scripted schooling. The main contribution of improvisation in educational and other sectors is its fundamental formula that accepts and accommodates the constructive idea of “yes and” (Corbett et al., 2016, p. 5). This approach supports the idea of a more open curriculum and learning because the “yes and” approach to life and work recognizes the importance of working together respectfully and in concert with others, contrary to the teaching which is founded on competition and the accrual of material things to individuals.

It is therefore incumbent upon institutions of learning to embark on “make-shifts programs” that would adapt their offerings to make them more relevant. As an example, the Psychology department at the University of South Africa started to incorporate traditional ways of counseling in their programs in a bid to promote relevance while the de-colonization debate continues. Such a stance will hopefully satisfy the quest of students and learners to show that
what they are taught is worthwhile and is done in their interests. Punia (2001), whose ideas feature in this discussion also supports the idea that tutors and teachers improve and implement curricula offerings that make sense to them and their learners.

While these conversations, engagements, and contestations continue, it must be said that, “universities... remain generators of knowledge, harbours of intellectual endeavour and nurseries for flourishing of future generations of scholars” and that institutions of learning, planners, enactors and recipients of the end product of this debate should not refrain from being critical and creative (Ramotshele, 2018). Considering relevance as the basis of curriculum reform could be a unifying force in the endeavors by all those who engage in curriculization.

While there is a lack of curriculum models at present, common topics which are discussed when de-colonization is in focus include the use of indigenous languages, the impact of HIV/AIDS, preparation for work, etcetera, with a slant toward Ubuntu philosophy (Taxer, 2017). There is a need for “epistemological vigilance” in looking for materials that celebrate diversity and that acknowledge that the African lore is part of the many discourses that contribute to knowledge production locally and internationally. Such curricula should be of universal concern (Pillay, 2016).

The investigation by the National Education Association of the United States when it was faced with the problem of “what to teach” in the early sixties answers several questions regarding relevance and could serve as a guideline for any recurrenculation mission in progress. The project recommended six criteria for the assessment of current practices and for planning for improvement (Fraser, 1964). The criteria and their implication are listed below for appropriation in the discussion of a de-colonized relevant curriculum in the South African context while the de-colonization debate is in progress.

**Respect for the Worth and Dignity of Every Individual**

The dignity of previously disadvantaged learners should be respected to allow an honest processing of a curriculum for a better future for them. The scholarship and inputs of Black academics also should be respected and given space. In addition, Black learners should not be regarded as objects and the idea of Blackness should be foregrounded, affirmed and reinforced along with those of all other learners around the globe (Pillay, 2016, p. 538). In that way, learners will feel empowered to develop according to God-given talents and aptitudes.

**Encouragement of Variability**

The African lore and knowledge systems should be accepted as valuable to African scholarship. It must be accepted, as Dei shows, that “there are many sciences and the Eurocentric science/approach makes up just one of them” (Bettman, 2011). Dei further shows that African scientists have a responsibility and the capacity to bring their knowledge base to the forefront and to validate indigenous ways of knowing by showing that their postulations are valid. The world contains multiple knowledge systems which can be called “the power of multi-centric knowledge space,” and the multiplicity of knowledge systems should be regarded as an add-on, not a threat to a forward-looking program of de-colonizing the curriculum. Enabling indigenous communities to employ their own materials of teaching allows a variegated approach to curriculum planning which will respond to the needs of the community it is designed to serve. Hull’s (2009, p. 155) astute input on this matter is that “it is wrong to think that one’s orientation can do everything or to suppose that by adopting one orientation all others have nothing to offer.” Africa has a lot to offer and it is also capable from learning from other cultures.

**Equal Opportunity for All Children**

Equal opportunity in South Africa’s educational system entails that the country’s resources be made available to all learners and that the government make serious efforts to redress the inequalities of the past. Learning materials and infrastructure such as buildings, ablution facilities, and all that enables learning should be provided in an equitable manner.

**Faith in Human Ability to Make Rational Decisions**

The West should have faith in the ability of African communities that they can and should make decisions in matters affecting them without any interference. It is improper to look down upon any initiative that does not have a Western imprimatur.

**Shared Responsibility for the Common Good**

Scholars, planners, and legislators should agree that proposing curricula programs that are relevant to the needs of the South African society would go a long way in improving lives and developing the society and the world at large. The “we are in it together” mentality should permeate all efforts of recurrenculation which embraces the de-colonization project. It is logical to agree with Slattery (2006, p. xvii) here that the duty of a university, or any other organization interested in curriculum development, should be, through its programs and its entire staff, “a form of social work directed toward uplifting the lives of students and those whom they will serve in society.”
Respect for Moral and Spiritual Values and Ethical Standards

According to Graham (2017, p. 4), the material that is planned for teaching learners in South Africa is relevant if it relates to the land, its languages and its spiritual and material histories. This also helps each individual learner to experience the world as a totality.

It is important to understand that curriculum development is continuous in nature and de-colonizing curricula offerings should be understood as an ongoing process.

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This article has expressed an awareness that like all other societies, the South African society is in a constant flux because change takes place in unexpected and sudden ways. This type of change was witnessed by the country’s institutions of higher learning when students’ protests took place unexpectedly. The discussion focused on concepts of de-colonization and relevance highlighting a few pointers that could guide the project of a relevant de-colonized curriculum. The project of de-colonization recommends the designing of a curriculum that originates from the community that it is designed for, and which reflects its social, political, spiritual and economic complexities. While variegated approaches to the problem and other impeding factors are highlighted in the discussion, this article supports an ongoing debate—a debate that is important and which should continue. The article foregrounds the need for a “relevant de-colonized curriculum” with the hope that the emphasis on relevance in the (re)curriculation project would serve as a binding force to unite all in the pursuit of a home-grown curriculum, thus, situating education as an important contributor to difficult questions that face the society. Communities should listen to their own voices and implement curricular programs that they know would advance the community.

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Ethics

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