Decolonising the Curriculum that Underpins Social Work Education in South Africa

Mbazima S. Mathebane
orcid.org/0000-0002-4036-1375
University of South Africa
mathems1@unisa.ac.za

Johanna Sekudu
University of South Africa
sekudj@unisa.ac.za

ABSTRACT

The current social work knowledge that is characterised by colonial domination in South Africa demands new visions. These visions should be aimed at producing an epistemic revolution that would see the re-emergence of previously silenced knowledges. The continued Eurocentric hegemony reflected in the content and form of the social work curriculum and pedagogical practices creates an epistemic scandal that requires decolonial intervention and redress. Following an examination of the decolonisation discourse from textual archives on coloniality, decoloniality, social work and its history, several tenets and principles were identified to guide the process of decolonising social work education in South Africa. These include focusing the curriculum and pedagogy of social work on the African world view (Afrocentric social work), adopting cultural relativity as an approach in social work education, and promoting dialogue between diverse cultural orientations and knowledges found in South Africa, including Western knowledge without harmonising the knowledges and/or creating a hierarchy.

Keywords: Afrocentric social work; coloniality; decolonisation; decoloniality; epistemology; pedagogy

Introduction

[W]e have a past but not a heritage. To the data-generating demands of the Historical Axis, we present a virtual blank, much like that which the Khoisan presented to the Anthropological Axis. This places us in a structurally impossible position, one that is outside the articulation of hegemony. However, it also places hegemony in a structurally impossible position because – and this is key – our presence works on the grammar of hegemony and threatens it with incoherence. (Wilderson 2007, 31)

The hegemonic gaze that undergirds Eurocentrism, deep-rooted in coloniality, permeates conventional ways of knowing, thinking, as well as curricular and pedagogical practices in South Africa. Coloniality entails the attitude, idea and logic of power, knowledge, and being locating Europe at the centre stage of privilege and hegemony over the whole world (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Social work education is not immune from the influence of coloniality. The coloniality embedded in social work education challenges scholars to critically evaluate the profession and academic discipline with a view to decolonise it. As eloquently captured by Wilderson (2007) in the quotation cited above, social work education in South Africa is equally faced with a predicament of incoherence related to Eurocentric hegemony. The solution lies in either accepting or challenging the status quo with a transformative agenda. Thus, decolonisation is but one way of dealing with the incoherence inherent in the Eurocentric social work education found in South Africa.

Social work scholars in the global South have argued that social work theory and practice developed in Western contexts are ineffective and culturally irrelevant for social challenges in non-Western contexts (Brydon 2011; Graham 2002; Gray 2005; Mathebane 2015; Midgley 2008; Mungai 2015; Osei-Hwedie 2002; Schiele 2000; Thabede 2008). The words "global South" are used in this paper to refer to the ways of knowing, power and being in post-colonial context rather than a geographical location (Santos 2014). For Santos (2014), the global South represents a metaphorical symbol of the unjust suffering of the people of colour at the hands of an enduring system of institutionalised global colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy.

The academic discipline of social work is not immune from the influences of coloniality which Maldonado-Torres (2007, 243) articulated as "the long standing power patterns that originate from colonisation, but continues to be exercised in the absence of the colonial administration". Maldonado-Torres' (2007) conceptualisation of coloniality leads us to Razack's (2009) critical reflection on the association of social work knowledge with the colonial project. The latter is seen through the privileging of the superiority of Western paradigms to the marginalisation of alternative ways of knowing, whose place of origin is in the global South. In this article, the words "Anglo-American", "Eurocentric" and "Western" will be used interchangeably.

The authors write from the vantage point of being Africans who form part of the global South having experienced coloniality of power and knowledge first-hand. Therefore, the purpose of the study on which this article reports was to examine closely the epistemological challenges linked to the Eurocentric hegemony of social work education in South Africa, and to propose general principles that should inform and guide a process of decolonising social work education going forward. Following textual examination of the raging discourse on decolonisation, this article attempts to highlight the incongruences created by the imposition of Eurocentric social work on Africa and South Africa in particular. The article uses decolonialised and Afrocentric theoretical lenses to make sense of the current state of social work education and to map out a way

forward with regard to transforming the current Western-oriented social work education towards an Afrocentric social work education system.

The discussion begins with an overview of the literature focusing on the hegemony of Eurocentrism in social work education in the global South and some reflections on international social work. The findings of an analysis developed from the literature review will be discussed concurrently. Towards the end of the article, the colonisation and decolonisation process adapted from Laenui (2007) will be discussed in relation to the South African context followed by a presentation of Afrocentric social work education as a decolonialised option for transforming social work education in South Africa. The authors conclude that the application of Afrocentric social work in South Africa would lead to the elimination of the Eurocentric hegemony and allow ample space for embracing cultural diversity through the adoption of cultural relativity as proposed by Brydon (2011). In turn, a cultural relativity approach will aid in the promotion of dialogue between different cultural centres in social work education in South Africa.

The Nature of Eurocentric Hegemony of Social Work Education in the Global South

Smith (2014) notes that from its inception during the 1930s, social work education in South Africa mirrored British and American models. As argued by Schiele (1997), there are two fundamental problems with the form and outlook of social work. The first problem entails the fact that social work is based on theories and paradigms that are underpinned by a Eurocentric world view. Schiele further posits that the Eurocentric world view is primarily based on the geohistorical, political, economic and philosophical traditions of Europe. This Eurocentric world view is characterised by a linear, individualistic, materialistic and rationalistic understanding of reality and being, with the exception of the ecological perspective. However, Schiele acknowledges that the use of an ecological perspective in social work remains limited to the linear, individualistic and materialistic interpretations (Schiele 1997). The second problem as noted by Schiele (1997) is that the social work profession remains silent on the cultural values of people of colour (the global South). Consequently, this necessitates a need for critical re-examination and search for alternative typologies. The above challenges flagged by Schiele (1997) set the scene for the problems with which the authors grappled in the study on which this article reports. The authors focused specifically on social work education.

Several scholars wrote about the challenges experienced by academics when teaching Western-oriented social work theory in the global South (Gray, Coates, and Yellow Bird 2008; Razack 2009; Rowe, Baldry, and Earles 2015; Thabede 2008). The most common among the challenges experienced are:

- the incongruence between theory and practice;
- the use of practical examples and case studies that do not relate to the lived realities of the people of the global South; and
- the over-reliance on texts and theoretical frameworks developed in the West and the consequent lack of relevance to the socio-economic, cultural and political context in the global South.

As a result, the African world view is marginalised and silenced. For instance, a typical thinking from the African world view would enable one to view witchcraft as African science (Thabede 2008). One would be able to remove the positivist narrative that requires material evidence to prove reality and validate alternative sources of evidence, including spirituality and effect (Schiele 1997).

Therefore, given the current state of affairs where Eurocentric hegemony defines social work education (Razack 2009), it can be expected that the situation will undoubtedly breed epistemological and pedagogical challenges. These challenges emanate from the paradoxical relationship between precolonial black African existence with ontological density and colonial (including post- and neo-colonial) black African existence characterised by what Sithole (2016, 182) dubbed the "ontological zero point". The latter means that blacks are understood from their lived experiences and their form of living, which are reduced to non-existence (lack of ontological density), but possessing the ability to emerge (Sithole 2016). This is also known as "existential phenomenology" (Sithole 2016, 182). The result is an epistemological dilemma where a rescuer arrives from somewhere to make meaning of black Africans while simultaneously rejecting their humanity (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009). This implies that the making of meaning is coupled with a denial of the humanity of the subject exemplifying the coloniality of being (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009). An open and honest reflection on the above challenges may allow for critical insights into creating new visions for the development of decolonialised epistemological and pedagogical options for social work education in the near future.

Illuminating Some Subtle Aspects of Coloniality in Contemporary Social Work Discourse

We acknowledge that in the main, the use of the word "indigenous" has been limited and is specifically used to refer to both the people from the global South and their ways of knowing and being (Brydon 2011, 156). However, we elected to take exception to the use of this word, on the grounds that it seems to represent a form of coloniality of being, power and knowledge. The word "indigenous" is arguably not contrived by the people of the global South. Nevertheless, it is imposed by the global North and Western intelligentsia on the global South to refer to what is generally perceived as parochial and

particularistic subjectivity that defines alternative knowledges, a sense of powerlessness and ways of being in the global South.

We argue for the ascription of primacy to decolonisation instead of indigenisation because indigenisation implies adaptation and, by implication, the silencing of some and others to a certain degree (Payne 2005). The authors underscore that the system of coloniality and its concomitant modernity sustains itself through an underlying logic of power, which includes among other strategies, appropriation of others' knowledges and positioning Europe as an epistemic centre and hegemony of the modern world (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009). Hence, Western cultural thought and knowledge systems are not articulated as indigenous, particularistic and parochial but as universal (Brydon 2011, 157). This is a blindingly obvious form of coloniality that the global South and its intelligentsia must critically examine. It is for this reason that several scholars advocating for alternative epistemologies emerged and employed different naming practices, including the use of concepts such as "southern theory" (Connell 2007, 218), "epistemologies of the South" (Santos 2014, 15), and "Afrocentricity" (Asante 2006, 650). Therefore, in the spirit of decoloniality, African social work scholars too should steer clear of using colonial conceptions to decolonise social work education, as such would only serve to reinvent the wheel and eventually recycle and perpetuate coloniality.

Reflecting on the State of Southern Epistemologies in Relation to International Social Work

It becomes important to start the discussion on international social work by reflecting on the newly adopted definition of social work. In her editorial of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*, Ng (2014, 127) undertook a comparative analysis of the changes brought forth by the new definition from the old. Among changes noted are:

- the addition of the academic discipline;
- replacement of problem-solving with social cohesion;
- the addition of collective responsibility and respect for diversity; and most importantly
- the addition of "indigenous" knowledge systems.

The inclusion of "indigenous" knowledges or what we may call "Southern theory" or "epistemologies of the South" as part of the knowledge base of social work by the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) in 2014 signalled a recognition at global level of the significance of the previously ignored and/or silenced knowledges. The move by the IFSW to include indigenous knowledges as valid sources of knowledge for social work propelled yet another wave of scholarly contributions at international level regarding the significance of the historically neglected knowledge systems. However,

the question that boggles the mind, when previously ignored knowledge systems are invoked as a source of professional knowledge for contemporary social work in a post-colonial era where coloniality and Eurocentric hegemony remain the order of the day, is which indigenous knowledge systems should be incorporated after prolonged periods of genocides and epistemecide (a systematic destruction of any indigenous knowledge base) (Sithole 2016).

This situation creates a dilemma for professional and academic disciplines, such as social work. The dilemma signals a call to social work academics to engage with the situation and contemplate sustainable solutions to the challenges identified. Unfortunately, there has been a deafening silence on issues of decolonisation among academics, particularly black African academics, in institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Notably, it has been through the unshakable determination and heroic acts of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements and student protests that the issues of decolonising the curriculum are gradually gaining momentum. During the 2015 and 2016 academic years at universities, South Africa has witnessed nationwide student protests where students and some stakeholders had come together to demand free education and the acceleration of transformation, particularly the call for decolonisation of university spaces and the curriculum. It is against this backdrop that the authors argue for a critical re-examination of the intersecting relations between power, knowledge and being or identity and their concomitant influence on humanity, particularly in the context of social work education in South Africa.

To this end, the domain of social work has been dominated by globalised Western traditions conceived as universally applicable (Askeland and Payne 2006; Gray and Fook 2004; Haug 2005). Conversely, Sewpaul (2005) questions the universal applicability of social work values as propagated by Western social work and the domain of social work. Furthermore, Haug (2005) argues that the discourse on social work knowledge is not globally inclusive as it is dependent on one's ability to speak with the conceptual and linguistic capacity of the West, from where the discourse has been constructed. More recently, Brydon (2011) added to the list of concerns regarding mainstream "Western social work" and the domain of international social work. Among others, she highlighted the fact that Western social work in its current form and standard is available only to a minority of people of the world. Furthermore, she pointed out that the discipline has no capacity to achieve mutual exchange and dialogue at a global level owing to the existence of unequal power relations reflected by the positioning and exclusive hegemony of the Western paradigm in relation to others.

The above assertion by Brydon (2011) affirms an earlier observation by Marais and Marais (2007, 812) that "indigenous" beliefs were never incorporated into the core values of social work, and concluded that it was therefore not possible to identify a unified world view of social work. This means that as things currently stand, existing paradigms are not afforded equal value and respect in shaping social work education, practice and research. Consequently, there is no opportunity for different cultural

contexts to learn from one another. This status quo remains despite the fact that culture permeates all spheres of life and the acknowledgement that "no culture is absolute" (Brydon 2011, 158). As articulated by Marais and Marais (2007) and Laungani (2004), a need exists for social workers to seek a deeper analysis of the implications of culture and how they view the world.

As globalisation brings everyone closer to each other and international collaborations become a necessity, the need for a body of knowledge that cuts across and transcends national boundaries becomes more urgent (Marais and Marais 2007). However, as articulated earlier, little effort has been made to integrate the silenced knowledges from the global South into the social work discourse (Marais and Marais 2007). Earlier studies (Coates 2003; Healy 2001) found that, where efforts were made to make service delivery and social work education culturally relevant, this has been done in a context of the dominant Anglo-American theories and practices. More recently, Brydon (2011) acknowledged the difficulty associated with accepting and incorporating other world views into one framework. However, she warned that contemporary discourses on cultural competence and sensitivity do not provide a sustainable solution for this challenge. She challenged social work scholars to move beyond the proverbial notions of cultural sensitivity and competence and embrace cultural relativity.

The current authors concur with Brydon (2011) and maintain that knowing (competence) and being sensitive to one's own as well as the diverse cultures of others will not lead to the redressing of the historical inequities and domination of Eurocentric paradigms in mainstream and social work, but would instead perpetuate such hegemony. Therefore, there is an urgent need to decolonise social work in the global South. The following section presents a discussion of the colonisation and decolonisation processes.

The Colonisation and Decolonisation Processes

Building on the foundations cemented by certain African scholars (Midgley 2008; Mupedziswa 2001; Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo 2008; Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie 2011; Sewpaul and Holscher 2004; Smith 2008; Thabede 2008), the authors accordingly advance that a truly Afrocentric social work epistemology can only emerge following a decolonisation process. The authors hold that for African scholarship to appreciate the value of decolonisation fully, it is imperative that an understanding of colonisation is first sought. As eloquently captured by several decolonial scholars (Hart 2007; Laenui 2007; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Razack 2009; Sithole 2016; Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009), the meaning and impact of colonisation go beyond the physical act of building colonies and dispossession or invasion. It incorporates an internalised process of valorisation of the coloniser's culture and the denigration of the colonised culture (Hart 2007; Laenui 2007). Furthermore, internalised colonisation occurs when negative racial attributes and expectations (common tactics of colonisation as discussed above) form a person's belief about him- or herself and could result in a negative self-image and

self-harming behaviour (Laenui 2007). The current authors support Laenui's (2007) definition of colonisation, which talks about both physical acts of colonisation as well as internalised colonisation as indicated earlier.

Therefore, coloniality on the one hand, denotes "the long standing power patterns that originate from colonisation and that are now exercised in the absence of a colonial administration" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243). In addition, Maldonado-Torres (2007) distinguishes between three forms of coloniality, namely coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge, and coloniality of being. Coloniality refers to the imperial or colonial organisation of societies (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243). Tlostanova and Mignolo (2009) further illuminate the coloniality concept, revealing important aspects of this concept that have been hidden. They argue that at a conceptual level, "coloniality is the hidden side of modernity, it is like the unconscious, hidden weapon of both the civilizing and developmental mission of modernity" (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009, 132).

As argued by Maldonado-Torres (2007), it is thus vital to underscore the fact that the long-standing power patterns originating from colonisation continue to be exercised even after colonial administrations had ended. This is to be found in the ongoing struggles between the indigenous cultures and the so-called hegemonic cultures brought forth by Eurocentrism (Brydon 2011). According to Brydon (2011, 157), culture denotes "society's ways of responding to social needs and problems" on the one hand. On the other hand, the words knowledge and culture can be readily interchanged and taken to mean the same (Huggings, Macklin, and Glendinning 2008). Thus, culture refers to both the societal response to social needs and problems as outlined by Brydon (2011) and to a knowledge system as defined by Huggings, Macklin, and Glendinning (2008). Hence, one of the key tools used by colonialists against their colonised victims was the destruction of indigenous cultures and their replacement with hegemonic Eurocentric cultures. It is against this backdrop that the authors argue that the global South and South Africa in this case, need to undergo a process of decolonisation in order to deal with the challenges created by coloniality.

Decolonisation is a critical analysis of Western-informed ideological frameworks, and while it is able to link to and find commonalities with the left and/or right political ideologies, the primary focus remains on deconstructing and challenging the ideology of colonisation (Hart 2007; Laenui 2007). According to Reyes-Cruz (2008, 656), decolonisation calls for grounding our theories, anchoring them, on the reflections non-academics make about social life as they live it, and elaborating theory with them instead of about them. The struggle for decolonising knowledge needs to go beyond developing research projects from and with the historically marginalised to actually elaborate theory based on the reflections people make about social life.

Decoloniality refers to "the decolonisation of knowledge and being by epistemically and affectively de-linking from the imperial/colonial organization of society" (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009, 132). Therefore, based on the above assertions, the current authors

maintain that decolonisation should take primacy in African social work education. Once the academic discipline of social work in South Africa has been decolonised, a truly Afrocentric social work epistemology with potential for a meaningful contribution to the global body of social work knowledge will emerge. Moreover, African social work scholarship would be able to create own relevance instead of finding relevance in the current Eurocentric and hegemonic knowledge base of social work.

Following the discussion of the concepts "colonisation" and "coloniality", "decolonisation" and "decoloniality", the discussion moves the processes of colonisation and decolonisation as conceptualised and explained by the Australian scholar, Laenui (2007). The five stages of colonisation and decolonisation present a useful and succinct way of understanding the past and providing inspiration for a path for the future (Laenui 2007). The choice of Laenui (2007) was motivated by the comprehensive nature of his conceptualisation of both colonisation and decolonisation as processes and the paucity of literature in this regard, particularly with regard to decolonisation. Thus, the processes outlined by Laenui (2007) can be easily adapted to other contexts in the global South.

The Process of Colonisation

Stage 1: Denial and Withdrawal

According to Laenui (2007), at this first stage, colonisers deny indigenous peoples' culture and moral values. An example of the Australian case reflects how indigenous peoples' humanity was denied and withdrawn in the process of colonisation. The authors observed that South Africans witnessed a similar experience when colonial settlers arrived in Africa. The African people were reduced to inferior subhumans (Sithole, 2016). According to Sithole (2016), given the lived experiences of black subjects under the hands of colonisers, the existential condition of black people was reduced to and could only be understood from an ontological zero point. This means that black African life as viewed from their lived experiences and their form of living reduced to non-existent (lack of ontological density) was characterised by a denial and withdrawal of their sense of who they were (their true selves). This, in the authors' view, speaks to the first stage of denial and withdrawal in the colonisation process.

Stage 2: Destruction/Eradication

During this stage, the destruction of culture and social systems is witnessed by the colonised nations. In the case of Australia as described by Laenui (2007, 358), this stage ushered in mass murders, massacres, eugenic breeding programmes aimed at assimilation or absorption, and forced removal. Similarly, in South Africa, black people witnessed a prolonged period of mass genocides and dispossession of African natives of

their land and livestock. As argued by Sithole (2016), black people in Africa are among the inhabitants of the world whose cultural and spiritual power has been destroyed (epistemecide). In his lamentation of colonialism, Biko ([1978] 2004, 31) quotes Fanon's (2008) reflections on colonial destruction and eradication of black history when he said:

> [I]n an effort to destroy completely the structures that had been built up in the African society and to impose their imperialism with an unnerving totality, the colonialists were not satisfied merely with holding people in their grip and emptying the Native's brain of all form and content, they turned to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it. No longer was reference made to African culture, it became barbarism. Africa was the Dark Continent. Religious practices and customs were referred to as superstition. The history of African society was reduced to tribal battles and internecine wars.

Stage 3: Denigration/Belittlement/Insult

According to Laenui (2007), at this stage indigenous culture, languages, practices, knowledge and beliefs are denigrated and rendered invisible and valueless, and in some instances, outlawed. He argues that the indigenous ways are replaced by the coloniser's model. Sithole (2016) argues that, in the African context, black people in Africa represented those whose life was dehumanised, inferiorised and racialised. The authors concur with Asante's (2006) observations that African people were denigrated to holding up the margins of the American and European worlds. As a result, Asante (2006) uses Afrocentricity as a theoretical perspective and philosophy in order to convey the profound need for African people to be relocated historically, economically, socially, politically and philosophically from holding up the margins of the American and European worlds. This, according to Asante (2006), would ensure that Africans free their minds and shift from being decentred to being centred on African cultural heritage. Biko ([1978] 2004, 22) describes the denigration process as the bastardisation of Africans and their cultural heritage by colonisers reducing a long history of African life into barbarism. Biko ([1978] 2004, 22) laments that black Africans suffer from an inferiority complex because of 300 years of deliberate oppression, denigration and derision which made them useless as co-architects of a normal society. It is on the basis of the above assertion that Biko alluded to the necessity of what he termed "black consciousness" (Biko [1978] 2004, 22) so that blacks may learn to assert themselves and to stake their rightful claim. All of the above assertions attest to the fact that Africans too were denigrated, belittled and insulted as part of the colonisation process.

Stage 4: Surface Accommodation/Tokenism

Laenui (2007) argues that in this stage, the remains of the surviving culture are given token regard. According to Laenui (2007, 359), this stage creates the "noble savage concept and others definition of what constitutes a real indigenous person". Consequently, Biko

([1978] 2004, 21) expresses his strong distaste for surface accommodation or tokenism, as described by Laenui (2007), by proclaiming:

> The integration they talk about is first of all artificial in that it is a response to conscious manoeuvre rather than to the dictates of the inner soul. In other words the people forming the integrated complex have been extracted from various segregated societies with their inbuilt complexes of superiority and inferiority and these continue to manifest themselves even in the 'non-racial' set-up of the integrated complex.

Stage 5: Transformation/Exploitation

According to Laenui (2007), at this stage, remnant culture is transformed and exploited by the dominating colonial society. Indigenous art is one example of this stage. In his reflection about colonisation, Biko ([1978] 2004, 30) recounts how the coloniser disfigured African cultural practices, including traditional spirituality and indigenous knowledge systems and replaced them with Western ways that turned African people against themselves. He summed up the logic behind white domination of blacks as about "preparing a black man for a subservient role in his country" (Biko [1978] 2004, 30). Biko ([1978] 2004, 30) qualifies the transformation and exploitation that Laenui (2007) describes in stage 5 by describing what a black man has become because of colonisation as follows, "… a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity".

The colonisation process has a negative bearing on the social work curriculum as well, which calls for a serious redress. The following section will focus on the decolonisation process with specific reference to the social work curriculum.

The Process of Decolonisation

Following the discussion of the five stages of colonisation, the following section draws on the subsequent five stages of decolonisation proposed by Laenui (2007). These stages are not sequential like the process of colonisation; people can move between them, and stages could overlap. All five stages are integral and interlocked and used in conjunction with Biko's conceptualisation of black consciousness. Most importantly, the authors posit that the decolonisation process offers a blueprint for all forms of decolonialised interventions, including curriculum transformation. The stages are not necessarily linear, but cyclical as the process is dynamic and ongoing (Laenui 2007).

Stage 1: Rediscovery and Recovery

In this foundation phase, people rediscover their history, recover traditional practices and languages, and reconnect with country and kin (Laenui 2007). It is a time of a

renewed sense of identity, of recovering knowledges. Laenui (2007, 360) notes that people may arrive at this stage by curiosity, accident, desperation, escape, coincidence, fate or spirituality. In the South African context, Biko ([1978] 2004, 34) calls this stage "the re-awakening of the sleeping masses". He argues that the only vehicle for change before starting on any programme with people who have lost their personality is to "make the black man come to himself; pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused" (Biko [1978] 2004, 34). He termed this an "inward-looking process in black consciousness" (Biko [1978] 2004, 31). Most importantly, Biko ([1978] 2004, 34) emphasises, "it shall have to be the black people themselves who shall take care of this programme … as a living part of Africa and of her thought".

To bring this closer to home, this first stage in South Africa would centre on restoration of the African cultural heritage and the centring of curriculum development on such heritage. This may cover the three aspects of decoloniality of being, power and knowledge as propounded by Maldonado-Torres (2007). Decoloniality of being would relate to the restoration of the true identity of African people, while decoloniality of power refers to the reclaiming of the power by Africans to choose and act in the best interest of self without coercion and undue influence from somewhere else, and finally, decoloniality of knowledge relates to the restoration of indigenous knowledge systems (Maldonado-Torres 2007).

The authors concur with Maldonado-Torres' (2007) assertions and argue that all the dimensions as discussed above were destroyed by coloniality and should form the basis of a decolonised social work curriculum. We maintain as authors that, given our unfortunate experience with genocides (killing of people) and epistemecides (killing of knowledges), as discussed by Sithole (2016), leading to a poor culture of reading (chronic shortage of African books) and preference for knowledge of orature (spoken) instead of literature (written), we would resort to the use of poetry, novels, music and arts as they are based on observation of the lived realities of Africans. Thus, building Afrocentric knowledge would involve galvanising these art forms as sources of knowledge. This is an ongoing process to which we will keep coming back. South Africa is grappling with this stage while progressing to other stages, particularly stage 3, which seems to be the current stage of South Africa in the decolonisation process.

Stage 2: Mourning

The mourning phase is a time where the feelings of anger and injustice need time for expression in order for the healing to begin (Laenui 2007). Laenui (2007, 364) cautions that some people could become lost in this phase, resulting in being unable to move towards healing. It can be expected that there will be some reactions to the process of decolonisation, given more than 300 years of subjugation and dereliction. Therefore, as the authors observed in South Africa, some people may be harbouring

anger and unresolved issues arising out of colonisation as even after many years after being a colony, colonisation continues to cause havoc among its victims. Some people might have lost their true identity completely and may even deny that such a loss had happened. Therefore, patience is required in the authors' view. Such patience also means accepting that it will take time for people to achieve what Biko calls "returning to self" and a "reawakening of the sleeping masses" (Biko [1978] 2004, 34). With regard to curriculum development, it implies a need for a progressive move from a colonial to a decolonised social work education with the beginning phase featuring elements of both in a blended mode as propounded by Brydon in her cultural relativity approach to social work (Brydon 2011). However, it must always be borne in mind that the ultimate goal is for a complete shift towards a decolonised Afrocentric social work curriculum.

Stage 3: Dreaming

This is a phase of strengthening and revaluing people's philosophy and knowledge. Laenui (2007, 365) sees this phase as the most crucial one for recovery, describing it as a phase for "building the Master Recovery Plan". The authors equally and similarly view this as vital because it is instructive of people to envision a new way of being, knowing and power in a more practical sense through setting goals and planning how to achieve such goals. It is a call for action in all sectors of society, including academy and disciplines through their education, research and practice roles. For instance, this is the stage where social work as a profession begins to plan and redeploy a new decolonised form and content of social work knowledge exclusively based on the dictates of the South African socio-political and cultural landscape. At this level, there must be inter-sectoral collaboration and consolidation of decolonial thought that allows the whole society to move in one decolonial direction (Laenui 2007). This is a phase where South African social work scholarship begins to contemplate an Afrocentric social work education. The process of decolonising social work education should culminate in the decolonisation of the social work curriculum and pedagogy and its centring on the African world view leading to the development of Afrocentric social work. The adoption of cultural relativity as an approach in social work education implies that students are exposed to the different cultures and encouraged to interact with them from their own situation or positionality (Brydon 2011). This will promote dialogue between diverse cultural orientations and knowledges found in South Africa including Western knowledge without harmonising them and/or creating a hierarchy (Brydon 2011; Santos 2014).

It is the authors' views that, given the scarcity of textual archives (literature) on African social work as indicated earlier, reliance on orature (oral knowledge) in the form of storytelling, music and other art forms may be an option and a source of indigenous knowledges. The use of African languages is key to this objective. The same mediums may be used when assessing students in social work. Students could be allowed to

communicate and articulate themselves using different mediums, including idioms or proverbs, music, poetry, and the fine and performing arts.

The authors contend that the decolonisation of social work education should unfold in a manner that enables the academic discipline to appreciate the positionality of any form of knowledge and its teaching, and the ways such teaching is conducted in relation to how content is developed. Equally important is the question of how students interpret and integrate social work knowledge as well as critical reflections aimed at ascertaining that no voices are silenced and erased as reflected by the coloniality of knowledge. Thus, the current authors call for a total dismantling of the Eurocentric hegemonic gaze into the curriculum and pedagogical approaches that underpin social work education in South Africa. This may be achieved through developing a set of practical guidelines that cannot be covered in one article by this discussion. It should become a subject of a special article that focuses on such guidelines. However, as a general principle, it would have to be noted that the process of knowledge development is influenced by a dynamic, ever-changing socio-political and cultural context (Payne 2005). Thus, the process of knowledge development is ongoing and responsive to the dictates of the context.

Stage 4: Commitment

From the dreaming phase comes the opportunity for commitment to a direction into which society must move (Laenui 2007). Thus, once a plan on decolonisation has been agreed upon and actioned, there will be a need to reinforce it with an unwavering commitment in order to sustain the process. This may take many forms, including continuous engagement between stakeholders and role players in social work using various communication mediums, such as publications, conferences, collective agendas, pledges and mottos.

Stage 5: Action

The action in this phase is proactive and not reactive (Laenui 2007). Laenui (2007) maintains that this phase is not the responsive action to challenge injustices or actions to ensure survival. It is not a punitive action, but a positive action based on patriotic consciousness and commitment. The decolonisation process should not be aloof and abstract, but rather talking about day-to-day issues that will have to be contended with on an ongoing basis (Laenui 2007). Therefore, action will always be key to the process. As plans are adopted and actioned, new issues and challenges will emerge and call for action. Therefore, the process may need to be multi-faceted and multi-dimensional so that issues may be tackled at different levels. Some action will need to be proactive while other situations may call for reactions and all these may occur at grassroots level or may be coordinated at institutional, structural and systemic level.

The following section presents a discussion on Afrocentricity as a decolonialised option for Africa.

Afrocentricity as a Decolonialised Option in Africa

In Africa, Afrocentricity and Afrocentrism represents an African option for the proverbial indigenisation of and/or indigenous social work as commonly used for knowledge development in the global South (Asante 2006). Over the years, Afrocentricity has developed to become a framework to articulate an alternative voice for understanding African culture, and eventually emerged as a theoretical perspective for social work (Graham 2002; Pellebon 2007; Schiele 1997). Afrocentric social work can be defined as a method of social work practice based on traditional African philosophical assumptions that are used to explain and to solve human and societal problems (Schiele 1997). According to Schiele (1997), there are three basic assumptions that underpin Afrocentric social work, namely:

- individual identity is conceived as a collective identity;
- the spiritual aspect of humans is just as legitimate and important as the material aspect; and
- the affective approach to knowledge is epistemologically as valid as the objective empirical approach.

Based on the above assumptions, Afrocentric social work deduces that the main cause of social problems is oppression and spiritual alienation (Schiele 1997). The Eurocentric value system undergirded by materialism, objectification, individualism and inordinate competition could become a fertile breeding ground for oppression and spiritual alienation (Schiele 1997). It is clear from the discussion that in our quest to create relevance in social work education in Africa, Afrocentric social work stands as a desirable option. It is therefore critical that Afrocentric social work be developed optimally to allow for the possibility of it making a meaningful contribution to the social work domain, without which it will be impossible for Africa to make a contribution to the global body of social work knowledge.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion on the state of social work education in South Africa and the position of African knowledges revealed an undesirable state of incongruences and discrepancies driven by the continued hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge at both macro (global) and micro (national and below) levels. Consequently, potential and existing African knowledges that should underpin social work are parochialised to their local context (micro level) and find no real accommodation and expression at macro level

(international). The domain of mainstream social work remains an exclusive preserve of Western epistemologies, partly because of the destruction of local knowledge systems through colonisation and largely due to continued coloniality in the global South. Thus, to deal effectively with the above situation, social work scholars, particularly those in Africa, need to examine coloniality closely and critically in order to find the best and most effective methods to decolonise social work education. Such a decolonisation process should focus on both the curriculum (content and form) and pedagogy (manner of teaching and learning) for sustainability.

There are already some good examples of decolonisation from Australia, as shown in the literature, which South Africa may adapt. Indeed, the state of coloniality in social work education calls for a serious confrontation of the status quo and challenges social workers to find ways urgently of opening up the space for alternative epistemologies to emerge. Thus, the authors conclude that similar to its counterparts, South Africa should embark on a general decolonisation process of social work practice, education and research. In education, the process should culminate in the decolonisation of the social work curriculum and social work pedagogy and its centring on the African world view leading to the development of Afrocentric social work. The adoption of cultural relativity as an approach in social work education and the promotion of dialogue between diverse cultural orientations and knowledges found in South Africa, including Western knowledge, without harmonising them and/or creating a hierarchy are additional options that could be considered to enrich the decolonisation process in the South African social work education sector.

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