

**Esther Mavengano**

Department of English and Media Studies

Great Zimbabwe University

 0000-0002-9360-3334

**Tobias Marevesa**

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Great Zimbabwe University


 0000-0001-5479-6735

**Paul Nepapleh Nkamta**

Indigenous Language Media in Africa Research Entity,

School of Languages, Faculty of Humanities,

North-West University, South Africa

 0000-0003-1301-1326

e-ISSN 2449-8645

HEMISPHERES

No. 37, 2022

## Exploring Africanisation of the University Curriculum in Zimbabwe: An Afrocentric Approach

### Abstract

Conversations about Africanisation of university curriculum are part of the epistemic crisis and efforts to debunk Eurocentric thinking characterised by binarisms, racial biases and discriminatory attitudes towards Africans. An Afrocentric perspective troubles conceptualisation of notions of African humanity *vis-à-vis* the vexing question of epistemological trajectories undertaken in postcolonial Zimbabwe. This study focuses on African efforts to design an African-oriented curriculum at university level. Analysis is provided of worrying issues in Zimbabwe's curriculum, including the philosophy-guiding universities. This discussion is based on the premise that there is need to re-configure the African epistemic base from which Africans view and conceptualise the world.

**Keywords:** Africanisation, Afrocentric approach, curriculum, Eurocentrism, epistemic crisis, university curriculum, Zimbabwe.

### Introduction

Conversations about curriculum reforms are always highly politicised, as rightly observed by Kable (2001). The university curriculum in Zimbabwe has for a long time been dogged by competing agendas and discourses, especially from dominant groups, and lack of a holistic epistemological approach for existing curriculum challenges. Most pertinently, the reviews of the university curriculum need to be considered in the context of well-defined epistemological pathways to be undertaken, defined skills, relevance in the global context, and knowledge to be imparted. These are complex issues that require serious academic attention to investigate the subject of

the Africanisation of the university curriculum. This study focuses on this pugnacious topic with regard to the often frantic efforts to come up with an African-oriented university curriculum in Zimbabwe. It is in this regard that discourses about Africanisation should be understood. This situation is not exceptional to Zimbabwe, but common throughout Africa. In view of the above insights, the paper seeks to answer the following research questions: How can the present university curriculum in Zimbabwe be Africanised? What are the epistemic and ideological dis/connections in the current university curriculum in Zimbabwe? What are the pedagogic, ideological and practical challenges faced by Zimbabwe in adopting and implementing Africanisation of the university curriculum?

### **Theoretical Framework: Afrocentric Approach**

Afrocentrism valorises African ideology, worldviews or thoughts and calls for shifts from European ideology (Winters, 1992). Onyewuenyi (1993) posits that the Afrocentric standpoint is:

a series of activities by concerned African and African-American scholars and educators [which is] directed towards achieving a particular end of ensuring that the African heritage and culture, its history and contribution to world civilisation and scholarship, are reflected in the curricula on every level of academic instruction (Onyewuenyi, 1993, pp. 39–40).

Advocates of Afrocentrism, such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 23), request “a rewriting and reconstruction of the whole panorama of human history in its account of the origin of mankind, the origin of philosophy, science, medicine and agriculture architecture”. Scholars in this school of thought embarked on the mission to challenge Western European ideologies by rewriting and valorising the African past. The Afrocentric paradigm adopted in this study is relevant and useful in the interrogation of Africanisation discourse in the context of university education in Zimbabwe. Most importantly, the Afrocentric school of thought investigates the need for human equity and justice with regard to existing epistemological canons.

### **Africanisation and the Curriculum**

Africanisation is defined from different vantage points by different scholars. For example, Makgoba (1997, p. 199) emphasises culture and identity in his understanding of this concept and considers Africanisation as “a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of [positioning and] affirming African

cultures and identities in a world community". For Ramose, Africanisation refers to:

[...] the African experience in its totality, is simultaneously the foundation and the source for the construction of all forms of knowledge... Africanisation...holds that different foundations exist for the construction of [diverse] pyramids of knowledge. It disclaims the view that any pyramid is by its very nature, eminently superior to all others. It is a serious quest for a radical and veritable change of paradigm so that the African may enter into genuine and critical dialogical encounter with other pyramids of knowledge. Africanisation is a conscious and deliberate assertion of nothing more or less than the right to be African (Ramose, 1998, p. i).

In addition, Higgs (2003) proposes a more integral approach to Africanisation discourse by arguing that if we consider the concept of *Ubuntu*, which is a southern African philosophy that focuses on human loyalties, we might get a better understanding of Africanisation. What Higgs suggests in his definition is that Africanisation encompasses or embraces humanity in its diversity and totality. Similarly, Louw (2010) considers Africanisation as a way of surpassing individual and national identities, searching for mutual understanding and our African and global diversity. The above strands of Africanisation show diversity in the understanding of the concept and is revisited in the debate section for further scrutiny and discussion.

Another important concept in this discussion is curriculum. The term curriculum is defined by Pinar (2012, p. 80) as "a formal course of study, emphasising content or subject matter". Reid (2012) and Odendahl (2011) also define a curriculum in terms of the experiences of each learner, the implication on how the content is learned and can be the process of outcomes and behavioural objectives. In the context of higher and tertiary education, the curriculum refers to "what knowledge is included or excluded in university teaching and learning programmes" (Le Garange, 2004, p. 145). Other problematic issues which need to be investigated are: How to Africanise the university curriculum in Zimbabwe and still remain relevant in the international arena; Is the Africanisation narrative of the curriculum sustainable within the context of international standardisation of university curricula framework? In other words, the conversation about Africanisation of the university curriculum in Zimbabwe brings to the fore the multi-layered struggles required for transformation to occur.

## The Africanisation Debate

The discourse of Africanisation is incomplete without Ngugi's (1987/2009) insights. He aptly writes that "[d]ismembered from the land, from labour, from power, from memory, the result is the destruction of the base from which people launch themselves" (2009b, p. 28). Inspired by Ngugi's insights, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 23) also poses the following polemical questions: How can 'dismembered' people be 're-membered'? How can they re-launch themselves from the world of 'non-being' into the world of 'being'? How can they recapture their lost land, power, history, being, language and knowledge?

The above questions are thought-provoking when debating the concepts of Africanisation, decoloniality and liberation, which are also entangled in conversations about educational curricula. The above critical questions posed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni demand on-going academic conversations and investigations in an attempt to provide answers and solutions. Africanisation discourse is a response to these fundamental questions. These discourses, namely, Africanisation, decoloniality and liberation, arise from the need to address the impact of colonialism on Africans and their contemporary existential circumstances. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 23), colonialism is not an "episode, but a process of dismemberment, subjectivisation, domination, control and exploitation". There is a convergence of ideas from Ngugi and Ndlovu-Gatsheni on the need for re-humanisation and 're-memberisation' of African humanity, which was previously dehumanised and dismembered by the process of colonialism.

Similarly, Makgoba (1997) views Africanisation as an orientation towards the promotion of the African way of life (culture) and the worldview of Africans. He postulates that:

It involves incorporating, adapting and integrating other cultures into African visions to provide the dynamism, evolution and flexibility so essential in the global village. Africanisation is the process of defining or interpreting African identity and culture. It is formed by the experiences of the African diaspora and has endured and matured over time from the narrow nationalistic intolerance into an accommodating, realistic and global form (Makgoba, 1997, p. 25).

From the above, Makgoba places emphasis on the significance of African cultures and identities, which work together to promote self-pride and considers inclusivity in the university curriculum. Much akin to Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2015, p. 26) observation that the long-term effects of the dismemberment process "were out of sync with their history and memory, out of sync with

their being and [became] human beings who have lost name, language, culture, religion and identity”, Africanisation is a broader process of re-naming the previously ‘unnamed’, legitimising the previously delegitimised and creating a sense of ownership for indigenous people.

Similarly, Lebakeng, Manthiba and Dalindjebo (2010) note that indigenous African epistemology was considered defective and any knowledge coming from indigenous Africans was deliberately overlooked, deemed inferior and that there was a need to further develop and re-orient towards a Western epistemological model. Furthermore, the colonisers “ignored the unique demonstration of the human genius that people in different parts of the world have employed in taking different pathways to knowledge creation, transmission and dissemination successfully” (Keto, 2003, p. 5). Clearly, the main thrust of Western education was to denigrate the indigenous people in Zimbabwe/Africa and deny them valuable and relevant social knowledge about themselves and their communities. Lebakeng, Manthiba and Dalindjebo (2006) argue that the resuscitation of local knowledge and problematisation of epistemic reliance from the West could be realised in the inclusion of African indigenous epistemology. Failure to acknowledge the significance of philosophies from Africans perpetuates epistemological injustice and biased monolithic views of humanity. These scholars emphasise that:

the imperative for the inscription of indigenous African epistemology into the curriculum and underpinning education with African philosophy is, in the first instance, a question of rights, and thus, a matter of natural and historical justice. In advocating for the reversal of epistemicides, there is a need to place indigenous knowledge systems on the same level of parity with other epistemological systems in an effort to achieve formal and substantive equality (Lebakeng, Manthiba and Dalindjebo, 2006, p. 76).

Hickling-Hudson, Matthews and Woods (2003, p. 3) are “apprehensive of the power of education to influence thought and behaviour.” They argue that Eurocentric representations distort the culture and history of formerly colonised African countries, such as Zimbabwe, in a binary fashion, thus: “the Orient and its history – like the West and its history – are constructed through a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary in a manner that serves the interests of Western rule”. Mazrui (1978, p. 18) similarly exhorts “young Africans to struggle to conquer African self-contempt” otherwise termed ‘cultural cringe’, a term used by Tiffin (2003), occasioned by Eurocentric education. Such a critique of colonial education as well as the desire to forge an identity for Africans have resulted in the re-assessment of the curriculum and the

increased advocacy for Africanised education in the postcolonial era. Africanisation of the university curriculum is a deconstructive thought that is located within epistemological politics and the decolonisation project that defines curriculum conversations in postcolonial Africa. Blade Nzimande, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology in South Africa, made insightful remarks about the nature of education in contemporary Africa when he noted that:

Over the last few decades, some things have not changed. There has been no significant break in relation to knowledge production between the colonial and postcolonial eras. African universities are essentially consumers of knowledge produced in developed countries (UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, 2009, p. 30).

Nzimande (2009) suggests the need for an epistemological rupture from Eurocentric epistemes for African universities. Africanisation of the university curriculum in Zimbabwe is relevant when we consider the fact that the only university of Rhodesia, renamed the University of Zimbabwe after independence, was an affiliate of the University of London, meaning it adopted Western epistemological canons, to the exclusion of African mores. This means that the type of curriculum imposed on Africans was Eurocentric, thus relegating African culture, values and ethos.

This paper focuses on an analysis of the reasons behind the importance of infusing Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) within the Africanisation discourse and investigates whether this approach sufficiently addresses the problem that proponents of IKS, and Africanisation of the university curriculum, are trying to resolve. According to Letsekha (2013, p. 7), the IKS “is understood as local knowledge, which is unique to every culture or society, embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals, and is commonly held by communities rather than individuals”. The infusion of IKS into the university curriculum is also further supported by Mwinzi (2016), who, however, contends that this process needs to be regulated in order to be relevant at the global level. The significance of infusing the epistemology of Africa necessitates positioning the type “of rationality, objectivity, rejecting what is obsolete, accepting what is apt, modifying and adapting what can augment creativity in terms of improving the psychological, intellectual and economic realms” (Mwinzi, 2016, p. 380). The author further argues that an insertion of epistemology of Africa in the university curriculum is a fundamental resolution to destructive differences, distortions and obscurities in contemporary university learning. It is thus important that the present university curricula requires re-assessment, re-thinking and re-energising of African IKS and epistemology.

Yet, some scholars, such as Alatas (2009), Connell (2007) and Crossman (2004), advocate a less radical position in the process of Africanisation and infusion of IKS into the university curriculum. For example, Crossman (2004) is of the view that the idea of Africanisation of the university curriculum should not racialise and ethnicise ideas of knowledge. The author further believes there is a need for finding other benchmarks and standards for locally, regionally and internationally shared knowledge and practices. Horsthemke (2009) also posits that conversations about Africanisation have highlighted some loopholes, which demand attention. He states that:

[n]either the idea of ‘an African essence, culture and identity’, nor the notion of ‘African ways of knowing’, constitutes an appropriate theoretical framework for conceptualising the change required in higher educational thought and practices... instead, that the transformation agenda can be better met by a different human rights approach (Horsthemke, 2009, p. 573).

Connell (2007) warns that when discussing IKS in the context of Africanisation discourse, it is imperative to acknowledge that various types of knowledge may entangle in a troublesome and complex way with identity and politics. Considering the fact that Zimbabwe, like many other African countries, is multi-racial and multi-ethnic, with numerous and diverse groups of people, the problematic questions to be addressed are: How are IKS selected? What content is suitable to cater for such diversity? These are critical questions which point at the dilemma that academics encounter in championing the implementation of Africanisation and the infusion of IKS into the university curriculum.

In advancing Africanisation discourse there is a need not to over-emphasise IKS, as it could be detached from the global context. In other words, Africanisation of the university curriculum should not ignore the demand to be relevant to international educational standards. Is it essential to refrain from an epistemological paradigm based on contempt, racism and arrogance, but rather promoting humility, respect and sincerity as important standards infusing the new university curriculum. This view concurs with the tenets of *Ubuntu* philosophy, which encourages inclusivity, interconnectedness and humanness in educational epistemic pathways, including the university curriculum. Guided by *Ubuntu* philosophy, Africanisation of the university curriculum should adopt a broader perspective that projects ethos of humanism, universalism, interconnectivity and respect for human rights in their diversity and the collectivity of humankind.

Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Makuvaza (2014), Shizha (2006) and Mukusha (2013), among others, advocate the incorporation of indigenous knowledge

in Zimbabwe's university curriculum. The infusion of local knowledge into the curriculum is considered paramount and may help "define and determine academic knowledge relevant for African societies and economies" (Shizha, 2006, p. 20), in place of colonial education. Such scholars criticise colonial education for undermining traditional societies and spearheading an individual Western value system, which was foreign to Zimbabwean/African belief systems (Shizha, 2006). The adoption of an African-centred curriculum could instil self-confidence, patriotism and communally-oriented graduates who can demonstrate pride in their African-ness/Zimbabwean-ness. Drawing from the above reflections, the conversation about Africanisation is a complex one since it is marked by numerous ambiguities, grey areas and contestations.

The Africanisation discourse is not complete without mentioning the role of indigenous language in the university curriculum. The continued dominance of English over African languages in Zimbabwe and Africa at large, promotes linguistic imperialism and denigration of indigenous cultures (Ngugi, 2009/1987). In this article, we subscribe to the view that language is a carrier of culture, hence, if a language is undermined or denigrated, it follows that its speakers are also inferiorised. In a situation where indigenous languages have been developed into written forms, it is pertinent that universities design and adopt language policies that recognise and empower indigenous languages and consider such languages in teaching and learning.

### **Africanisation and the University Curriculum in Zimbabwe**

There is general consensus that the university curriculum in Zimbabwe in the postcolonial era needs to be Africanised in line with decolonisation logic that privileges Africanity in epistemological discourses (Mignolo, 2011/2012, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Africanisation discourses call for the inclusion of what was previously considered to be subaltern knowledge from Africans (Mignolo, 2012). According to Van Heerden (1997), Africanisation in the context of education is usually understood in relation to the reformation of educational curriculum and the inclusion of African values and ethnics. He notes that:

For at least three centuries since the conquest of the indigenous people in the unjust wars of colonisation, the education curriculum... did not include African philosophy. For the colonial conqueror and the successor in title thereto, the indigenous conquered peoples had neither an epistemology nor a philosophy worth including in any educational curriculum (Van Heerden, 1997, p.70).



The Bantu educational system for black Rhodesians was meant to restrict intellectual growth of learners by misrepresenting knowledge and making it a point that the colonisers would control the acquisition of knowledge of both learners and teachers, thereby reinforcing state propaganda (Kallaway, 1988). The type of education offered to black Rhodesians was meant to create a permanent state of political and economic inferiority. In this sense, the colonisers utilised education as an ideological instrument that supported the white superiority/black inferiority dichotomy. Yet, this could be read as an essentialist and, perhaps, patriotic narrative since it can be argued that the colonial administration in Rhodesia educated blacks who could be employed both in public and private sectors, whereas the postcolonial administration in Zimbabwe is educating and training teachers, nurses and other service personnel who would otherwise be unemployed. During the colonial period, white settlers dispossessed black indigenous people of their identity, self-respect and anything African, leading to an uprooting and deracination of these people. The deracination of the indigenous people prevented them from developing their autonomy and self-growth. This is in reminiscence of Mignolo's (2007) notions of the logic of coloniality and grammar of decoloniality.

From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that Africanisation of education is inevitable in order to correct the epistemological and hermeneutical injustices created during the colonial era. Mignolo (2009) demands epistemic disobedience in order to depart and challenge the colonial logic of the postcolonial era. Ramose (2002) equates colonial education to 'epistemicides', pointing out the damaging effect on Africans. Therefore, Africanising the university curriculum in Zimbabwe should be conceptualised as the development of scholarship and research done in institutions of higher learning, such as colleges and universities to drive educational transformations that could be expected to restore the dignity and self-pride of indigenous people. This concept is anchored in the fact that this type of education will produce people who are rooted in their communities and who are cognisant of the challenges faced by Africans.

Africanisation of the university curriculum in Zimbabwe is meant to unify very diverse communities with different ethnic values. Although Africanisation of the university curriculum in Zimbabwe should valorise the African past in order to create a unified future, it is essential to consider Mignolo's (2011, p. 45) proposition of "epistemic disobedience" as a way of delinking African from Eurocentric thought. Mignolo further argues that:

Epistemic disobedience leads us to decolonial options as a set of projects that have in common the effects experienced by all inhabitants

of the globe who were at the receiving end of global designs to colonise the economy, authority...to colonise knowledges and beings (Mignolo, 2011, p. 45).

Epistemic delinking is then necessary for opening epistemological spaces for a new humanity, thinking and knowledge. It is equally unjust, both philosophically and epistemologically, to think that Africanisation, no matter how it is defined, is a panacea to the problems of university curriculum in Zimbabwe.

### **Zimbabwe's University Policy Framework**

In Zimbabwe, university education is coordinated, regulated and promoted by the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE). The council was “created through an act of parliament, Chapter 25:27 in 2006” (Garwe, 2014, p. 3). The ZIMCHE was established to replace the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Garwe further explains that the ZIMCHE assesses “the standards of teaching examinations, academic qualifications and research in institutions of higher education” (Ibid., p. 3). It is composed of 21 council members, nominated for a three-year period. Out of the 21 council members, three are appointed from internationally recognised institutions of higher education to ensure quality assurance (Garwe, 2014). The appointment of members is done in accordance with high professionalism, as enshrined in the ZIMCHE Act, 2006. Members should have experience and expertise in the domain of university education and should guide and render advice on issues of quality assurance. Thus, the council becomes the responsible authority of university education in Zimbabwe and its overall function is to offer guidance on educational policy matters (ZIMCHE Act, 2006). The ZIMCHE is a regulatory body whose roles include accreditation, de/registration and auditing of higher learning institutions. It also plays an advisory role, as it works in liaison with the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education in Zimbabwe. It also promotes regional and international cooperation between universities. In Zimbabwe, the idea of ‘teaching/learning’ should be approved by the ZIMCHE, which regulates and monitors educational practices in universities. The ZIMCHE encompasses reforms, policies, infrastructure, strategies and plans made by institutions of higher learning. With reference to Zimbabwe, the ZIMCHE has sought to infuse Africanisation in the curriculum since 2019, with the creation of the minimum body of knowledge (MBK).

## **Global Standardisation of the University Curricula**

Africanisation of the university curricula needs to be undertaken in the context of the global arena. There are many factors to consider when one talks of standardisation of university curricula at the global level. These include benchmarks for international rankings, such as university evaluation, academic evaluation, research evaluation, publications and scientific papers (Huang, 2011). University evaluation is a term used to explain both academic and research evaluation, such as university research output or achievement, university administration and the quality of education offered. However, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate university from academic evaluation. Academic evaluation focuses mainly on scholarly activities, achievements and results of research investment (Daniel and Fisch, 1990). Research evaluation includes teaching, community and university services, while scholarly publications are used in research evaluation. However, there is need to rethink and critique the set international university ranking benchmarks to guard against a resurfacing and domination of the Eurocentric epistemological model. For instance, it is pertinent to question whose benchmarks are dominant. Another relevant question is whether these international benchmarks are defined within an African context.

In the Zimbabwean context, viable library facilities with internet connectivity in universities are critical for local and global spaces of engagement. Good library facilities are the bedrock of serious and vigorous research, which leads to high standards of university education. Another fundamental aspect is research funding for empirical and non-empirical studies. Funding is also an indispensable factor for postgraduate students, especially those undertaking master's, doctoral and postdoctoral studies. Recently, Zimbabwe designed a new approach to the university curriculum (Education 5.0), which emphasises innovation and industrialisation. Education 5.0 is about setting key missions for Zimbabwean universities, which include teaching, research, university services, innovativeness and industrialisation. These five missions seek to produce graduates who can create jobs through the application of acquired skills and knowledge. This is a marked shift from the previous Education 3.0 (teaching, university service and research), which was a colonial epistemological model designed to produce and feed employees into existing colonial industries (Murwira, 2019). In Zimbabwe, Education 3.0 was one of the colonial vestiges to be dismantled in line with decolonisation and the Africanisation project in independent African states. The noted limitations of Education 3.0 led to the construction of Education 5.0 to meet the contemporary local and global standards of university education. Education 5.0 was created for the purposes of industrialisation and modernisation. In Zimbabwe, almost

all state universities have established innovation hubs, for instance Chinhoyi University of Technology successfully launched an Artificial Insemination Programme, which is attracting both local and international attention, pointing at the success story of Education 5.0.

Another key initiative from the ZIMCHE in the process of standardisation of the university curriculum in Zimbabwe is the minimum body of knowledge (MBK). The MBK project was initiated by experts from each of the study areas in order “to achieve comparable standards in what is learned by students embarking on similar degree programmes in various universities across the country” (Garwe 2014, p. 5). For instance, in the area of New Testament studies, there are significant modules which should be compulsory for the successful completion of the Bachelor of Arts Honours in Religious Studies degree programmes. A student cannot specialise in New Testament studies without taking modules in Hellenistic Greek and History of interpretation from the first century up to present. These are international requirements for one to specialise in the above-mentioned degree programme in reputable universities globally. Therefore, the MBK should include areas to meet the set international standards. Furthermore, the MBK for students undertaking a Bachelor’s degree programme in Linguistics should include areas such as Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Semantics. These areas are critical for students to compete on the global market and be accepted by reputable international universities. The MBK project offers compatibility and comparability of Zimbabwean university curricula with the international university education community. In this regard, the Zimbabwe university curriculum is in tandem with international quality assurance.

### **Challenges of Africanising Zimbabwe’s University Curriculum**

One of the primary problems which African scholarship faces is a dependency syndrome. Institutions of tertiary education in Africa and Zimbabwe tend to be copycats and maintain colonial Western values (Makgoba, 1996). It could be argued that universities in Zimbabwe and Africa at large, are not autonomous and scholarship is fundamentally imitative. Lebakeng, Phalane and Dalindjebo (2010, p. 73) argue that African universities are characterised by the phenomenon of the ‘captive mind’ or ‘mental captivity’ since their scholastic “roots are defined more consciously and consistently within the framework of the various Western philosophical and methodological schools.” These universities may be accused of reification and their approach is dominated by Western colonial thought in the mimicry evident in course replication and duplication. Some of the features of a captive mind-set are an indiscriminating attitude towards ideas from the West (Lebakeng, Phalane and Dalindjebo

2010; Alatas, 1972; Altbach, 1977), the inability to address fundamental issues of indigenous society and a failure to tap into local resources, such as indigenous languages and religion (Ngugi, 1986; Wiredu, 1995). There are other challenges, which include:

1. Lack of political will since the colonial educational model serves the interests of the ruling elite;
2. African countries, including Zimbabwe, claim to be independent, but in reality this remains an elusive idea since the former colonial powers tend to have to approve any serious curriculum reforms undertaken. The Western models of education remain in place because African leaders view these as part of the modernisation of African states; and
3. The language utilised for 'linguaging' the curriculum is itself problematic, because it reflects Western biased curriculum or linguistic imperialism.

### **Way Forward**

The above insights and reflections enrich debates around Africanisation of the university curriculum. Apple (2004) rightly observes that no education is ever neutral, hence the discourse about Africanising the university curriculum in Zimbabwe is also in the service of specific ideologies or worldviews. This means that the reforms in university curriculum should be undertaken in a critical and cautious manner in order to investigate the assumptions, claims and beliefs embedded in Africanisation discourses. While the infusion of local knowledge into the university curricula may encounter a number of challenges, as highlighted in the foregoing discussion, there is need to identify a comprehensive substitute discourse. Mwinzi suggests that:

Africanisation must oscillate on the continuum of re-orientation of persons, institutions, structures, products, processes and ideas towards a fresh, creative and constructive imaging of Africa and African contexts, which take the past, present and future African reality and African potential seriously, consciously and deliberately (Mwinzi, 2016, p. 384).

In addition, Africanisation of the university curriculum should be directed at resolving any form of stereotyping and racial discrimination, as rightly alluded to by Garvey when he states that:

...with pride in self and with determination of going ahead in the creation of those ideas that will lift them to the unprejudiced company of races and nations. There is no desire for hate or malice, but ... to see all mankind linked into a common fraternity of progress and achievement

that will wipe away the odour of prejudice, and elevate the human race to the height of real godly love and satisfaction (Garvey, 1969, p. 26).

The above Garveyan viewpoint of Africanisation of the university curriculum calls for a ‘remembering’ of black people and the entire human race that has been fractured by racial and social categorisation. In other words, Africanisation discourse seeks to subvert long held racial prejudices, classism and white-black dichotomisation, which can be traced back to the slave trade. In this sense, Africanisation is a search for human integration, equality, justice and inclusivity. Humanity is realised in its totality and given the opportunity to define epistemological pathways collectively.

Prinsloo contends that “Africanisation is a legitimate counter narrative and the quest for an African identity is its multiple intersectionality with gender, race, location, language, religion and cultural markers” (Prinsloo, 2010, p. 19). He also emphasises that African academics should be able to question Western canons of knowledge and celebrate and validate the contributions of indigenous knowledge systems. Hence, universities must not be ivory tower institutions occupied by an elite minority ignorant or indifferent to the prevailing poverty and squalor that surround them. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017, p. 23), “a genuine African university should draw inspiration from its context, not a transplanted tree, but growing from a seed that is planted and nurtured in the African soil”.

## Concluding Remarks

From the above discussion, it appears that Africanisation of the university curriculum in Zimbabwe and other African countries, is important to make the knowledge taught appropriate and meaningful to the aspirations of the local people. This paper provides a critical interrogation of the concept of ‘Africanisation’ as a problematic socio-political construct that can be viewed as a specific reaction within the broader context of the Afrocentric conversation *vis-a-vis* university education in Zimbabwe. Positioning Africanisation debate within postcolonial and Afrocentric discourses, the subject becomes a necessary counter-narrative to the historical and continuing Western hegemonic practices that disregard the importance of ontological and epistemological canons in Africa and, specifically, university education in Zimbabwe. The discourses of Africanisation, as a counter-narrative, though necessary, should, however, not be taken or promoted uncritically or unconditionally.

In the light of the above scholarly insights, university education and its curricula are highly contested and debatable discourses and spaces as different stakeholders bet their claims for different motives and purposes. While

acknowledging the existence of these divergent claims, observations and worldviews, this paper focuses precisely on the debate about Africanisation of the university curriculum in Zimbabwe and grapples with the polemic questions around how to Africanise and the amount of Africanised content in the university curriculum. These and other questions deserve an ongoing scholarly inquiry since the exact parameters of Africanness are not very clear. The other fundamental aspect for consideration in this debate is that Zimbabwe's university education should also fit into the global educational framework and meet international standardisation criteria.

It is further argued that African knowledge or indigenous knowledge systems need to be developed and that they should be infused into the existing Zimbabwean and African university epistemological models to mitigate the dominance of Western canons. Through this position, we intend to contribute to this scholarly dialogue, examine alternative epistemological canons and embrace diversity in contemporary academic conversations. The African university curricula in general, and Zimbabwean curriculum in particular, should involve a serious inquiry that will obviously contribute significantly towards positive transformations.

In the first place, the need to Africanise the curricula arises from, and contributes to, the African tenets of knowledge and praxis, not as discriminatory and counter alternatives to Eurocentric epistemological canons, but rather, as surely salient, scientifically rigorous and valid. In debating about the Africanisation of the university curriculum in Zimbabwe, the academic community needs not only investigate existing Western educational canons in Africa, but also critically question the proposed new epistemological pathways and the nature of knowledge to be infused into the available university curricula. From these reflections about this contentious and topical subject, it is essential to rethink the discourse on Africanisation in a more critical way and re-examine the new educational pathways to be undertaken not only in consideration of the needs of the indigenous people but also within the wider global context.

## References

- Alatas, Syed F. 2009. 'The Definition and Types of Alternative Discourses', in: Wang, Georgette (eds.) *De-Westernizing Communication Research: Altering Questions and Changing Frameworks*. New York: Routledge, pp. 238–249. <http://www.ios.sinica.edu.tw/cna/download/5balatas2pdf> (Accessed: 2 May 2020).
- Alatas, Syed H. 1974. 'The Captive Mind and Creative Development.' *International Social Science Journal* 36 (4), pp. 691–699.

- Altbach, Philip G. 1977. 'Servitude of the Mind? Education, Dependency and Neo-colonialism'. *Teachers College Record* 79 (2), pp. 187–204.
- Apple, Michael W. 2004. *Ideology and curriculum*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Chemhuru-Hapanyengwi, Oswell. and Makuvaza, Ngoni. 2014. Hunhu: In Search of an Indigenous Philosophy for the Zimbabwean Education System. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development* 3 (1), pp. 1–15.
- Connell, Raewyn. 2007. *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science*, London: Allen & Unwin.
- Crossman, Peter. 2004. "Perceptions of "Africanisation" or "Endogenisation" at African Universities: Issues and Recommendations", in: Zeleza, Paul T. and Olukoshi, Adebayo O. (eds.). *African Universities in the Twenty-First Century*, Volume 2 Dakar, Senegal: Codesiria, pp. 319– 340.
- Daniel, Hans-Dieter., and Fisch, Rudolf. 1990. 'Research Performance Evaluation in the German University Sector'. *Scientometrics* 19 (5-6), pp. 349-361.
- Garwe, Evelyn C. 2014. Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Zimbabwe. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, pp. 1–10, available at: <http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/131745.pdf>.
- Hickling-Hudson, Anne., Matthews, Julie. and Woods, Annette. 2003. 'Education, Postcolonialism and Disruptions', in: Hickling-Hudson, Anne and Mathews, Julie and Woods, Annette (eds.). *Disrupting preconceptions: Postcolonialism and education*. Queensland: University of Queensland Press, pp. 1–16.
- Higgs, Philip. 2003. 'African Philosophy and the Transformation of Educational Discourse in South Africa'. *Journal of Education* 30 (1), pp. 5–22.
- Horsthemke, Kai. 2004. 'Knowledge, Education and the Limits of Africanisation'. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 38 (4), pp. 571–587.
- Huang, Mu-Hsuan. 2011. 'A Comparison of Three Major Academic Rankings for World Universities: From a Research Evaluation Perspective'. *Journal of Library & Information Studies* 9 (1), pp. 1–25.
- Jansen, Jonathan. 2017. 'Decolonising the University Given a Dysfunctional School System?' *Journal of Education* 68, pp. 3–14.
- Kable, Elizabeth. 2001. 'Making Sense of a New Curriculum Text within Competing Discourses and Complex Contexts'. *Contemporary Issues. In Early Childhood*, 2(3), pp. 321–336.
- Kallaway, Peter. 1988. *From Bantu Education to People's Education*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Keto, Tsheloane C. 2003. 'Reinventing the African University'. *Umrabulo*, 18, pp. 60–63.
- Le Garange, Lesley. 2004. '(South) African (a) Philosophy of Education: A Reply to Higgs and Parker', *Journal of Education* 33 (1), pp. 143–154.
- Lebakeng, Teboho J., Phalane, Manthiba M and Dalindjebo, Nase. 2006. 'Epistemicide, Institutional Culture and Imperative for the Africanisation of Universities in South Africa'. *Alternation* 13 (1), pp. 70–87.



- Le Grange, Lesley. 2014. 'Currere's Active Force and the Africanisation of the University Curriculum'. *South African Journal of Higher Education* (SAJHE) 28 (4), pp.1283–1294.
- Le Grange, Lesley. 2007. 'Integrating Western and Indigenous Knowledge Systems: The basis for effective science education in South Africa'. *International Review of Education* 23 (5-6), pp. 577–591.
- Letsekha, Tebello. 2013. 'Revisiting the Debate on the Africanisation of Higher Education: An Appeal for a Conceptual Shift'. *Human Science Research Council, South Africa Report*.
- Louw, Willia. 2010. 'Africanisation: A Rich Environment for Active Learning on a Global Platform'. *Progressio* 32 (1), pp. 42–54.
- Makgoba, Malegapuru W. 1996. 'South African Universities in Transformation'. *Perspectives in Education* 17, pp. 175–186.
- Makgoba, Malegapuru W. 1997. *Mokoko: The Makgoba Affair – A Reflection on Transformation*, Vivlia: Florida.
- Mazrui, Ali. 1978. *Political values and the educated class in Africa*. Berkeley: CA. University of California.
- Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Mignolo, Walter. 2011. 'Epistemic Disobedience and Decolonial Option: A Manifesto'. *Transmodernity. Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1(2), pp. 44–66.
- Mignolo, Walter D. 2012. *Local Histories/ Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton University Press.
- Mignolo, Walter D. 2011. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mignolo, Walter D. 2009. Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom. *Theory, Culture and Society* 26 (7–8), pp. 159–181.
- Mignolo, Walter D. 2007. 'DELINKING: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of Decoloniality'. *Cultural Studies* 21 (2–3), pp. 449–514.
- Msila, Vuyisile. 2009. 'Africanisation of Education and the Search for Relevance and Context'. *Educational Research and Review* 4 (6), pp. 310–315.
- Murwira, Amon. 2019. 'Towards Revitalising the Role of Education in Zimbabwe'. *Regional Universities Forum for Capacity-Building in Agriculture*. Speech, 6 December, Harare.
- Mwinzi, Joe M. 2016. 'Towards the Africanisation of Teacher Education: A Critical Reflection'. *International Journal of Education and Research* 4 (9), pp. 377–388.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. 2017. "The Emergence and Trajectories of Struggles for an 'African University': The Case of Unfinished Business of African Epistemic Decolonisation". *Kronos* 43 (1), pp. 51–77. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2309-9585/2017/v43a4>.

- Ndlovu-Gatssheni, Sabelo J. 2015. 'Decoloniality in Africa, a Continuity Search for a New World Order'. *The Australasian Review of African Studies* 36 (2), pp. 22–50.
- Ndlovu-Gatssheni, Sabelo J. 2008. 'Nativism and the Debate on African Public Sphere in Post-Colonial Africa: Reflections on a Problematic 'Reverse Discourse''. *The Australasian Review of African Studies* 36 (2), pp. 1–34.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. 2009. *Something torn and new: An African Renaissance*, New York: Basic Civitas.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. 1987. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Harare: Zimbabwe Printing Press.
- Onyewuenyi, Innocent C. 1993. *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.
- Odendahl, Nora. 2011. *Testwise: Understanding Educational Assessment (Volume 1)*. Lanham, MD: Roman and Little Field.
- Pinar, William F. 2012. *What is Curriculum Theory?* New York: Routledge.
- Prinsiloo, Paul. 2010. 'Some Reflections on the Africanisation of Higher Education Curricula: A South African Case Study'. *Africanus* 40 (1), pp. 19–31.
- Ramose, Mogobe B. 1998. 'Foreword', in: Seepe, S. (ed.) *Black Perspectives on Tertiary Institutional Transformation*. Johannesburg: Vivlia.
- Reid, William. 2011. *Case Studies in Curriculum Change: Great Britain and The United States*. New York: Routledge.
- Shizha, Edward. 2006. 'Legitimizing Indigenous Knowledge in Zimbabwe: A Theoretical Analysis of Postcolonial School Knowledge and Its Colonial Legacy'. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education* 1, pp. 18–35. DOI:10.20355/e5rp4j.
- Van Heerden, Eulalie. 1997. 'Cultural Diversity and Schooling', in: Lemer, E.M and D.C. Badenhorst (eds.). *Introduction to Education for South African Teachers*. Kenwyn: Juta.
- Winters, Clyde A. 1992. 'Afrocentricism: A Valid Frame of Reference'. *Journal of Black Studies* 25(2), pp. 170–190. DOI: 10.1177/002193479402500203.
- Wiredu, Kwasi. 1995. *Conceptual Decolonisation in African Philosophy: Four Essays*. Selected and introduced by Olusegun Oladipo. Ibadan: Hope Publications.