

Art. #1714, 12 pages, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n4a1714>

## Towards decolonising teacher education: Reimagining the relationship between theory and praxis

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We live in a dynamic world, characterised by major economic, technological and social change. Decolonising teacher education is embedded in a critical approach that aims to create counterhegemonic intellectual spaces in which new worldviews can unfold, in ways that can lead us toward change of praxis. The idea for this article was born out of discussions that took place during the various workshops of our recent curriculum renewal process and provides an explication of the subsequent outcome of the process; the newly developed, integrated Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) curriculum of the Nelson Mandela University's Faculty of Education. This curriculum is underpinned by a critical, conceptual framework of teacher development, progressing from 'bridging,' through 'becoming' and 'being' towards 'belonging' as a teacher in the teaching profession. Drawing upon key themes which emerged during our curriculum renewal process, we explore possible strategies to intervene and disrupt various forms of oppression that are manifest in the current composition of a colonised higher education in South Africa.

**Keywords:** curriculum renewal; decolonisation; developmental model; teacher education

### Introduction

Twenty-four years after the first democratic elections, it seems as if South Africa now, like most postcolonial African societies in the past, has entered a grey and murky negative moment (Mbembe, 2016). A moment in which the non-achievement of goals set at the start of our democracy is being questioned. Claims are being made that true freedom has not yet been obtained in South Africa, and that transformation has not happened at the required rate. University students' country wide have protested and are demanding free, decolonised education. The South African Government has made several commitments regarding free education, but what about the other part of the students' demands – decolonised education? This demand is directed specifically to the Higher Education sector.

Students have cried foul due to the lack of curriculum transformation at universities. They claim that outdated colonised content is being dressed-up and served as the decolonised dish of the day. Furthermore, that teaching, and presentation methodologies resemble Western strategies that are foreign to 80 percent of the university population and that this hampers their progress. They claim that they can still feel the effects of racism in lecture halls and in the rendition of the curriculum and have called for deep curriculum transformation at all institutions of higher learning. Cross, Shalem, Backhouse and Adam (2009) try to cast light on this matter by drawing our attention to the fact that the profile of the South African university student has changed. They allude to an important disjuncture between the skills and competences that impoverished students leave high school with, and the admission requirements of the Higher Education Institutions, which follows a performance-driven model. Maistry (2011) agrees with Cross et al. (2009) and suggests that there is a need to question how the curricula of universities have responded to the changing profile of their students.

The matter of decolonising the curriculum is particularly relevant, as most universities in South Africa have just gone through a macro-review of their curricula and are either implementing, or at the point of implementing, newly revised curricula. The review of curricula was prescribed by the Department of Higher Education and based on the suggestions made in The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (Department of Education (DoE), Republic of South Africa, 2008). After a lengthy investigation, this committee suggested that universities are required to assess whether their curricula prepared young people for their role in South Africa and the world in the context of the challenges peculiar to the 21st century (DoE, Republic of South Africa, 2008). So, the question arises to what extent have universities taken account of decolonisation in their revised curricula and how have they ensured that it is converted into practice? Already some research alludes to the fact that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) dealt with these requirements for transformation and decolonisation, using different approaches. Some HEIs choose technical compliance to revise their curricula as displayed in carefully written policy documents in accordance to the Minimum Requirement for Teacher Education Qualifications. This approach to curriculum transformation ensured that the purity of disciplinary knowledge would not be disrupted (Maistry, 2011; Oloyede, 2009). In contrast, other institutions choose to radically question to what extent their existing curriculum took cognisance of local content and context.

We, in the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela University (NMU), have also undergone a rigorous process of curriculum review and are also currently questioning the extent to which we have dealt with decolonisation in our newly designed B.Ed curriculum. In order to obtain a better understanding of decolonisation,

the Faculty have asked the following guiding questions in various workshops: “What is decolonisation?”; “What does decolonising a curriculum entail?”; “How does decolonisation impact the presentation of modules?” and “How do we ensure that the theory of decolonisation is transferred into the practice of our student teachers?” What we have come to realise is that the theory on decolonisation is a vast and very dense maze, and that no prescribed recipe exists as to how one decolonises a curriculum. Various researchers provide differing opinions and suggestions regarding decolonising a curriculum; however, one suggestion that is highlighted by the majority of researchers is that of taking local context into account when selecting learning material, in the way lessons are presented and how theory is connected to practice (Hyland, Trahar, Anderson & Dickens, 2008; Ryan & Tilbury, 2013; Welikala, 2011). In this paper, we provide a brief exposition of our initial investigation into the matter of decolonising a curriculum; we also make initial suggestions regarding how to take local context into account and how to link theory with practice by using a teacher development model. We concede that our conversation is only in its elementary stage and that it will evolve as our engagement with the decolonisation of our curriculum intensifies.

#### Context of the Study

The recent student protest for free, quality, decolonised education provides the impetus for renewed concern regarding the issue of decolonising Teacher Education in South Africa. Many Higher Education Institutions within the country are involved in special activities to deconstruct what decolonisation means, and how it impacts on their core business, namely that of providing quality higher education. So too, are the Faculty of Education at NMU engaged in obtaining a better understanding of decolonisation and experimenting with strategies to decolonise our newly revised B.Ed curricula. In particular, we are focusing on how taking cognisance of the local contexts in curriculum enhances the decolonisation of the curriculum. As a Faculty, we have drawn on the following definition: a decolonised curriculum is one that recognises and prepares student teachers to work in the different contextual realities of teaching and learning in the range of different schools in South Africa (SA), taking into account aspects such as privilege, inequality, poverty, unemployment, demographic under representation, and racism (Tamburro, 2013). Thus, we aim to bring these issues and themes to our student teachers’ practical as well as philosophical repertoires within the B.Ed curriculum.

We are indeed very conscious that the majority of our students were educated in a colonised education system, where Western ideologies were

privileged over local, African values, and that this did not adequately prepare them to engage with the topics required to be covered in a decolonised curriculum and it also did not prepare them to work in schools outside of their known context. The perceived limited knowledge that students bring to class makes engaging in decolonised content and infusing these topical decolonisation issues into the mainstream educational context challenging, but not impossible. Students in our classes come from different educational backgrounds influenced by race and socio-economic standing, as constituted by the previous apartheid government. We facilitate and encourage students to learn from each other regarding the different educational contexts in the South African schooling system. Furthermore, students are expected to do teaching practice in a context that are unfamiliar to them during their four years of study.

NMU was once known as the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) which catered for white students only, up until 1990. Since then, the institution has gone through considerable transformative changes. Historically, our institution, and the Faculty in particular, have done a very poor job of preparing student teachers to meet the needs of the majority of black learners from poor socio-economic environments. The historical processes of colonisation in our institution and schools have suppressed student teachers’ knowledge systems and contributed to the lack of an educational awareness of the range of different contexts in the South African education system (Le Grange, 2016). Ignorance of the contextual realities of the majority of schools in South Africa has served the interest of the privilege minority of schools at the expense of the majority of South African children, and our current curriculum and its designated Teaching Practice module has helped promote this status quo (Godlewska, Massey, Adjei & Moore, 2013). Therefore, there is a critical urgency to re-think the content of our Education Theory modules and how it informs and links to the Teaching Practice module. We want our students to be exposed to the range of different schools in the South African schooling system and allow them to contextualise the theory that they are taught in the Education Theory modules. With this we hope to challenge and redress the illusion that schools are politically neutral spaces, thus perpetuating those hegemonic structures that are rarely questioned. We cannot guarantee that our attempt to decolonise our curriculum and in particular the Education Theory modules and the Teaching Practice module will change society and schooling for the better, but the idealised benefits serve as a motivation to at least try.

We followed a critical approach (applying critical pedagogy principles) during our curriculum review and renewal process. Keesing-Styles (2003),

McLaren (2000) and Nouri and Sajjadi (2014) explicate that a critical approach to education involves a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationships in classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society and nation state. For example, by acknowledging that students bring knowledge into the class and that teachers can learn from their students. This contributes to cultivating in students a respect for moral commitment and social responsibility. Thus, applying a critical approach to our decolonisation investigation fits well as it allows us to question our taken for granted assumption that the Western education model is superior to its alternatives and specifically to an African and localised approach.

Furthermore, it challenges us to consider how our Education Theory modules and our Teaching Practice module still promote Western ideologies formed by neo-liberal discourses of hierarchical models drawing from “expert” knowledge (Battiste, 2002) where competition, individualism, and scientific research have dominated educational thinking (Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor, 2012). Applying a colonised model to teacher education that artificially separates theory and practice is no longer sufficient for providing the education needed to expand student teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the contextual realities of all our schools in South Africa. A new model is needed if student teachers are to embrace the challenges in the country and to work towards the development of a socially just and democratic society. We need to heed the call of our students for decolonised education that takes their background, knowledge, skills, experience and realities into account. This compels us, as teacher educators, to engage in decolonising our curricula.

#### Problem Statement

Decolonisation has become the new buzzword in Higher Education. But what does this all mean and why does it matter? At the dawn of our democracy in 1994 the South African people celebrated their freedom but 24 years later they question this hard fought for freedom. This is so, as true freedom can only be achieved when the knowledge which is taught to our students in our educational institutions reflects the knowledge of the country’s people and when the knowledge that students bring into classes is acknowledged as legitimate knowledge, and not looked upon as inferior. True freedom is only obtained when institutional practices also reflect local values, instead of just following Western practices, because it acknowledges that there is not just one acceptable knowledge and recognises the value of indigenous knowledge.

The effects of having been a British colony and the oppression enforced by the apartheid government can still be seen and experienced in South Africa today. Despite having a democratically elected government, abolishing apartheid and introducing affirmative action, true and deep social transformation has not taken place. This is especially so in Higher Education, where Eurocentric values, methods, and to some extent content have persisted, despite rigorous transformation attempts. Ashcroft (2001) and Tamburro (2013) agree that these are direct consequences of colonisation. Harber (2013) suggests that this could be because it is the only method that the current educators at HEIs know; that is how they were schooled. Oloyede (2009) also refers to university academics, who guard against disrupting the purity of their disciplines. The recent student protests are a clear indication that students feel that the curricula at universities are still colonised, and that they want them changed. Furthermore, they want to have a say in the change.

What the above contentions highlight is that decolonising education is a highly contested area, where people hold different views regarding what decolonising a curriculum means and how it should be done. On the one hand, there are students crying for local content and context to be taken into account in the curriculum, and on the other hand are some academics calling for the purity of disciplinary knowledge to be upheld and for the historical, eurocentric views to continue.

Baikie (2009:56) suggests that postcolonial thinking “raises the possibility of creatively drawing upon the knowledge from [...] the diversity of indigenous cultures [...] or creating new indigenous knowledge applicable to contemporary social challenges.” In the Faculty of Education at NMU, we drew on one of the principles of a critical approach – critical dialogue to engage both students and academics regarding decolonisation. At one of the many workshops held during our faculty renewal process (spanning over three years), these groups had to respond to the following questions:

- What is decolonisation?
- What does decolonising a curriculum entail?
- How does decolonisation impact module presentation?
- How can we make sure that the theory of decolonisation is transferred to the practice of student teachers?

The purpose of the workshop was to get academics and students to talk and to establish a common ground regarding decolonisation, so as to develop suggestions that could be utilised to decolonise the newly developed B.Ed curriculum.

#### Literature Review

##### *What is decolonisation of education?*

Sium, Desai and Ritskes (2012:11), alert us to the fact that “decolonisation [*sic*] is a messy, dynamic,

and contradictory process.” This is so, not only because the violences of colonisation affect nearly every dimension of one’s being, but also because decolonisation has multiple meanings. Decolonisation thus refers to the deconstruction or disassembling of colonisation. According to Goulet, Linds, Episkenew and Schmidt (2011), colonisation appropriated resources in a segregated manner and, as a system of oppression, imposed a way of being in and thinking about the world. Colonial policies imposed behavioural norms on indigenous peoples’ bodies while colonial belief systems sought to colonise their minds. In SA, the apartheid government enforced colonisation through segregated schooling “a system of oppression” and constituting the Bantu Education Act thus “imposing a way of being in and thinking about the world.” This Act enforced inferior schooling on black South Africans, which contributed to excluding the majority of blacks from pursuing higher education. These authors go further and warn us that colonisation isn’t limited to historical events, but are on-going and definitively present in current education, laws, policies, the media, and almost every aspect of mainstream society (Goulet et al., 2011).

The deconstruction of colonisation thus entails “the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing [*sic*] indigenous liberation” (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005:3). Thus, behavioural norms are imposed on indigenous peoples’ bodies through colonial policies whilst their minds are colonised through colonial belief systems.

According to Wa Thiong’o (1981:88), decolonisation is about rejecting the centrality of the West in Africa’s understanding of itself and its place in the world. Prinsloo (2016) concurs that it is about ‘re-centring’ ourselves, intellectually and culturally, by re-defining what constitutes the centre. Blaser (2013) and Mbembe (2015:17) argue for Africa to take the central position in our understanding of the self and the world. In this regard, Franz Fanon (1963) proposes that it is a process of re-making that has as its goal the creation of a new humanity. Whilst Wa Thiong’o (1981, as cited by Mbembe, 2016) is of the opinion that decolonisation is not an end point, but the beginning of a totally new one. It is a struggle over what needs to be taught to the African ‘child,’ (Mbembe, 2016).

Thus, if the critical purpose of education is to bring about social change and to prepare learners to become active participants in a democratic society, teacher education has to prepare teachers to embrace and draw on local content and context to enhance their teaching and to make learning more meaningful for their learners. One way of ensuring

that teachers are prepared to embrace local content and context in their teaching is to decolonise the teacher education curriculum. Ryan and Tilbury (2013), mention that the decolonisation of education must have as its premise the deconstruction of dominant pedagogical structures and strategies which promote singular world views (in the case of South Africa – a Western Eurocentric view).

Various descriptions of decolonising education are available, but we draw reference from the above description as it supports our view of what a decolonised curriculum should do – it should not promote one dominant perspective and thus strike a balance between drawing on local content and context and using globally sensitive references and methods. There is over-all agreement in the literature that one of the problems in Teacher Education is the dominance of traditional, single based subjects and one perspective worldviews, with HEIs still structured along disciplinary lines (Barth, Godemann, Rieckmann & Stoltenberg, 2007; Wals, 2010; Warburton, 2003). However, the challenges facing the twenty first century are so multifaceted and mutually dependent, that they necessitate an approach to education that can prepare contextually relevant and responsive students.

#### *What does decolonising a curriculum entail?*

At the core of curriculum renewal in South Africa lies the challenge of how to interact with the remnants of intellectual colonisation, racialisation and patriarchy within our B.Ed Programme (Du Toit, 2000:103 as cited by Ramoupi, 2014). According to Mbembe (2015:6), decolonising the university has to do with “creating a set of mental dispositions.” The mental dispositions that need to be nurtured are in line with what Oelofsen (2015) has been calling the “decolonisation of the mind.” We support the call for academics and students to be transformative intellectuals that will make their voices and perspectives heard in the university and the intellectual landscape. This will require students to be engaged in self-reflection about the contexts in which they find themselves.

Our current B.Ed Programmes emphasises the role of teachers to develop particular classroom-based practices, which are designed to promote values and beliefs which support a democratic, critical approach of teacher-student participation and interaction in support of social responsiveness (Freire, 2003; Kanu, 2011). However, Guattari (2000:9) cautions us that:

it isn’t a question of exchanging one model or way of life for another, but rather of responding to the event as the potential bearer of new constellations of universes of reference. The paradox is this: although these universes are not pre-established reference points or models, with their discovery one realises they were always already there, and that only a singular event could activate them.

In other words, the universities need to acknowledge the epistemological knowledges that exists within communities and incorporate them into the curriculum and pedagogical practices.

What are needed are spaces of engagement for students to interrogate the relationship (or the absence of it) between knowledge and context. Applying such an interconnected approach to Teacher Education entails modifications to the content of the curriculum, pedagogies, uncovering of different values, knowledges, and aspirations among societies and communities. These forms of education will enable people to understand and embrace the interconnectedness of global-local relations between their lives and the experience of others (Ryan & Tilbury, 2013). Furthermore, they maintain that to decolonise the Higher Education learning experience of students we ought to establish mutually inclusive environments of learning. In this light Andreotti (2010:246) suggests that postcolonial education in a decolonised curriculum should equip students to:

- Engage with complex local or global processes and diverse perspectives that face humanity (challenges and all) and not feel overwhelmed;
- Examine the origins and implications of their own and other people's assumptions;
- Negotiate change, to transform relationships, to dream different dreams, to confront fears and to make ethical choices about their own lives and how they affect the lives of others by analysing and using power and privilege in ethical and accountable ways;
- Live and learn from difference and conflict and know how to prevent conflict from escalating into aggression and violence;
- Cherish life's unsolved questions and sit comfortably in the discomfort and uncertainty that it creates;
- Establish ethical relationships across linguistic, regional, ideological, racial, religious, class and representational boundaries (i.e., to be open to the "other") and negotiate principles and values "in context"; and
- Enjoy their open and uncertain individual and collective learning journey.

In the next section, we will unpack the methodology that was followed during this investigation.

## Methodology

### Action Research Cycles

Our curriculum renewal process is couched in a participatory action research methodology in which the authentic voice of all the stakeholders could be honoured (Freire, 2003), and encouraged agency while creating a sense of community (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). Participatory action research provides us with a culturally and socially responsible (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin, 2013) way to generate knowledge that will help us to negotiate these pathways for curriculum development. In particular this paper reflects on how we dealt with the matter of decolonising the

curriculum during the curriculum development process.

This research design comprise four cycles as illustrated in Figure 1 below. This process is based on the work of Cowne (2003:26), with the intention of producing effective implementation strategies for teacher curriculum development.

### Cycle one

Involved the analysis of the current B.Ed programme to identify gaps and challenges. Different stakeholders, that were previously excluded from any involvement in university curriculum development were consulted. We invited teachers, principals, students, parents and lectures to do a needs analysis of what they thought was important to be included into our new curriculum.

### Cycle two

Conceptualising the curriculum framework. Our Faculty curriculum framework was developed during this cycle. This framework informed the modules that would be offered on the programme. The framework saw us placing the "who" (who are our students) at the centre of the curriculum with the "what" (content to be covered in our respective disciplines, Western, Eurocentric- and African knowledge systems to be recognized as equally important), the "where" (where does learning take place), and the "so what" (how will we assess if learning has taken place) supporting the development of the who (Geduld & Sathorar, 2016:45).

### Cycle three

Conceptualising the 4B Teacher Development model. During the conceptualisation of the curriculum framework the matter of decolonisation emerged as something that required more interrogation and investigation. Furthermore, we needed to develop a vehicle/tool to assist in implementing our newly conceptualised curriculum. This gave birth to the 4B Teacher Development model.

### Cycle four

Implementation of the new curriculum. It is envisaged that the approved B.Ed curriculum will be implemented in January 2019 with a review of the first year scheduled for December 2019.

### Data Collection

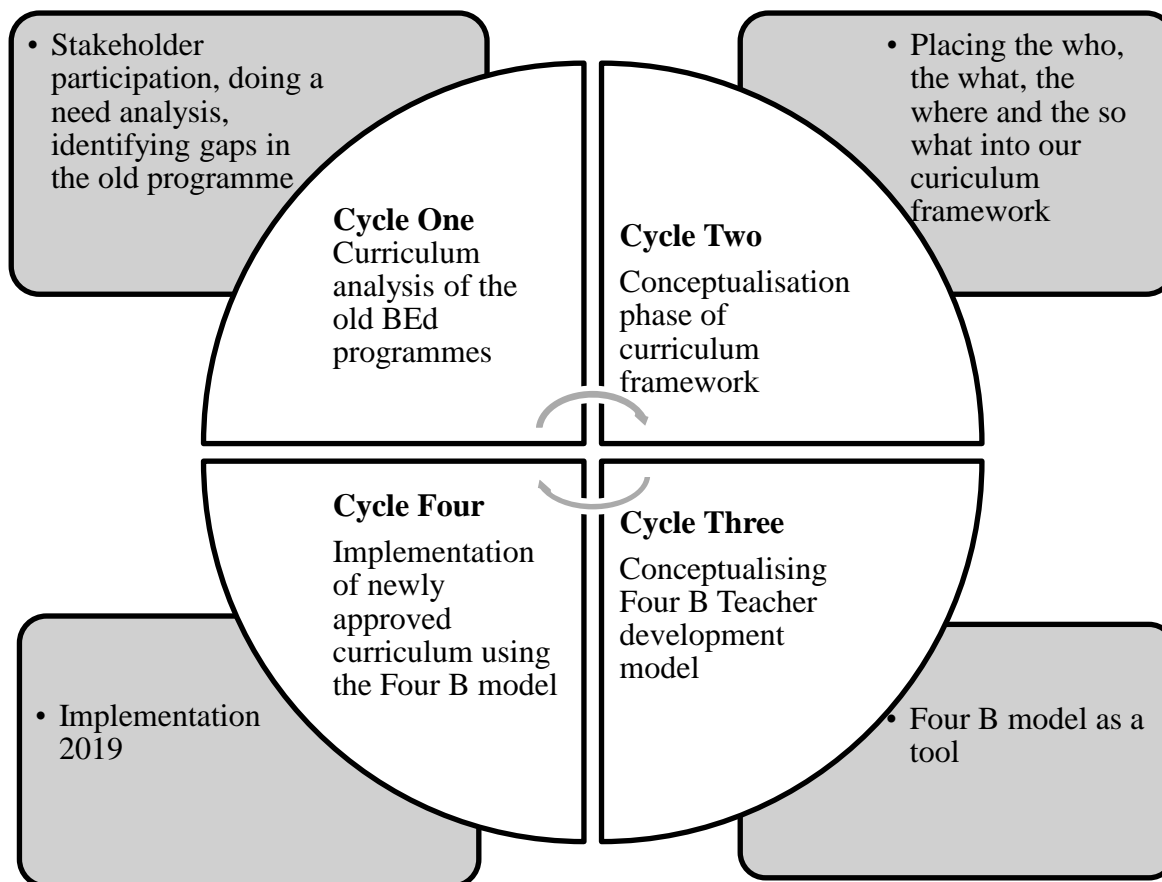
Both academics and students participated in the process of data collection and analysis and specifically in the workshop held to demystify the concept of decolonisation as part of the curriculum development process. Furthermore, the workshop was held to highlight colonised aspects of the current B.Ed curriculum and to discuss strategies to decolonise it. All academic staff from the Faculty as

well as third- and fourth-year students from the B.Ed programme were invited to the workshop where the World Café discussion strategy was used to answer the questions on decolonisation indicated above in the problem statement section. The principles of the World Café discussion strategy involved exploring questions that matter, encouraging everyone to contribute their thoughts on the particular question, to connect multiple viewpoints, to listen together, and to generate and share their knowledge (The World Café, 2015).

According to Dheram and Rani (2008:1), researchers can use workshops as a tool for data collection on phenomena which are difficult to observe such as attitudes, perceptions and opinions. These authors claim that workshops allow for interaction amongst peers; it encourages them to think over the relevant issues through reflective activities and facilitates learning from the experience. In addition, Steyn (2010:542) describes a workshop as a qualitative report, during which data is gathered by means of written reports on open-ended questions and a report-back session. These examples from the literature support our idea of using workshops and specifically the World Café methodology. This methodology facilitated a process whereby participants can critically engage

with the questions, thinking, listening and rethinking not only their own understanding of perceptions and experience of decolonisation, but also those of the other participants. After the World Café group discussions, feedback was provided by a representative from the different groups on the questions that were discussed. This allowed for further discussion and note-taking to substantiate our understanding of participants' perceptions and experiences of decolonisation and what is required to decolonise a teacher education curriculum. It also created an opportunity for the expression of what is required to raise students' critical consciousness.

This particular workshop was designed in such a way that guiding questions on decolonisation would be addressed by means of the activities the participants would be engaged in during the workshop. The aim was to guide the participants to discuss their views and propose suggestions. Dheram and Rani (2008:7) maintain that a workshop creates a forum where, through interaction, participants can explore, modify and create ideas, negotiating with the tacit and explicit knowledge bases at their disposal. We came to realise during the workshop that decolonisation of education is not a neat, linear process, and requires continual discussion.



**Figure 1** Action research cycles for curriculum development and implementation

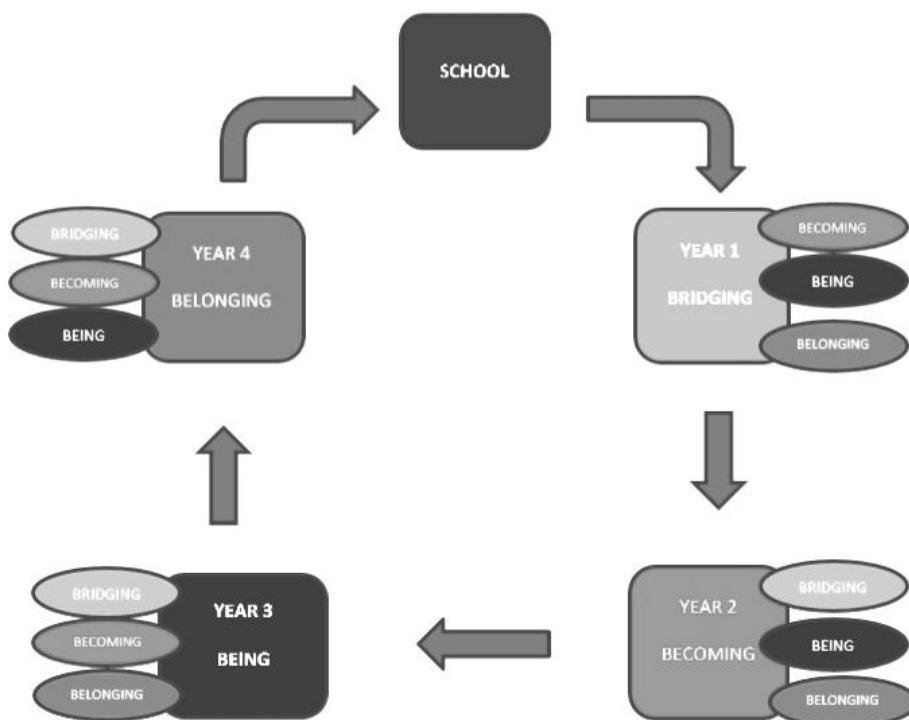
**Data Analysis**

In the Faculty of Education at NMU, we are on a journey of curriculum renewal that focuses on the application of a critical approach and a humanising pedagogy. During this ongoing process, the decolonisation project evolved as a key aspect that needed attention in the conceptualisation of the new curriculum. A series of workshops were held with the purpose of enhancing our understanding of decolonisation as a phase in the longer curriculum development process. The notes that were taken during these workshops, where the guiding questions listed above were discussed served as data that would be analysed and used to further inform the curriculum development and renewal process. We thus read through the workshop notes several times and did a thematic analysis. This allowed us to gain familiarity with the data and then to code or label specific sentences, phrases, paragraphs or lines and compare them across the whole data set to identify variations, similarities, patterns and relationships (Petty, Thomson & Stew, 2012). In analysing the notes from the workshop, we found that various differing views exist as to what decolonising our curriculum means, and how it should be done. However, two common aspects that were identified by all groups during the World Café Conversations were: (1) that the curriculum should include local content; and (2) that it should expose students to the local context. This stands in contrast to using a predominantly Western, Eurocentric

approach. In our understanding, a Eurocentric approach emphasises the importance of the “I” versus the collective strength of the “We.” The “We” forms the basis for the African ubuntu (humanity to others) approach that nurtures collective participation and collaboration rather than competition. Furthermore, all World Café groups also highlighted the importance of linking the topics that students cover in their Education Theory modules to their Teaching Practice module, allowing them to contextualise the theory.

**Discussion and Proposed 4B Developmental Model**

An analysis of the data gathered during the curriculum renewal workshops, established that there is a need for acknowledging the relevance of the different contexts of the South African schooling system as well as for including local content into the curriculum. Thereafter we developed a vehicle to facilitate this process. During follow-up workshops where these findings were discussed, the 4B Teacher Developmental model (Figure 2) below was conceptualised and proposed as a way of implementing these suggestions. We postulate that this model can be used as a guiding tool to assist with the linking of theoretical topics to the students’ teaching practice experience, allowing them to contextualise the theory and in turn contribute to decolonising the curriculum.



**Figure 2** The 4B Teacher Developmental model

In addition to the questions that guided our decolonisation discussion (mentioned above), Healey's (1983) questions below assisted us in contextualising our discussion and taking our local context and content into account:

- Who gains and who loses by decolonising the curriculum?
- Why does this occur?

The above questions helped to uncover the shortcomings in our current curriculum which benefits only some well-resourced schools in the system as opposed to the majority of under-resourced schools in the country. The current B.Ed curriculum prepared students to work in well-resourced schools in terms of the pedagogy and methodology used. Thus, students (including students who come from under-resourced schools and disadvantaged communities) by choice prefer and request to be placed in well-resourced schools and exclude schools with limited resources from their repertoire. Healey's (1983) questions also caution us to not repeat the same mistakes in the implementation of our new B.Ed curriculum. The second question in particular pushes towards developing appropriate tools of social analysis and improving our understanding of the social forces which influence student teachers' experiences and their decisions regarding where to go and practice. The 4B Teacher Developmental model allows us the opportunity to expose our students to the range of different schools in South Africa allowing students to familiarise themselves with the local context and to assist them in making an informed decision about where they choose to teach after completing their studies.

In the same light, Chilisa (2012) and Laenui (2009) suggest the following phases in the process of decolonisation: *rediscovery and recovery*; *mourning*; *dreaming*; *commitment*; and *action*. Phase One is one of rediscovery and recovery, whereby colonised peoples rediscover and recover their history, culture, language and identity. Phase Two, mourning, signifies the process of grieving the continued attack on the colonised/oppressed peoples' identities as well as their social realities. This mourning forms an integral part of the healing process and initiates the possibility of dreaming. During Phase Three, colonised/oppressed people mention and refer to their histories, worldviews, and indigenous knowledge systems to create and re-create new possibilities – in this instance a different curriculum. The fourth phase, commitment, is when people become activists who show the political commitment to include the voices of the colonised/oppressed, in the B.Ed curriculum. Lastly, action is the phase where dreams and commitments lead to strategies for social transformation. These stages are not a linear process but are intertwined and can happen simultaneously. We see these stages, as identified by Chilisa (2012) and Laenui (2009), as

closely resembling what we envisage for our students during the four years of the 4B Developmental model that serve as an implementation tool for our B.Ed programmes. Below follows an explication of how Chilisa (2012) and Laenui's (2009) phases in the decolonisation process links to our 4B Teacher Developmental model.

The first year of study in the 4B model is referred to as the *bridging* year as this is the year in which the student must make the transition from having been a learner to becoming a student teacher. In this year, the Education Theory module (Education I) in the B.Ed curriculum will focus on child and human development. Simultaneously, in the teaching practice module, students will be exposed to three different school contexts during three-day school visits. This will allow students to experience in particular how the context of different communities impact a child's development. The bridging year of our 4B Developmental model resembles the first phase of Chilisa's (2012) and Laenui's (2009) phases of decolonising a curriculum. During the school visits in this year students are allowed to embark on an educational journey of "rediscovery and recovery," where they get the opportunity to learn about colonial conquest, assimilative policies, and the ramifications thereof. Students from different racial groups and different social backgrounds will experience this journey differently during their personal reflections, and when they link what they are observing and learning to their own experiences. Students will be provided with instruments that will allow them to reflect on the contextual realities of the three schools they visited and how they compare with each other. The assignment would require: (1) time spent at each school; (2) a community mapping exercise; and (3) policy mapping of key themes (i.e., funding; quintiles, language policy; teacher-student ratios; resources; etc.).

Furthermore, the Education Theory module will highlight various aspects that will allow students to comparatively reflect on child and human development in the three contexts that they will be exposed to. These aspects include:

- different ways of learning and knowing and how learners construct knowledge based on experiences. This module will take into account that in many communities in SA the normative definition of childhood does not fit the traditional concept of what a child is. Many children in SA head households at very young ages. Furthermore, students will also be alerted to take cognisance of how the knowledge and experience of indigenous learners that attend colonised schools will be or not be accommodated;
- learning the importance of community mapping, how to do community mapping, and how to use the data; and
- learning how to do basic critical policy analysis related to key themes.



The 4B Teacher Developmental model exposes students to the different contexts in the SA schooling system and for this purpose we draw reference from Korthagen (2002), who provides us with a framework for teacher learning, which states that development takes teachers' existing knowledge and experience into account and builds on it. As such, the aim of year one is to incorporate local content into the Education Theory module and to link this theory to practice by exposing students to the diverse contexts in the South African schooling system so that they can experience the theory of child development in context. Thus, this year aims at allowing students to reflect on their own context, languages and histories and compare them to that of other people in South Africa. This in turn assists with the decolonisation of the curriculum as local content is incorporated into the module and students are exposed to different local contexts.

Year two is referred to as the *becoming* year. Students have now been exposed to the local South African context and introduced to teaching. In this year the focus is on preparing the students to become teachers. The Education Theory module (Education II) focuses on providing students with the tools that they require to teach; thus, it focuses on teaching and learning theories as well as theories of curriculum design and implementation. Bearing the decolonisation aspect in mind, attention is also given to how these theories are applied in the South African context and how curriculum development has manifested itself in the country. The theories that students are exposed to in this module highlight the difference between appearance and reality and initiate action, rather than just plan for action (Habermas, 1984 as cited in Held, 1980:349). As such, students are encouraged to put these theories into practice during their micro-teaching lessons. For example, students are required to plan lessons taking diversity and the language of teaching and learning into account, while drawing on different teaching strategies, such as the art of explaining, questioning, problem solving, etc. This is further reinforced by allowing them to contextualise the theory during Teaching Practice. In the second year, they will visit two different schools from differing contexts for a two-week period at a time, to observe teachers plan and teach lessons. This will allow them the opportunity to see the theories they were taught in the Education Theory module being practiced (or not practiced) and will allow them to engage teachers regarding these theories. Thus, the activities of this year in the Education Theory modules as well as the Teaching Practice modules once again contribute to the decolonising of the curriculum, in the sense that they expose students to how educational theories as well as curriculum theories are implemented in the local context taking local content into account. The second year of the 4B developmental model coincides with Chilisa's

(2012) and Laenui's (2009) second stage of decolonising the curriculum, namely "mourning." As students are exposed to and learn of historical oppressive and assimilative practices of the colonisers, they sometimes weep out of frustration or a deep sense of hurt at the visible signs of colonised destruction that manifests themselves in poverty and social deprivation. During this year, students are encouraged to release their anger by writing about their feelings in a critical reflective journal. This provides an outlet for a sense of mourning, or rather an unfulfilled longing, for what could have been and what was, or has been lost.

*Being* a teacher is the focus of the third year. In this year, students will teach their first lessons in a real-life classroom situation under the guidance of a mentor teacher. During this year the Education Theory module (Education III) focuses on societal factors that impact teaching including the economy, unemployment, poverty, the sustainability of the environment, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and substance abuse. These topics will all be taught in a way that will allow the students to compare our local situation to that of the broader African continent and the world. The focus will also be on strategies to combat the negative impact of these factors on teaching and learning. The students' teaching practice module will require them to visit two schools from different contexts for a two-week period at a time. The student will be expected to teach one lesson a day under the supervision of a mentor teacher. These mentor teachers form an integral part of the Community of Practice on school-based learning located within the Faculty – where the Faculty's philosophy, practices and policies regarding teaching practice are discussed. The focus of the third-year teaching practice sessions is to allow students an opportunity to practice their teaching in real classrooms, but also to expose them to the impact of societal factors such as poverty, unemployment, crime, and substance abuse on teaching. To further contribute to the decolonisation of the curriculum, students will be expected to reflect on the experiences they had in the different schools and to share their experiences with their peers. The sharing of their experiences enables the development of knowledge that in turn will encourage student teachers to respond to their environment. We postulate that the exposure to teaching in real classroom situations and being alerted to the impact of social realities on teaching and learning would inspire students to dream about making a change to society by being a teacher. This will coincide with Chilisa's (2012) and Laenui's (2009) third phase of decolonisation, viz. dreaming.

The fourth year requires students to reflect on what they have learnt and experienced during their previous three years in order to develop their own teaching philosophy. Thus, the Education Theory module (Education IV) during this year focuses on

the Philosophy of Education and guides the students to develop their own teaching philosophy. At the same time, students will join a school for four days a week for most of the academic year as the focus of the year is *belonging* – with students being expected to demonstrate that they belong in the teaching profession by forming part of a Community of Practice at a school. It enables the students to commit to their dreams and to make the decision to make them a reality. This allows the students to put into practice what they have learnt over the past three years as they will be able to interact with diverse learners, implement curriculum and educational theories, as well as experience first-hand the impact of societal factors on teaching and learning and act on them. In the process they develop their own teaching philosophy that they would share with their peers at the end of the year but that hopefully, would also inform their decision regarding where they would be willing to take up a teaching post.

Students start the *belonging* year of the model off in Chilisa's (2012) and Laenui's (2009) dreaming phase, but soon elevate to the last phase of decolonisation, namely commitment and action. This will require students to engage and reflect on the political, social and economic structures of schools and society and the development, if appropriate, of new structures that can hold and house the values and aspirations of all children (Laenui, 2009:155). Students entering our B.Ed Programmes fit Paulo Freire's (2003:83) description of products of a "banking education" a form of education that does not encourage dialogue, nor critical thinking, and inhibits creativity. Thus, students' ability to question, analyse, and reimagine has been stifled by the prevailing schooling system (Goulet et al., 2011:29; Laenui, 2009). Furthermore, the model suggests that exposing students to the social realities in the country and equipping them with alternative, critical teaching strategies, would inspire them to become agents of change. Thus, that they would dream of making a difference and that these dreams would turn to commitment in their teaching philosophy and ultimately turn to actions where they decide what to teach and how they will teach. For this purpose, we envisage that the fourth year - the belonging year - of the 4B Developmental model is where the full landscape of possibilities eventually become the foundation for a new social order (Chilisa, 2012; Laenui, 2009). This will ultimately require the re-evaluation of existing institutional power structures and prevailing singular worldviews as well as the existing paradigms in order to contribute to the much-required transformation.

In this grey and murky negative moment in which South African Higher Education currently finds itself, the 4B Teacher Developmental model could contribute to decolonising teacher education

and heed the call from students for quality, decolonised education. The model serves as a guide to assist academics to incorporate local content and context in the Education Theory modules and to link this theory to practice during the teaching practice module.

### Conclusion

Decolonising education involves disrupting dominant discourses. It requires the current Eurocentric content and methods to be challenged. The proposed 4B Teacher Developmental model encourages student teachers to transform their thinking about teaching in South Africa. It exposes them to the range of different contexts in South Africa and allows them to make an informed decision about where they want to (and need to) teach. The 4B model helps students to gain greater understanding into their own dispositions that have often been drenched in colonised philosophies and concepts, which cannot be left unchallenged. This four-year programme of student teacher development will stimulate students to engage with new and unfamiliar ideas, as they begin a process of change. As teacher educators we are compelled to expose our students to the range of possibilities in the South African schooling system. If we don't do this, we run the risk of being accused of perpetuating the legacy of colonisation.

### Note

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