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# Curriculum responsiveness within the context of decolonisation in South African higher education

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## Abstract

*South African higher education in the past year has seen violent calls for decolonisation of the curriculum, as a way of addressing the passive nature of education. The inability of the curriculum to respond to contextual issues, empower students to come of age, while at the same time remain committed to giving them a plurality of voices has been a cause for concern. Morrison (2007) argues that curriculum discourse should be marked by a multiplicity of voices, articulating a hundred thousand theories thereby creating avenues for a just and caring curriculum. This curriculum is only possible in spaces that are open to construction and reconstruction of responsive knowledge. To enhance the responsiveness of the curriculum, this paper experimented on voices that matter in the decolonisation project in the bid to create sustainable and socially just spaces wherein caring and just curriculum encounters can take place. Designed as a qualitative case study of six universities, the study used open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to generate data. The data generated was analysed using Morrison's (2007) notion of a hundred thousand theories. The paper reveals three key findings: curriculum encounters are shaped by power dynamics in educational spaces, plurality of voices provokes the creation of disciplinary and interdisciplinary spaces for curriculum engagement and sustainable education experience is powered by plurality, which in itself is shaped by curricular charges. The paper concludes that curriculum encounters is vital for the effectiveness of the decolonisation process and the enhancement of curriculum responsiveness.*

*Keywords: curriculum encounters, responsiveness, decolonisation, plurality*

## 1. Introduction

The context of South African higher education is rather a complex one, rife with inequalities, lack of resources and personnel. Owing to the inequalities and the lack of transformation in South African universities twenty-three years after the end of apartheid, students and staff are demanding the decolonisation of the curriculum. However, the meaning of decolonisation within this context is yet to be agreed upon, especially because there are several discordant voices advocating different pathways for the decolonisation project. Decolonising the curriculum in South African higher education according to Mgqwashu

(2016) and Fomunyan (2017a) is the foregrounding of local or indigenous knowledge and experiences in curricula content, thereby downplaying or eradicating Eurocentric or global north experiences which has dominated curriculum content for centuries. Which voice should matter in the decolonisation process is a question for another research study, but the responsiveness of the curriculum within the context of decolonisation is the issue for discussion. Fomunyan (2014) argues that curriculum is a series of potential experiences organised in a school for disciplining students in ways of thinking and acting. This means that the curriculum centres on what students are supposed to take away from teaching and learning as well as what they can or should do with what they take from the curriculum. Pinar *et al.* (2008) add that the curriculum can be seen as a description of what, why, how and how well students should learn in a systematic and intentional way. To this effect, the curriculum is not an end point, but a means to foster a more congruent and impactful educational experience. For these learning experiences to be effective, they need to be responsive to the needs of students and the society in which these students find themselves. The inability of the curriculum to respond to local challenges is a vital reason behind the call for the decolonisation of the curriculum. Moll (2004) argues that curriculum responsiveness is the ability of curricula taught in schools or universities to address student needs as well as societal circumstances. This means that the curriculum not only focuses on what happens in the classroom but also on what students do with what they learnt. To this end, curriculum responsiveness would address issues of employability or economic responsiveness, diverse student make up in the classroom or cultural responsiveness, the nature of underlying knowledge within the discipline or disciplinary responsiveness and pedagogical or learning responsiveness (Moll, 2004).

These four dimensions of responsiveness speak to the very context of decolonisation in South African higher education and how responsive the curriculum is tailored to be is determined by the forces or voices that matter, which is in turn determined by the kind of curriculum encounters students and teachers or lecturers have within the context of higher education. However, the recent waves of protest in South Africa demanding the decolonisation of South African higher education attest to the need for a more responsive curriculum in higher education programmes. This is especially necessary in a nation such as South Africa with a past that has been discriminatory and segregative. This paper therefore theorises curriculum responsiveness as a tool for decolonisation and the effectiveness of this tool is determined by the voices that shape it. To understand this better, this article proceeds with a discussion of curriculum responsiveness and decolonisation, followed by the research methodology, the findings and a discussion of the findings.

## **2. Curriculum responsiveness and decolonisation**

Ensor (2004) argues that in some universities in South Africa, curriculum responsiveness have been geared towards developing degree programmes with names that suggest relevance to the workplace, but questions the extent to which the suggested responsiveness of these names have been enacted in the classroom. To understand this better, this article looks at the four dimensions of responsiveness mentioned above. Economic responsiveness deals with the ability of the curriculum to train skilled professionals in the different sectors in the economy. It moves beyond offering a degree in a particular field of study such as management or computer programming to how skilled and ready for the job market these professionals are. If they can move beyond dabbling with the problems in the field to developing solutions, then the curriculum can be said to be economically responsive. To this

effect, revolutionary individuals need to be trained who would not only be fit to take on the job market but will be able to respond to the economic challenges of the time through job creation, inventions and innovative approaches to better manage resources and avoid waste. Economic responsiveness in the curriculum therefore goes beyond satisfying the job market at the present, but creating sustainable solutions to future challenges as well as the growth of the economy. What you learn therefore and how you learn it contributes to the decolonisation process of the mind and the institutional architectures within the nature which embodies the economy in its entire or partially. Decolonising the curriculum in the South African context would be one way of causing the curriculum to be responsive to local economic challenges and by extension developing measures to address it.

Cultural responsiveness on the other hand is the curriculum's ability to access and respond to the cultural dissonance in the classroom (Moll, 2004). This dissonance can be in terms of ethnically diverse students, racial profiles of the students and teachers and to a lesser extent, gender. Gamble (2003) argues that in a nation such as South Africa with a corrosively discriminating past, it requires a curriculum that would not only respond to cultural challenges but also recognises the diversity within the classroom. The recognition of this empowers the teacher to tap into the diverse social and cultural capital within the classroom to enhance the learning experience. Gay (2010) adds that cultural responsiveness is the teacher's ability to demonstrate knowledge of the cultural characteristics of different groups within the classroom, and how these cultural differences affect the teaching and learning process. Knowledge is built on experiences, which itself is culturally shaped; as such recognising the cultural differences in the classroom from a curriculum standpoint is way of decolonising the educational space and giving everyone a voice. Traditionally, a cultural responsive curriculum has been a problem in most parts of the world especially in recent times where globalisation and internationalisation are increasingly determining the direction of higher education. The competitiveness within the knowledge economy has provided little space for a curriculum that addresses cultural issues in a local context. Ogude *et al.* (2005) add that for the curriculum to be culturally responsive, it needs to have knowledge of diverse cultural encounters and transformations. It also requires knowledge of human projects to dominate other human beings and how the people being dominated respond to subjugation, knowledge of democratic ideas and constitutional principles that pertain to the people, knowledge of the teachers' cultural roots and complexities. The weaving together of these different aspects would make for a more culturally responsive curriculum especially in a context that requires decolonising. The foregrounding of culture and local experiences is a principal tool for decolonisation since it shuns foreign concepts and ideas.

Disciplinary responsiveness is the third type of responsiveness which curriculum in higher education, especially South African higher education, is supposed to engage. Disciplinary responsiveness is the ability of a curriculum document to be up to date with the research in the field as well as promote new discoveries within the discipline (Ferdinand, 2009). A higher education curriculum is intricately bound up with a community of scholars or scholarship who produce new knowledge according to the dictates of the discipline. However, most academic disciplines or curricula are often highly systematised forms of inquiry which evade everyday life practices which education is supposed to prepare people for, inform and challenge (Moll, 2004). For the curriculum to be disciplinary responsive within the context of decolonisation in South Africa, it should not only be up to date in relation to research in the field, but should be structured in ways that are applicable to everyday life especially since knowledge is largely for

application. Moll (2004: 8) adds that, “disciplinary responsiveness can be taken to mean that the curriculum is responsive to the nature of its underlying knowledge discipline by ensuring a close coupling between the way in which knowledge is produced and the way students are educated and trained in the discipline area”. Disciplinary knowledge is at the centre of the decolonisation project since decolonising South African higher education is primarily about knowledge ownership and production. Disciplinary responsiveness will ensure that what is happening locally and internationally as far as the discipline is concerned is covered, as well as encourage students to think globally and act locally to develop the discipline (Moja, 2004).

Lastly, pedagogical or learning responsiveness is the curriculum’s ability to respond to the needs of the student. In every classroom, there are students with different needs and abilities as far as teaching and learning is concerned. Without the curriculum responding to the needs of these individual learners, no meaningful learning can take place. The one size fits all approach has failed and continues to fail in addressing student needs (Ferdinand, 2009). Responding to student needs through the curriculum entails “approaches to the design of curricula, instructional strategies, methods of assessment, and approaches to student support that take the characteristics and context of target student groups seriously” (Ogude *et al.*, 2005: 13). To Moll (2004) all students entering the university is disadvantaged one way or another especially since they have to adapt to an institutional and epistemic context that is unfamiliar to them. Making the curriculum responsive to their needs fosters the course for decolonisation especially since decolonising the mind is the first step to ensure freedom and critical engagement to whatever material it receives.

These four aspects of responsiveness work for the improvement of higher education especially in a context where decolonising is of great priority. However, to what degree these different aspects of responsiveness will apply in higher education is determined by who shapes the discourse or curriculum and what direction they want it to take. To explore this further, it is vital to employ a theoretical lens that informs curriculum voices as well as a methodology that informs how the voices were selected.

### **3. Research design and methodology**

This research was framed as a qualitative case study to enable the researcher to generate in-depth data about the phenomenon. Qualitative research according to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) refers to research that probes into an individual’s understanding and interpretation of certain experiences, while according to Neuman (2006: 40) a case study is “an in-depth study of one particular case in which the case may be a person, a university, or group of universities etc.”. This paper is therefore justified as a qualitative case study and the case being explored is six universities. To generate qualitative data for this paper, semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires were used. Both semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires used the same questions though targeting different people. The interviews targeted university lecturers while the questionnaires targeted students. The participants for the study were chosen purposively and twelve lecturers from the six universities were interviewed. The interviews lasted for forty minutes each. One hundred and twenty students from the six universities responded to the questionnaires. The interviews and questionnaires were anchored on two basic questions what aspects of the curriculum require decolonisation and how can these aspects be decolonised? The data generated from the interviews and the questionnaires were coded and developed into themes. These themes are presented and discussed in the findings and discussion sections of the article. However, to

make sense of this, it is vital to explore a theoretical lens that can give meaning to the findings. To this effect, this paper considers the hundred thousand theories theory by Morrison (2004).

The hundred thousand theories theory advanced by Morrison (2004) and enhanced by Doh (2013) and Fomunyam (2014) focuses on engaging curricula issues from different perspectives. It advocates the creation and celebration of a hundred thousand theories in solving curricular problems as opposed to the use of curriculum theory by curriculum developers and educational experts. Fomunyam (2014) argues that curriculum theorists have failed to generate a single unified theory which can accommodate or solve all curricula or educational challenges. This is because challenges in higher education are often caused by diverse factors ranging from curriculum, resources, institutional architecture and culture and funding amongst others. The varied nature of higher education goals especially in South Africa makes the task of dealing with educational challenges a herculean one. A variety of voices is therefore needed in ensuring curriculum responsiveness in South African higher education. Doh (2013) opined that curriculum developers and theorists are becoming increasingly frustrated in their quest of finding a universal theory that will serve as a guide for all teachers, learners and curriculum theorists. This failure makes a hundred thousand theories the more apt way to go since theorists as well as educational stakeholders acknowledge the sensitivity of the emerging patterns and complications found in the lives of students in- and outside the university. Fomunyam (2014), adding to this, states that the curriculum's ability to respond to contextual issues within the context of higher education is through theorising or curriculum theorising, which involves individuals in three specific activities; being sensitive to new trends in education, identifying similar trends and issues and finally relating these trends to the individual's context. Curriculum theorising therefore resonates with a hundred thousand theories and through this; the higher education curriculum in South Africa can be responsive in the context of decolonisation. Since a thousand context is the basis for Morrison's argument in this theory, depth, diversity, conflicting voices, responsiveness, productiveness, diverse philosophies and theories should be the basis for curriculum encounters, be it with students or teachers. This way outdated but convenient explanations or solutions to educational problems are eliminated and budding theories developed as researchers attempt to reshape the higher education landscape in general and in South African higher education in particular.

## **4. Findings**

The data generated was coded and categorised into different units echoing different encounters. These units were further merged to form three themes: power dynamics in educational spaces, plurality of voices and curricula changes. These three themes are particularly significant in South African higher education because they inform the basis for responsiveness and decolonisation. The plurality of voices is the context for encounters that can ensure responsiveness and decolonisation. Since responsiveness in higher education is a function of the process and not the product, a hundred thousand theories articulating the essence of curriculum encounters, be it students with students, students with lecturers or lecturers with lecturers is vital especially in South African higher education if the decolonisation project must succeed.

### **4.1 Power dynamics in educational spaces**

How responsive a curriculum is, is a function of who shapes the discussion and what their vision for such a curriculum is. Whether the curriculum is more responsive economically,

culturally pedagogically or disciplinary is principally determined by the power dynamics. The findings of the study revealed that the curriculum has remained colonised in South African higher education for over two decades after the advent of democracy because of the power dynamics in educational spaces. Those who shape curriculum discourses determine what direction education would take, thereby influencing the future of the nation and the lives of the people. Higher education is still dominated by scholars who were trained during apartheid, who see or valued Eurocentric epistemological stands as the ultimate. African indigenous knowledge systems have been neglected while ideas and experiences from the global north have been foregrounded in South African higher education. Attesting to this, one of the participants who completed a questionnaire stated that, “power relations need to be normalised. We as students need to have a say in what we study so that we can ensure the value for our money”. The power dynamics in higher education spaces have been maintained over the years by a few who value their position and for one reason or another have chosen to maintain the statuesque. Curriculum discourses must be decolonised to make sure that every stakeholder within the higher education sector has a say. Another participant alluded that,

*Our education curriculum is still championed by neo-colonialist and this needs to change. Higher education curriculum needs to be student-, learning- and context-centred so that it can be responsive to local situations.*

This lack of responsiveness is the reason why economic power remains in the hands of a few and unemployment keeps increasing.

Furthermore, power dynamics does not only resonate at institutional levels but also at the national level. Curriculum development processes and policy development initiatives for basic and higher education always see scholars from the global north dominating the process. Whatever the reasons for this might be, it has made education largely unresponsive especially pedagogically, economically and culturally. These dynamics require a shift to ensure a balance of power. Students, culture, discipline and economy need to all have their say to ensure that the curriculum used in training students is relevant and productive to the society. Responsiveness is influenced by power and until those who will this power have thorough knowledge of local circumstances and experiences and foreground such circumstances and experiences, responsiveness and decolonisation will remain a myth. To validate this further, one of the participants argued that,

*Everybody needs to be involved in curriculum development process especially at the higher education level because this is where the future of the nation is shaped. It produces our teachers, entrepreneurs, doctors, astronauts, archaeologist, and philosophers amongst others.*

Another participant added that,

*Indigenous knowledge is side-lined because those who are researching it and advocating for it don't have decision making power. And those who do, prefer the ivory towers they are seating [sitting] in until this power dynamic is dismantled, our curriculum would remain unresponsive and decolonisation would remain another buzz word.*

## 4.2 Plurality of voices

This was the second theme that emerged from the data as a way of addressing the hegemonic nature of power in higher education curriculum discussions. Plurality of voices would ensure that every facet of the society is represented, as stakeholders would be given the

opportunity to voice their concerns. With community engagement as one of the core missions of higher education in South Africa, plurality of voices becomes vital in understanding local circumstances and how these circumstances can be addressed. Promoting plurality would empower education stakeholders to know where and what exactly education needs to be responding to and how effective it has been in addressing these issues. Emphasising this, one of the participants stated that, “multiplicity of voices is vital if the decolonisation process is to be successful. Those in the academia have already failed in decolonising it. So, voices are needed from all facets of life to power the process”. Another added that, “lecturers need to stop seeing students as passive acquirers of knowledge and see them as active participants in the knowledge construction process. Together, both students and lecturers can debate what they want or don’t want to be part of the curriculum thereby making it more responsive.” Discussions about curriculum in recent times have been skewed, especially in the face of marketisation, knowledge economy and curriculum internationalisation where universities are competing to make global impact while neglecting the local context.

Plurality of voices will help keep in check the hegemonic nature of power in higher education discussions and ensure that the context is taken into consideration and the decolonisation agenda is foregrounded. Another participant further added that,

*Educational processes or discussions are hegemonic in most universities and this requires decolonisation. A few people have dominated these discussions for the past twenty years and now it's time to change. Thousands of voices should be promoted to contribute in these discussions, so a variety of perspectives can be understood and applied.*

Plurality ensures representation of diverse contexts and viewpoints in the curriculum debate thereby creating room for the curriculum to be more responsive to the people and the society wherein these institutions are based. In addition, disciplines develop better with a variety of viewpoints or different focal approaches to articulating reality. However, this is only possible if curriculum discussions are not stifled by hegemonic practices and academic freedom is promoted in all areas of higher education.

### **4.3 Curricular charges**

Curricular charges determine whether the curriculum is responsive and how the decolonisation project can unfold. These charges, depending on what kind of charges they are, determine who does what within the higher education landscape, what kind of research projects are undertaken to develop the discipline, the spaces for which curriculum discussions take place and the pedagogical approaches embedded within such a landscape. Curricula charges such as responsibilities, consciousness, commitments, responsiveness and projects therefore determine what happens in higher education curriculum discourses. The responsibilities or roles that lecturers, managers, students and support staff perform, would determine whether decolonisation takes place. These charges inform the conversation and the direction higher education would eventually take. However, the power dynamics within the institution as a whole or within the discipline shapes what kind of charge comes into play, as well as the nature of voices that matter, be it a multitude of voices or a privileged few. These voices also shape what kind of charges institutional stakeholders will be involved with and what they can use these charges to do in the development of the discipline or disciplines as the case might be. Owing to the power dynamics, these charges have moved from being disciplinary to interdisciplinary making the charges general rather than specific. This has a resulting effect

on the responsiveness of the curriculum and the decolonisation of the system as a whole in the case of South African higher education system.

Expatriating further on this, one of the participants stated that,

*some of the so-called professors who became professors in 1980/90s are very backward in their thinking. They sit as discipline heads and issue commands on what should or should not be done without consulting lecturers who do most of the work. They fail in taking responsibility to implement their own directives.*

When responsibility is not shared, or initiated by example, defaulting would be a general norm. Another participant, a postgraduate student, stated that,

*the kind of research some supervisors want you to do is baffling. They simply want to remain in their comfort zone as such force students to do research that have no socio-political relevance. Communication is stifled, responsibilities are not defined and those at the end of the food chain [food chain] end up suffering.*

Most academics are not conscious of the impact of their actions on others such as students or support staff and this influences the way the higher education system functions. Their overly lack of commitment, whether due to low pay or archaic institutional architecture, further weakens the ability of the curriculum to be responsive. By engaging with projects with little or no socio-political relevance, avoiding the rigor and vigorousness of disciplinarity to dabble in the shallow waters of interdisciplinarity, championing role confusion and hegemonic practices within the higher education sector, the curriculum is made of no effect. This is because the processes that are supposed to power it to produce have been reduced to mere formalities. Curricular charges therefore influence and are influenced by how responsive a curriculum is powered to be.

## 5. Discussion

Power dynamics in the higher education curriculum is the focal point of responsiveness and decolonisation in the case of South African higher education. Brennan (2011) and Apple (2004) argue that the curriculum is a political document in which lies the power for building and destruction. Those who influence the curriculum determine how responsive it will be in the higher education system. Apple (2004) further argued that schools or universities and by extension, education do not only control people, but meaning and this is done through the curriculum. Therefore, those who control the curriculum discourse control the power and determine what is perceived to be "legitimate knowledge". To Apple, power is the only way through which legitimacy can be establish and whether this knowledge makes for or mars curriculum responsiveness and decolonisation is dependent on who controls it (Apple, 2004). Fenster and Kulka (2016) emphasise that since power is the ability of certain actors to control and influence decisions in planning, development and evaluation of processes that affect an individual and a community's everyday life such as education, these voices of power determine the direction of the society. The curriculum in higher education becomes a playground where voices that matter or that should matter are silenced or promoted. To Fenster and Kulka (2016), knowledge is a product of power, especially pertaining access to higher education, funding or other resources. This is so because knowledge production is directly connected to power as a resource and this power influences what gets to be regarded as knowledge worthy of the curriculum. Academics who control curriculum discussions within the educational landscape

therefore determine what would be transmitted or constructed as knowledge as the case might be and who emerges as custodians of such knowledge.

Fenster and Kulka (2016: 224) arguing further on what they refer to as a “crisis of knowledge”, indicate the “limitations of expert knowledge and the power relations inherent in it. This has followed the emergence of a new interest in local or lay knowledge”. This is confirmed by Jones (2009) who argues that modernists have reached a consensus concerning knowledge’s ability to bridge the gap between nature (education) and society; however, this is impossible without a mutual approach to learning in which every day experiences of the common man (often eliminated through power) is used to balance or challenge “powerful professional knowledge”. Power dynamics in most South African higher education institutions stifle education conversations, causing the common man’s experience to be neglected. This is the reason why the higher education sector and the curriculum have remained colonised. The famous Mamdani affair in the University of Cape Town (Mamdani, 1998) and the Desai affair in the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Beetar, 2013) best illustrate this.

Foucault’s discussion on knowledge and power in which he focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power, with power operating within institutional apparatus is quite relevant here. The institutional apparatus, which includes educational discourse, curriculum encounters, language philosophical propositions and morality amongst others, is always enshrined in a play of power (Foucault, 1980). Knowledge, which is a product of this apparatus, is enmeshed in dynamics of power because of its constant application to social conduct and relation in practice. This power is what is used to silence the plurality of voices, which characterised the higher education environment. Daldal (2014) and Fomunyam and Rahming (2017) argue that power is everywhere and man cannot escape from the complex relations of power. The effects of this power are determined by how it is distributed or used to empower the people. If a plurality of voices is empowered, it would cater for responsiveness at all levels because all areas of concern will be covered. However, forced relations of power where certain individuals remain custodians of authority ensures continuous colonisation of the higher education sector as a whole and fetishism of power in particular. Higher education can only be overly productive in the face of discourse, which is free of hegemonic products and is characterised by a hundred thousand voices. Foucault (1980) argues that power comes from below and there is no binary opposition between the rulers (higher education barons) and the ruled (common placed lecturers, students and other stakeholders). Plurality of voices therefore is the real source of power that is often usurped by a few to foster certain agendas. Gramsci (1980) further expounds on this by seeing power as the ideological predominance of bourgeois values and norms over the subordinate classes, which accept them as normal. This dominance is aimed at controlling the consciousness and belief systems of the people through knowledge and education. This control of consciousness, Daldal (2014) argues, is more of an arena of political struggle than the strive for control of the forces of production. He add that “three words can be said to summarize Gramsci’s notion of power; power is ideology” (Daldal, 2014: 156). This ideology is inherent or transmitted through the curriculum to ensure that the education system remains colonised and unresponsive.

Morrison (2004) argues that the complex nature of the education landscape brought about by hegemonic power dynamics, complicated human experience, social or cultural capital and the socio-political landscape in which such education is taking place requires a plurality of voices if education is to be fruitful. Morrison articulates the poverty of curriculum theory and advocates theorising from a hundred thousand contexts to generate a hundred

thousand theories that can be used to solve educational problems. Curriculum decolonisation and responsiveness are two of such challenges requiring a plurality of voices to ensure that the problem is understood from every context. A hundred thousand theories would cater for economic, cultural, disciplinary and pedagogical responsiveness. The constant call for decolonisation in the South African higher education system is a clear indicator of the failure of the curriculum to produce against the backdrop of hegemonic power structures. To this effect, responsiveness within the context of decolonisation is only possible if curricula charges such as responsibilities, consciousness, commitments and projects are rid of ideological nuances that make them unhealthy for academic discussion (Fomunyam, 2014; Fomunyam, 2017b). Higher education in South Africa has amongst other things three intrinsic objectives; value for money, fitness for purpose and transformation (Fomunyam, 2016). For students to enjoy value for their money, they must be made part of the conversations around curriculum and made to engage with diverse charges alongside lecturers and other university stakeholders. Through commitments, consciousness and responsibilities, the students and staff can grow within the higher education sector, engage in projects that foster the process of decolonisation and articulate the challenges they are facing to ensure pedagogical and disciplinary responsiveness. They can also bring to bear the strengths and weaknesses of their social and cultural capital to ensure that the curriculum is made to respond to their strengths and weaknesses culturally. This curriculum cannot be responsive especially in the context of decolonisation according to Veyne (2013: 32) who argues that “knowledge is a justification for power, power sets knowledge in action and, along with knowledge, a whole set-up of laws, rights, regulations and practices, ....representations, doctrines and even philosophies with institutions and so on. All this is impregnated by the ‘discourse’ of the day.” A hundred thousand theories articulated by a plurality of voices, powered by curriculum encounters that are void of hegemonic power dynamics would ensure decolonisation in South African higher education as well as the responsiveness of the curriculum.

## 6. Conclusion

Curriculum responsiveness in South African higher education has been and still is being stifled by several factors. In this era of decolonisation, the need for curriculum responsiveness cannot be over emphasised, especially because it is by responding culturally, disciplinary pedagogically and economically from a contextual perspective that the decolonisation project can succeed. Economic responsiveness is vital in addressing the growing concerns of unemployment, which is caused to a greater extent by contextual factors than global ones, and disciplinary responsiveness is the key to promoting African indigenous knowledge systems from a contextual standpoint. The curriculum must be aligned to culture, which is the basis of local experiences and thought to ensure that issues of patriarchy, respect of human dignity and social justice is at the core of education. Pedagogy is useless if it cannot enhance student learning, as such making the curriculum responsive to student needs is essential to giving them a voice and making them better candidates for the job market in particular and society in general. A hundred thousand theories is therefore needed to articulate local experiences for decolonisation and responsiveness within the curriculum. To this end, this paper therefore makes several recommendations for the enhancement of curriculum responsiveness in the current context of decolonisation in South African higher education.

The paper recommends that institutional architecture must be rid of hegemonic power dynamics that shape curriculum encounters in ways that disempower it to respond to society

challenges. Furthermore, these power dynamics and hegemony have stifled curriculum discussions and encounters making it counter-productive and until a plurality of voices are able to articulate what should or should not be part of the curriculum from a contextual perspective, decolonisation is impossible. Thirdly, curricular charges that have been neglected or dumped on a selected few while others remain in ivory towers need to be revisited to ensure that every stakeholder engages several charges, as the need might be to develop the discipline and themselves as voices within the discipline. In addition, the curriculum in particular and higher education curriculum in general is a political tool that can either be used to ensure decolonisation or continuous colonisation. As such, there is need for interdisciplinarity and a greater need for disciplinarity as South African higher education redefines itself in the context of decolonisation. Lastly, for the curriculum to respond systematically to contextual societal needs and the changing demands of globalisation and internationalisation, it must be unsettling and provoking to ensure that every stakeholder takes responsibility to make it responsive. By designing the curriculum to be provocative, the higher education system would be opened up for encounters that in effect empower scholars to think local (decolonising the curriculum) and act or respond globally.

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