

**DECOLONISATION OF THE  
CURRICULUM - the historical  
task of restoration**  
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## Decolonising the curriculum – talking points:

- >Decolonisation of the curriculum is a **historical challenge** for academics in teacher education since they are **key to SYSTEMIC changes** in education
- >We share a need to **RETHINK researcher and teacher educator agency** as historical challenge
- >**Imagine the consequences** of our collective actions of decolonizing the curriculum...

# My intention

Gert vd W – here to share learning from experiences with curriculum change work at UJ; inquiries and papers at conferences on ethics of practice; nature of educational conversations and transformative dialogues; indigenising Educational Psychology; rethinking teacher education philosophically...

Main inquiry question: **How best can my practices as researcher, and as research and teacher educator contribute to restoring cognitive justice in education?**



# What is this historical moment?

The **1994 transformation of education has been inadequate**, as we have been reminded by student actions around 2015, and of course the calls by activist academics before

Calls for **social and cognitive justice** is a contextual reality and change imperative – our moral responsibility

This is our historic moment which is a **watershed moment**; no turning back because the Colonial project is continuing to dominate, oppress, and subjugate for the worse



# DEFINING DECOLONISATION

## [Revisiting Postcolonial theory\_1

To colonise is to form a colony, to settle in a colony

Edwards Said: colonialism is a totalizing effect;

continued othering; understanding self as other;  
power over consciousness; **ongoing cultural dominance**; maintaining the culture of the colonisers; reproduced through education

Fanon: colonisation as inferiority; divided sense of self; **representational stereotypes of the lesser human**



# Post Colonial Theory\_2 UNDERSTANDING COLONISATION

Foucault: **scientific rationality as discourse of formation**; as truth production and master narratives; language is used in **the social struggle over meanings**

Derrida: **hierarchy and privileging of concepts/terms**

Odora Hoppers: the psychological AND CULTURAL consequences of continued colonisation – NEED for HEALING

# CONSEQUENCES of colonisation – quoting Odora Hoppers

- + Education is reproducing, preserving **an-other** society
- + Millions of **people are suspending and sacrificing what they take for granted**; bearing the **burden** of living in **unfamiliar** cultural idioms within all areas of everyday life; they live with **functional tolerance**
- + ‘...cultural imperialism – misrepresentations resulting in **insecurity, self-doubt** (Odora Hoppers 2001a: 7; 2009).
- + **The crisis needs to be understood on the deepest levels of humanity, of community livelihoods, of human rights, of democratic citizenship**

# LET US SEE: How colonisation is evident in education\_1

Current discourses about the science of teaching, and the master narratives of excellent teacher education is very much American, European documented as guides for golden standards/best practices in teacher education-

Importance of Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Knowledge of learning theories - linking theory and practice

Etc.



## How colonisation is evident in education\_2

Dominance of theories and theoretical frameworks,  
e.g. cognitive development; theories of learning  
and teaching as universally applicable

Colonisation in school curricula – e.g. Life  
Orientation – prescribed, official knowledge

# COGNITIVE JUSTICE (Visvanathan)

- ...the right of every individual or group to pursue and perpetuate the forms of knowledge that their ways of life depend upon... it seeks to protect the group from modern western science or any other form of knowledge that seeks to hegemonize eliminate or museumize it. It is a concept which seeks both the survival of communities and to protect the logic of their creativity ... The idea of cognitive justice is not about an abstract notion of rights. It seeks not an empty universalism for an abstract idea of humanity but it is a pluralistic search for an embedded idea of the social in which each form of the social is anchored in a particular way of knowing.” (Visvanathan 2011: 8).



# COGNITIVE JUSTICE (Odora Hoppers)

- “Cognitive justice is about the right of different forms of knowledge to survive, creatively and sustainably... returning to life Indigenous Knowledge Systems, restoring their ‘... place in the livelihood of communities so that they can, without coercion, determine the nature and pace of the development they require” (Odora Hoppers 2009: 16). Knowledge rests in people – for Africa the challenge has to be that of how to build on local knowledge that exists in its people as a concomitant to working with global knowledge and information (Odora Hoppers 2009: 2).

# SO WHAT NOW? Decolonisation is about RETHINKING what knowledge is

What counts as scientific knowledge?

[[Science as secular, hierarchical, fragmented,  
exclusionary, modernist (COH)

Who are the knowledge holders?

How can we restore knowledge rights?

Knowledge plurality – Knowledge holding knowledge  
development knowledge integration everywhere, not just  
research institutions

# Decolonisation of the curriculum – HOW

## Exemplar strategies 1 (GVDW)

1. Critical reading of literature//engaging the canon

Following Freire –

Freire - **reading texts critically**, in terms of  
paradigm, context, academic tradition, relevance

Engaging and evaluating readings:

# Decolonisation of the curriculum – HOW

## Exemplar strategies 1 (GVDW)

### 1. Critical reading of literature//engaging the canon

Context, origin, and authenticity- Where is the text from? Who is the author?

What was the intention with this writing? What is the story of the text? How is it part of broader debates/similar/other stories? What is the form? How is content limited by form?

Assumptions and world view- What assumptions are being made about education? About learners? About teaching practices? What are the views of the author reflected in the reading – Views of reality, of the nature of knowledge? World view? Views of community? Of what is deemed valuable?

Knowledge interests served- Who are the targeted audiences of readers? Is the reading part of a knowledge tradition? Whose interests are served, and how?

Relevance and applicability- How valid and relevant are the ideas to research supervision in SA?



# Decolonisation of the curriculum – HOW

## Exemplar strategies 2 (GVDW)

### 2. Using theories in generative ways:

Firstly, is the **generation of doubt** - open to new realms of flexibility.

The second attribute of generative theory: the **formation of alternatives** - give reason to pause and reconsider current modes of activity; point to other forms of actions and their results; generate legitimate alternative forms of action at the conceptual or intellectual level.

# Decolonisation of the curriculum – HOW

## Exemplar strategies 3 (GVDW)

### 3. Advance pedagogies of dialogic learning –

**Transformative Dialogue** [Gergen, Constructionism] – knowledge is relational; meaning making through dialogue – knowledge construction as co-action

**Morality of knowledge** in interactions [epistemic access, primacy, responsibility – how do we as teacher educators use what we know responsibly?



# Decolonisation of the curriculum – HOW

## Exemplar strategies 4 (GVDW)

### 3. Rethinking research

- **Indigenous research paradigms** and methods  
[Bagele Chilisa 2012]
- **Transformative Grounded Theory** – research  
for social justice [Charmaz 2018]
- Research on **learning conversations** –  
epistemics/morality of knowledge [Stivers,  
Mondada, Steenig 2011]

# Summary – what to continue doing, start doing, and stop doing for the sake of decolonising the curriculum

## Continue

- + **Studying postcolonial** theory
- + Participating in **communities of critical practice**
- + Being committed to and **linking research and teacher education with social change**
- + Rethinking **how knowledge is defined**
- + Being critical of **personal academic history**/trajectory and influences of the past

# Summary – what to continue doing, start doing, and stop doing for the sake of decolonising the curriculum

## Start

- + Understanding **modern forms of colonialism** – discrimination, stereotyping, racism
- + Involving **community knowledge holders** in your research and teaching
- + **Broadening understanding of educational concepts** [and theoretical frameworks] to include community understandings
- + Considering **worldview perspectives** in knowledge and research
- +

# Summary – what to continue doing, start doing, and stop doing for the sake of decolonising the curriculum

## Stop

- Holding the **international standards** of teaching as the norm in uncritical ways
- **Idealising everything scientific** as the truth, in uncritical ways
- **Limiting knowledge sources** to what is available in the form of academic articles

# Ways forward\_1

## 1. Curriculum as content

Dialogues with peers on

> Selections of readings, worldviews, traditions

> Rethinking concepts and their meanings -  
semantic, contextual, discursive

> African philosophies//IKS

# Ways forward\_2

## 2. Working with theories in generative ways

[in course and reserach work

>Gergen: finding ways to generate new theoretical understandings beyond the social and cultural confines of the theory

# Ways forward\_3

## Rethinking pedagogies

- > Discovering what transformative dialogue is about = dialogues for social change
- > Transformation by enlargement – how to expand knowledge sources –
- > Rethinking philosophical assumptions – worldviews: historicity, praxis – Anne Phelan

# THOBELA DANKIE THANK YOU

Dear Audience – thank you for this space to share experiences and **RETHINKING** of work as academic – also insights from my inquiries on decolonization.

Please share with me your inquiry questions on the topic of decolonization and curriculum research work...

