Chapter 28

Africa and the Curriculum Transformation Project: Towards the Epistemic-Independent Africa We Want[1]

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Introduction

As stakeholders reflect on the African Union (AU)'s 20 years of existence, it must be re-emphasised that decolonisation is not an event, but a set of interlinked and dependent processes. These processes are meant to respond to the mutation of the empire from its founding as a political empire to its adaptive mode as an economic empire and to its current survival mode as an epistemic/cognitive empire. Decolonisation processes must be able to continuously respond to this mutation of colonialism which has given rise to coloniality. One of the ways Africa can respond is through transforming the curriculum, especially the university curriculum, in the quest for epistemic independence in Africa.

Addressing the question of knowledge and its institutions, Mignolo & Walsh (2018:135) aptly note that ontology frames epistemology. That is, knowledge creates reality. Hence the AU

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must consciously lead the processes of producing knowledge that creates "the Africa We Want".[2] Without rethinking and reformulating the African curriculum as a continental project, the knowledge used to create "the Africa We Want" will have the opposite effect, perpetuating "the Africa We Do Not Want". Stated differently, the curriculum in Africa must be a vehicle for the realisation of cognitive justice as transitional justice. Continuing to use the Western-imposed curriculum in Africa constitutes cognitive injustice, which by definition is "social injustice that cascades from the denial of other people's humanity and, by extension, a refusal to recognise their epistemic virtue" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020:887). Without the recognition of Africa's epistemes and epistemic virtues through a crafted curriculum, coloniality will remain unchallenged, perpetuating "the Africa We Do Not Want".

The rationale for this chapter is based on the fact thatmodernity, stemming from Euro-North American influence, gave rise to colonialism and coloniality, extensive and enduring processes that led to globalisation and the diverse forms of empires that are evident currently. Spanning over 500 years, globalisation and its empire not only produced material wealth for the imperial powers, but most importantly, they produced epistemic imperialism, which continues to benefit them by privileging Western knowledge as the authentic knowledge and other forms of knowledge as subservient and reliant on their Western epistemic prototype. Epistemic imperialism accounts for the contestation of knowledge production and why Africa remains a consumer and not the producer of knowledge. This status quo must be challenged, and the decolonisation of the curriculum is one viable option in this endeavour.

2 "The Africa We Want" is the goal of the African Union's Agenda 2063. "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want" is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the African continent. It was adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2013 as a long-term vision for Africa's development over the next 50 years, with the goal of achieving a prosperous, peaceful, and integrated Africa by the year 2063. The Agenda 2063 framework is built on a set of aspirations, goals, and strategies aimed at addressing the continent's numerous challenges and harnessing its vast potential.

What is the decolonisation of the curriculum? The decolonisation of the curriculum is a process of re-evaluating and transforming educational curricula to address and rectify the historical biases of Eurocentrism and colonial legacies in traditional educational materials and approaches. It seeks to make education more inclusive, equitable, and reflective of diverse perspectives, cultures, and knowledge systems, particularly in regions or countries once colonised by European powers. Stated differently, decolonising the curriculum is a Global South project shifting away from Western centrism towards universalism. The AU recognises the need to place epistemology as a prerequisite to creating a decolonised autonomous future for Africa. This endeavour is ingrained in the AU's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

Agenda 2023 and 'The African University We Want'

This chapter is evaluative of both the AU's 20-year existence and the AU's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. In this chapter, I characterise Agenda 2063 as an alternative *within* a problematic Western-centric paradigm, as opposed to the desired alternative *to* a problematic Western-centric paradigm. The Africa that is desired as espoused in this canonical document is based on the same problematic episteme that brought the problem of epistemic dependence on the West. What is required is epistemic independence anchored in a transformed curriculum that starts at early childhood learning, cascading to primary, secondary, and finally to university education. For Ndlovu-Gastheni, "Epistemic freedom is fundamentally about the right to think, theorise, interpret the world, develop own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018:3). Decolonisation of the curriculum is part of the larger project of the formerly colonised people regaining their right to think and act in their best interest. It is the right to challenge and change the current colonial epistemology and make it relevant and not harmful to Africa.

One of the goals of Agenda 2063 is to transform Africa into a society with "well-educated citizens and [a] skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation" (AU 2015:15).

Under the sub-heading "Well-Educated Citizens and Skills Revolution Underpinned by Science, Technology and Innovation", Agenda 2063 states categorically the importance of accessible and quality education in the following terms:

> A key driver of Africa's prosperity will be its world-class human capital developed through *quality education* focused on *achieving 100 percent literacy and numeracy*, and clear emphasis on science, technology and engineering. Universal access to quality, accredited education at all levels will be enshrined in law... Africa of 2063 will have harmonised education and professional qualifications systems, with the Pan African University and several centres of excellence across the continent, a Pan African Virtual university that uses technology to provide mass post-secondary school education and indeed Agenda 2063 the university sector and intelligentsia playing an instrumental role. Millions of Africans will have been trained, educated and skilled with special emphasis on science, technology, research, and innovation, as well as vocational training in every sector. Unlike in the past, this human capital would choose to remain on the continent, rather than migrate, thus contributing to the continent's socio-economic development. By 2063, the mass out-migration of talented, educated, innovative Africans that characterised the brain-drain of earlier years will change to a situation where Africa is the centre of convergence of the world's best and brightest; akin to the role and status, in ancient times, of the famed city of Timbuktu in the empire of Mali (AU 2015:31-32).

Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 is very specific on the role of education and, by extension, the curriculum in formulating Africa's future. It describes "developing Africa's human and social capital (through an education and skills revolution emphasising science and technology and expanding access to quality health care services, particularly for women and girls)" AU 2015:13). Aspiration 6 focuses on "creating opportunities for Africa's youth for self-realisation, access to health, education, and jobs; and

ensuring safety and security for Africa's children and providing for early childhood development" (AU 2015:14). This attests to the realisation by the AU of the centrality of intergenerational cognitive and epistemic justice, which is key in addressing fairness and equity in the production, dissemination, and recognition of knowledge and epistemic practices. Intergenerational epistemic justice extends this idea to the interplay between generations, emphasising the need to address historical injustices in knowledge production and recognition that continue to affect future generations. It seeks to correct biases and imbalances in whose knowledge is valued and recognised, ensuring that marginalised voices and perspectives are included, respected, and used as equal pieces of knowledge.

Under Agenda 2063, the AU expresses a commitment to revitalise African higher education to develop new knowledge and innovation. This presents an opportunity for the AU to establish epistemic independence in Africa by utilising the envisaged Pan-African Virtual University (AU 2015:16). This university was planned to be operational by 2023, and to date (October 2023), there are no visible moves towards establishing this envisioned institution for higher education. The AU was clear on what needs to be done during the Second Decade of Education, especially at the tertiary level. The AU's Second Decade of Education, also known as the Second Decade of Education in Africa (2016-2025), is an initiative aimed at promoting education and skills development in Africa. It is a follow-up to the First Decade of Education in Africa (2006-2015). Listed below are the deliverables for the AU's second decade.

The zenith of Agenda 2063's focus on tertiary education is contained in a section titled, "AU Second Decade of Education: Tertiary Level", which aims to:

1. encourage greater mobility of academics, researchers, staff, and students and recognition of qualifications from different regions through harmonisation of degree structures;
2. establish an African higher education and research space that will pay serious attention to institutional and national quality assurance systems and promote high-level, relevant research

and post-graduate training tailored towards solving Africa's problems;
3. adopt and adapt open and distance learning as instructional delivery mechanisms in Africa as other continents have done, for Africa to significantly raise its tertiary education enrolment from the current 6% (face-to-face mode) to at least 50%;
4. use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) effectively for instructional delivery and professional communication to develop, acquire, produce, and distribute knowledge, skills, and competencies across the continent; and
5. create centres of excellence within regions of the continent to develop robust post-graduate studies and a strong research base and global competitive advantage (AU 2015:57).

This makes solid and positive promises; however, based on the AU's track record of policy non-implementation,[3] there is genuine pessimism that this policy may not be fully implemented, or even implemented. The AU is inflicted with political challenges that always play out when it comes to the adoption and subsequent implementation of common African positions, common points or ideas of interest agreed upon by AU member states. There is scepticism that the common AU agenda will struggle to guide and inform national positions on key issues affecting Africa.

There is a multitude of complex endogenous and exogenous power dynamics at play between the AU and the many actors around it, which gives rise to multilayered challenges and shortcomings that inhibit the AU from delivering on its ideals, policies, goals, and programmes, such as Agenda 2063's Second Decade of Education: Tertiary Level. First, there are implementation challenges. The education goals call for greater mobility of academics, researchers, staff, and students, but achieving this across diverse regions with varying levels of infrastructure, political stability, and economic conditions can be challenging. Implementation may face bureaucratic hurdles, visa restrictions, and funding constraints.

3 Policies, agreements, and protocols that were not implemented by the AU include, but are not limited to, the July 2016 historic Kigali Decision on Financing the Union.

Secondly, there are quality and quality assurance issues. While emphasising the importance of quality assurance systems is commendable, ensuring uniform standards across all institutions can be complex. National and institutional variations in quality can persist, potentially diminishing the intended impact of these measures.

Third, there are issues with the open and distance learning goals. The goal of increasing tertiary education enrolment through the open and distance learning (ODL) programme is ambitious and depends on many preconditions that do not currently exist in most African regions. While ODL can increase access, it also requires substantial investment in ICT, curriculum development, and harmonised staff training. Ensuring the quality of education in these settings is crucial to avoid diluting academic standards and veering off the AU's goals. On the contrary, a rapid rollout of ODL can enhance the digital divide and heighten the risk of leaving the digitally deprived behind for good.

Fourth, and linked to the above, there are ICT utilisation challenges. Effective use of ICT in education and research is vital, but it demands significant infrastructure and resources, which are currently unavailable in sufficient numbers, extent, and coverage in most of Africa (Benyera 2021). Many African regions still lack access to reliable electricity and internet connectivity, posing obstacles to the widespread adoption of ICT. Some countries, such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, are regressing in terms of their connectivity and electricity availability. Without reliable and sustainable connectivity, power, and ICT infrastructure, rolling out ODL will remain a pipe dream.

Fifth, the establishment of centres of excellence is viable but unrealistic, given the current political and economic conditions in Africa. Creating centres of excellence is an admirable objective, but it may have the undesired consequence of exacerbating disparities in research and education quality across regions. There is also the risk of uneven resource allocation and the resultant competition for limited funding, which could end up marginalising institutions outside these centres of excellence. Additionally, given the corrupt, unethical, and unjust leadership in Africa, the choice of

these centrecould be politicised, and underserving institutions and regions will most likely end up undeservedly being the beneficiaries, thereby defeating the ideals of the project.

Sixth, enhancing Africa's global competitiveness in the tertiary education sector is unrealistic, given the huge dependency of Africa on the West not only for epistemology and resources but also for material, financial, and technical support. Enhancing Africa's global competitiveness is counterproductive while Africa is still epistemically dependent on the West. Indeed, focusing on global competitiveness is essential, but it might inadvertently perpetuate a hierarchy in which a few institutions are prioritised over others. A more balanced approach that prioritises local and African epistemologies, and considers local and regional needs is more appropriate.

Seventh, settingenrolment targets is welcome if the targets are realistic. Raising tertiary education enrolment to 50% is a lofty goal. It may require expanding access and also addressing the issue of employability and the relevance of education to local job markets. Tertiary enrolment must not be seen as an isolated target but as one interlinked to the quality of the students, feeder secondary school capacity, employment and employability capacity, and the ability to fund such huge enrolments. Settingrandom quantitative targets such as 50% without considering the nuances of local realities, which exist across Africa will demotivate those who genuinely believe in decolonising the curriculum in Africa.

Eighth is the key issue of financial sustainability. The goals do not extensively address funding mechanisms and sources of funding. Sustainable financing for higher education and research in Africa is essential for long-term success, but it often faces budget constraints and competing priorities, especially in resource-poor countries. Many well-meaning projects in Africa are shelved because of a lack of sustainable funding and, without such, this programme risks being shelved. Attracting funds from external donors may be an option; however, this creates opportunities for the funders to determine the design of the programmes, which may not be in Africa's best interest. This

has been the case with many donor-funded programmes in Africa which have proven to perpetuate dependency and create a donor funding expectation when there is a programme to be executed in Africa.

Ninth and lastly, the issues of co-ordination and collaboration remain highly problematic. This may bedevil this project in the process of its implementation. Achieving these goals necessitates effective co-ordination and collaboration among African nations. It becomes important for countries to work together, share resources, and avoid duplication of efforts, which will be key to the success of the AU's initiative. This is a huge ask for African countries, some of which are technically almost at war with each other over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), or over the control of the mineral wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). When countries are acting in their national interest and a typical realistic fashion, collaboration on issues such as tertiary education becomes a far-fetched possibility.

There was an effort by the AU to address some of the shortcomings listed above by developing targeted action areas for Agenda 2063. The action areas are listed as follows:

1. investing in early childhood education;
2. building critical skills through expanded access to primary education for all, addressing the issue of school dropouts and improving quality issues;
3. improving the quality and relevance of technical and vocational skills development to address the needs of both cutting-edge skills and training the majority who are involved in the informal economy;
4. revitalising tertiary education through expanding access, improving quality and relevance;
5. building human capital for knowledge and innovation-driven economies; and
6. harnessing regional and continental resources to significantly scale up human capital formation (AU 2015:57).

The action areas for Agenda 2063 are laden with the right action words (verbs) such as invest, build, improve, revitalise,

and harness, and they reflect a commitment to addressing crucial challenges on the continent. However, like any set of policies and initiatives, they are not without potential criticisms and challenges.

First, Africa has challenges with low investment in decolonised early childhood education. Additionally, while investing in early childhood education is essential, there may be concerns about the equitable distribution of resources and access, particularly in Africa's remote, rural, and deserving areas. A significant challenge is how to ensure that early childhood education reaches all children, regardless of their socio-economic background. Second, building critical skills through expanded access to primary education is undeniable as a warranted key action area. However, simply increasing enrolment numbers may not guarantee improved educational outcomes as long as the curriculum remains colonial and, therefore, counter-productive to the goals of Agenda 2063. In addition to a decolonised curriculum, other prerequisites include quality of education, improved teacher training, and better accessible infrastructure. Furthermore, addressing the issue of school dropouts requires comprehensive strategies that go beyond access, such as addressing socio-economic factors by having bottom-up, targeted learner retention policies.

Third, the goal of improving the quality and relevance of technical and vocational skills development is key in addressing especially the shortage of artisans, skilled, and semi-skilled labour force. However, enhancing technical and vocational skills is important for workforce development, and ensuring the relevance of these skills to the challenges of local communities and national needs can be challenging. The curriculum needs frequent updates to keep pace with rapidly changing societal needs. Fourth, the revitalisation of tertiary education to enhance access is critical, but this must be balanced with maintaining high standards of quality and relevance. Rapid expansion without adequate infrastructure and academic and support staff members can lead to substandard institutions that offer questionable qualifications.

Fifth, building human capital for knowledge- and innovation-driven economies is needed and apt in order to shift the biology and the geophagy of knowledge production. This will enable African countries to transform into knowledge- and innovation-driven economies. However, this requires not only decolonised education but also African-centred, robust research and development ecosystems, intellectual property protections, and investment in innovation hubs. Transitioning to such economies can be slow and may require a significant mind shift and better just and ethical leadership in Africa.

Lastly, the harnessing of regional and continental resources for human capital formation is laudable. Unfortunately, while regional and continental co-operation is essential, co-ordinating efforts across diverse countries with varying levels of national interest, development, and political stability can be challenging. Ensuring equitable resource distribution and effective collaboration is a complex task that has proved daunting for the AU since its formation. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be in place to ensure that these actions lead to tangible improvements in education and human capital development across the continent. The AU's monitoring and evaluation mechanisms remain its Achilles heel, together with the development of early warning signs.

I now address the issue of what constitutes the university and why focus is placed on the university and its curriculum as an integral component in the realisation of the goals of Agenda 2063.

The Meaning and Reason for the Establishment of the University

The university is a very complex term and institution, one very contested and contestable, laden with history, politics, and a lot of misunderstandings. The prefix 'uni' in university denotes a singular – in this case, a community of pieces of knowledge. It is a singular body where faculties, departments, and research centres come under one management for a single purpose, that of bettering the lived experiences of both the local and international community. While the 'uni' in university represents

the amalgamation of different epistemes, others contest this apparent oxymoron and advance the argument for a 'pluriversity', as they see no need for the amalgamation of epistemes, but rather the accommodation and recognition of ecologies of knowledge (Boidin, Cohen, & Grosfoguel 2012; Escobar 2007; Fox & Sneddon 2019; Grosfoguel & Cervantes-Rodriguez 2002; Mignolo 2000; De Sousa Santos 2007).

The word 'university' comes from the Latin *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, which translates to "community of teachers and scholars". The suffix 'versity' comes from the Latin word *versitas*, meaning a turn, or a change, variety. Hence, when the word university is broken into its two constituent parts, 'uni' and 'versity', 'uni' means one or single, and 'versity', by extrapolation from its Latin origins, arguably refers to a change or variety. In the context of the whole world, a university denotes the idea and practice of many people (students, teachers, researchers, and support staff), fields of study, and varieties of pieces of knowledge and epistemes that are unified into one institution, one community. A university is a community within a community that diagnoses, analyses, and prescribes possible solutions.

Elsewhere, I note that the university, contrary to common belief, did not originate in ancient Greece but in Fez, North Africa, from where it was then exported to Greece and then re-exported to mainland Europe, especially the United Kingdom and France (Benyera 2018). As it moved away from its African origins, the university as an institution was enhanced, but it was also abused, instrumentalised, politicised, and rendered an instrument of statecraft. Instead of being efficacious in improving the lives of the nation and the people, it became an instrument at the disposal of the state and the elites. This was more pronounced when the university took a capitalist turn. The capitalist turn is one of the many turns endured by the university in its history. These turns are explored in subsequent sections of this chapter.

By colonising the curriculum and establishing colonial universities, the empire in its various forms ensured that it faced no existential challenge as the knowledge and students produced at these institutions were compliant with their needs.

This is why movements such as Rhodes Must Fall were met with three actions. Either the student leaders were absorbed into the state institutions, or they were disciplined, or simply ignored. Rhodes Must Fall and similar defiant endeavours represented a direct challenge to the epistemic/cognitive empire by demanding decolonised education and the recognition of other knowledges, especially epistemologies of the Global South, which were victims of epistemicides committed as part of the colonial processes. It is no coincidence that this is the same method that the former colonial powers generally used to deal with those who challenged it. By colonising the curriculum and the university, the colonial project invaded and took control of the colonies' 'software'. The occupation of the land signifies the control of the 'hardware'.

What is Wrong with the Current Curriculum in Africa?

An apt entry point to this section is to begin by reposting the question: What is the purpose of the university? As argued by Plato in *The Republic*, the purpose of the university was to impart the following virtues: prudence, courage, temperament, and justice (Plato 1961). These virtues were not an end in themselves but a means towards an end – that of, according the individual and the collective, a better lived experience, a life worth living.

Thus, what is the general state of the university and the curriculum in Africa? The university is now commercialised and aims to produce market-ready students, generate profits, or at least break even and retain commercial viability, favourable rating, and ranking. First, the current situation in most African universities is that of a commercialised curriculum, commodified education, and Western education system which is not aligned with local histories and realities.

Second, and linked to the above, is an additional challenge of the mass production especially of social science and humanities graduates, and an increase in their unemployment – which, actually, is unemployability, because the graduates being produced do not have the required skills to fit in an ever-evolving environment, including the workplace (Wagner 2009). Ironically,

these graduates also lack the skills to solve society's most pertinent problems.

Third, the situation in Africa's universities is that of very weak scholarship, which can be attributed to many factors which are beyond the scope of this chapter (Mutula 2009; Omobowale *et al* 2014).

Fourth, there is the problem of fake, false, and doubtable university degrees being churned out in Africa (Awuzie 2017; Brown 2006; Jimu 2018; Ndlovu & Leslie 2022). These lead to aspersions being cast on hard-earned degrees.

Last, there is a proliferation of questionable universities and degree-offering institutions, also known as 'diploma mills' (Creasy 2013; Deming, Goldin & Katz 2013). While there is nothing wrong with having private universities, there is a general challenge in Africa where capital is taking advantage of this space to establish pseudo-universities which are money-making schemes and 'diploma/degree mills'. All these factors contribute to the devaluing of the university and the curriculum in Africa. However, these challenges are not only confirmed to Africa but a global challenge which is more pronounced in Africa given the poor regulation and general laxity of policy implementation.

Generally, the current curriculum in Africa is part of the colonial processes and was meant to disempower the colonised people by giving them inferior education, which Ibekwe characterised as miseducation. Ibekwe used the analogy of a cat and a rat to emphasise the toxicity of colonial education to the colonies thus:

> If you take a rat and train it to see the world in the way the cat sees the world, you have not educated the rat, you have mis-educated it for life in a world with rats killing cats. You have actually made it an easier prey for the cats because the natural instincts of a rat would have told it how to deal with cats, or how to avoid cats. But after you have given the rat the education of a cat, it loses those instincts. It might even think of itself as a cat! And that is what this colonialist education has done to Africans for the last two centuries.

> We have been fundamentally miseducated, and we cannot even see the world from our own point of view, let alone from our own interest (Ibekwe 1975:1993).

Miseducation is the deliberate imparting of inferior education. Inferior education does not confer epistemic independence (which is the ability to practice thinking and acting in one's best interest). Epistemic independence allows one to think from where they are located. Currently and generally, the curriculum in Africa is Western-centric and forces learners, students, and teachers to think from the Western point of view, hence the great misalignment where Africa has thousands of unemployed graduates coexisting with multiple problems. Ideally, the graduates were supposed to solve these societal problems, thereby solving the double problem of unemployment and unemployability on the one hand, and societal problems on the other. The high number of unemployed university graduates in Africa is indicative of a major structural misalignment between the needs of their communities and what they are learning in universities.

University curricula are living documents that should evolve as society evolves. For Africa, the curriculum was supposed to evolve from its colonial origins to catering for and assisting in fighting the political empire to assisting in fighting the economic empire and to the current phase where Africa is struggling with the ruthlessness of the epistemic/cognitive empire. It must be admitted that universities in Africa have struggled to delink from Western universities, on whose template they were founded. Without epistemic delinking from Western universities, universities in Africa will continue to act like the proverbial poisoned chalice. The many attempts, especially by students, through movements such as #FeesMustFall and cries for decolonised curricula, must be seen as bottom-up calls by students for curriculum transformation. The #FeesMustFall movement is a student-led protest movement that originated in South Africa around 2015 with the primary purpose of advocating for affordable, quality, and accessible higher education for all, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

The next section reinterrogates the issue of the geology of the Western university in Africa by historicising the many turns the university took since its founding in Al-Anzhar in 970 and Al Quaraouiyine in 859. This section recognises the efforts of Fatima bin Muhammad Al-Fihriya Al-Qurashiya in pioneering university education in the world. Fatima bin Muhammad Al-Fihriya Al-Qurashiya, also known as Fatima al-Fihri, was a Muslim woman who is credited with founding one of the world's oldest existing and continually operating educational institutions. She is renowned for establishing the University of Al-Quaraouiyine (or Al-Karaouine) in Fez, Morocco in the 9th century (Benyera 2018:146).

Historicising the Western University in Africa: The Turns of the University

Indeed, Africa's university curriculum is generally not in tandem with the postcolonial needs of Africa. This begs the question: how did we get here? I respond to this question by tracing the genealogy of the Western university in Africa from its ironic African origins in Fez, Morocco. The university was founded in Africa as an institution predominantly for religious instruction. From its origins in North Africa, it was exported to Greece. Like Edward Said's Travelling Theory (Said 1983), the university's curriculum underwent constant adjustments to align with the unique requirements, preferences, and political dynamics of each new environment it entered.

From its origins in Africa, the university first took a Western turn, where it was exported to Greece. In Greece, the university or academy became heavily philosophical compared to Africa, where it was predominantly religious. From Greece, the university took an intra-European turn, where it was re-exported to mainland Europe, to countries such as France and the United Kingdom, where universities such as Sorbonne University and Oxford University were established. Already problematic at this stage of the university was the influence of the elites over the form, content, and structure of the curriculum. In Britain, the landed gentry, for example, played a significant role in the establishment

and development of universities, particularly during the late medieval and early modern periods. Their contributions and influence were intertwined with the broader historical context of the evolution of universities in Britain. The landed gentry, composed of wealthy landowners and nobility, often provided financial support to universities, its members frequently served on the governing bodies of universities, such as university councils and boards of trustees.

Additionally, many universities received endowments, benefactions, and bequests from the landed gentry. These contributions were often designated for specific purposes, such as establishing chairs in various academic disciplines, funding research, or supporting libraries and collections. This shaped not just the universities but also the curriculum and also influenced what areas of research were deemed fundable and unfundable. In other words, the money and resources from the landed gentry determined the direction of the curriculum and research in Britain, and this practice was extended to the British colonies when the university took a colonial turn.

When colonisation began in Africa, the university was also instrumentalised and used as part of the mechanisms to subjugate the colonised people. When the university took this colonial turn, it was in the form of the imposition of Western universities and curricula in Africa. The French and the British Empires not only imposed their political will on their African colonies, but they also imposed their episteme, while annihilating local epistemologies. Indeed, the colonisers committed epistemicides. When the university assumed the colonial turn, it became integral to the colonial project.

From the colonial turn, the university in Africa took a racial, tribal, sexist, and patriarchal turn. In South Africa, this was in the form of the establishment of racially segregated universities. At independence, the university in Africa was inherited by the predominantly Black, postcolonial governments that subsequently turned the university into a patriotic historiographical asset, thereby giving the university a nationalistic turn. During this nationalist turn, the university in

Africa was an asset for nationalist aspirations. As finances to run the universities began to dwindle in the postcolonial dispensation, universities in Africa took a corporate turn. This was the period when the postcolonial African states faced a lot of neoliberal and globalised external pressures, such as – but not limited to – the implementation of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). During this corporate turn, universities started to establish public relations departments, and students slowly turned into customers; thus, the need to impart prudence was overtaken by the necessity to meet certain targets, particularly concerning graduating students.

From the corporate turn, the university took the professional turn. This heightened the call forculling non-profit-making degree programmes, such as those offered in the social sciences and humanities fields. A consultancy culture crept into the university, with many academic members also doubling as external consultants. The system thereby celebrates numbers, while using several templates became the order of the day. The calls to decolonise the university gave rise to transformation calls, such as the #Feesmustfall and #Rhodesmustfall movements. The call was to deracialise, decolonise, Africanise, feminise, and indigenise the curriculum and the university system. This call coincides with the efforts to attain the AU's Agenda 2063, which is also in tandem with the quest for curriculum transformation.

However, without deliberate efforts at decolonising the curriculum, the university in Africa will remain largely a colonial project, serving colonial ends. In its current form, the Western university system in Africa is predominantly complicit in the oppression, subjugation, and dehumanisation of Africans for the following three reasons. Firstly, the university is supposed to be a crucible for solving society's most pertinent problems. If the university exists for that purpose, what then explains the coexistence of thousands of unemployed graduates with multitudes of societal problems? This situation is untenable and indicative of an epistemically structural problem. Secondly, the university is supposed to champion societal transformation, providing the blueprints for the advancement from a troubled past and distorted present to a possible peaceful and autonomous

future. In other words, the university is supposed to be the cartographic office where the future of Africa is debated, re-debated, and mapped.

Finally, the university in Africa, as an intellectual collective, is supposed to facilitate thoughts from African perspectives, thereby contributing to the larger movements of decentring the West and recentring Africa. The current form of the university is representative of an institution that thinks from the West and operates in the Global South. This creates an epistemic misalignment where the knowledge that is generated and regurgitated in Africa is not efficacious in explaining and solving the African problem. The result is that the 'produced' knowledge perpetuates the African problem instead of solving it.

The Seven Models of the University

The role of the university has been ever-changing in response to societal needs, from its origin as a place of religious instruction to the modern-day platform of cutting-edge technology and higher-order thinking. Efforts to decolonise the university and the curriculum in Africa are not new and can be traced most recently to the Association of African Universities' (AAU)[4] 15th Quadrennial General Conference of African University Leaders which was held from 5 to 8 July 2021. The AAU, a continental organisation and umbrella body for universities on the continent, serves as a representative body for higher education institutions in Africa. The AAU is the apt body to lead and co-ordinate the decolonisation of the university and its curricula in Africa. At its inception in 1967, the thinking was to formulate a university that responds to Africa's decolonisation needs. There was a lot of interaction between the AAU and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), as evidenced by the AAU's inaugural conference held in Kinshasa in September 1969, under the theme, 'The University and Development'. A follow-up workshop was held in Accra, Ghana, from 10-15 July 1972, on 'Creating the African University: Emerging Issues in the 1970s', where a decision was undertaken

4 It was founded in 1967 and is headquartered in Accra, Ghana.

to rethink and reformulate the very idea of the university in Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020:891).

There are seven types of universities in Africa. In this section, I adopt Ndlovu-Gatsheni's seven models of the university to propose the imperativeness and the pillars upon which the reconstitution and decolonisation of curricula in Africa can be erected. He refers to the first as the Alexandria/Timbuktu model of the university. This university is modelled around the University of Qarawlyine/Karawiyyin in Fez in Morocco (859 CE), the University of Al Azhar in Cairo in Egypt (972 CE), and the Sankore University/University of Timbuktu (982 CE). The second represents the Western model, with examples such as the Bologna (1088), Oxford (1096), Sorbonne (1150), Salamanca (1218), and Coimbra (1290) universities.

The third, the colonial model of the university, was established as a metropolitan university in Africa, with a clear channel of reporting to their European head offices. Examples of such include the University College of the West Indies (1946), University College, Ibadan (1948), University College of Rhodesia (1956), Nyasaland, Royal College Nairobi (1961), and the University of East Africa (1963). The fourth model is the African developmental university, otherwise termed the inherited university. This type of university was the subject of Africanisation and some efforts at transformation. The fifth model is the popular university. These universities offered popular education, and were non-elitist, people's universities that privileged the interests of the proletariat.[5] Some examples include the Popular University of Turin (1900) and the Universidad Popular Gonzalez Prada (1921). The sixth model is the neoliberal-bureaucratic-corporate-managerial model, which saw the establishment of universities of technology and entrepreneurial universities. The seventh and last model of the university, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni's typology, is the decolonised model of the university. This is the desired model for Africa. It also aligned to the AU's Agenda 2063. The model is indigenous-compliant, activist-inclined,

5 This is a term usually used to describe the working class.

accessible, multilingual, polyphonic, relevant, responsible, and culturally anchored.

Active Citizenry and the Decolonisation of the Curriculum in Africa

This section, the prescriptive part of this chapter, is anchored on the need to adopt a non-state intervention in African higher education, given the failures of the postcolonial states to improve the quality of life for citizens. It is certain that the state cannot be trusted with leading the process of transforming the curriculum in Africa because the state has remained predominantly colonial since the inception of foreign domination in Africa. Active citizenry, which is the bottom-up action of local communities, is one of the most viable mechanisms for rethinking, reconstituting, and decolonising the curriculum.

There are many prospects of using active citizenship to decolonise the curriculum in Africa. This allows universities to be epistemically locally situated, thereby enabling local solutions to local problems to become a reality. It understands local realities and histories better and can assist in positioning the university to solve society's most pertinent problems. Furthermore, active citizenry is efficacious in ameliorating some of the challenges faced by Western universities in Africa, such as the commodification and commercialisation of knowledge. It also gives voices and agency to local communities that have been crowded out by Western-centric epistemologies. Local pieces of knowledge that were on the verge of extinction can be resuscitated and used in local universities, both as a medium of instruction and a source of knowledge. Lastly, universities will cease to exist as outposts of colonialism, as they will resonate with local communities since the locals will have a key stake in what happens at these institutions.

However, the active citizenry can play a vital role in decolonising the curriculum in Africa by fostering inclusivity, critical thinking, and empowerment, as well as the following:

1. It can start conversations and raise effective and sustained awareness of the need and urgency to decolonise the

curriculum. This can include highlighting marginalised voices, discussing historical perspectives, and challenging Eurocentric biases in various facets of life.

2. Active citizenry enables effective grassroots advocacy. Active citizens can advocate for curriculum reforms by engaging with policymakers, educators, and community leaders. This can involve organising campaigns, writing petitions, and promoting dialogue to ensure that local epistemologies and marginalised narratives and perspectives are integrated into the curriculum.
3. It can aid in the quest for review and decoloniality of the curriculum. Active citizens can participate in curriculum review processes, offering input and feedback to ensure a more inclusive and decolonised curriculum. This includes promoting the inclusion of the correct forms of African history, literature, and indigenous knowledge systems.
4. It empowers local communities, educators, and students. Active citizens can support professional development programmes for educators, providing them with resources, training, and tools to address decolonisation in their teaching practices. This can involve sharing best practices, organising workshops, and creating networks for collaboration.

Despite these promises, active citizenry has its challenges, especially as the marginalised communities lack the requisite craft competency and craft literacy to effectively participate in the decolonisation of local universities and the curriculum. Given the fact that universities have been elitist for years, suddenly roping up local communities will be a huge challenge in some communities. There are other challenges associated with using active citizenry as a vehicle for decolonising the university and the curriculum in Africa. The major challenge emanates from the colonial legacies of divisiveness and lack of social cohesion. Africa has a rich diversity of cultures, nations, and languages. This means that what is relevant and appropriate to one group may not be to another, potentially leading to disagreements in the decolonisation process.

Additionally, the coloniality of knowledge remains pervasive and ever-threatening. There are individuals in Africa

who still uphold colonial perspectives and resist changes to a more African-centric curriculum. There is the challenge of political manipulation and interference, where politicians might manipulate the process for their gains or to favour certain groups. Another impediment is the persistent influence of the colonial curriculum. Generally, education systems tend to resist change due to entrenched systemic structures and processes. A concerted effort to decolonise the curriculum, thus, may be confronted with institutional barriers, especially in countries that have strong and organised labour movements, such as South Africa.

Several originations are already decolonising the curriculum in their various spaces. These include Decolonising Education South Africa (DESA a South African group that promotes an African-centric curriculum. The Black Students Movement (BSM) at the University of the Free State, South Afri another pro-curriculum transformation organisation. This group aims to decolonise education and create a curriculum free from Eurocentric bias. Then there is the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR). Based in Uganda, the MISR strongly emphasise decolonising knowledge and methodologies in social research and education. This centre has produced significant and cutting-edge decolonised scholarship under the leadership of Mahmood Mamdani. The African Curriculum Association (ACA) is another such project, which aims to develop and implement African-rooted curricula in schools across the continent. The ACA aims to provide a platform for all curriculum practitioners in Africa.

Also, South Africa hosts the Africa Decolonial Reading Network (ADERN), which was founded at the University of South Africa as a brainchild of Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni. ADERN has strong links with the South American decolonial scholars who were instrumental in its establishment. The project introduces readers to the decolonial framework and incubates mainly their theoretical thinking by highlighting the existence of African theories and scholarship more aligned with their work. The idea of ADERN is to accord African scholarship recognition and, in a way, reverse the epistemicides perpetrated by the colonial project. Other movements to decolonise the curriculum include #RhodeMustFall, originated at the University of Cape Town,

South Africa. It was a movement that sparked international conversations around decolonised education. #FeesMustFall, which aims at broadening access to higher education and decolonising the curriculum, is a larger nationwide movement in South Africa that went beyond fighting for fair fees to demand an education that was not misaligned to the needs of the Black races.

The list of organisations, groups, and movements listed above, which are already involved in the decolonisation of the curriculum, reveals how local committees are taking active citizenship to design or instigate institutions to redesign curricula that are in line with their histories and decolonial needs. This presents a propitious starting point for the AU in implementing Agenda 2063.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the curriculum transformation project in Africa represents a pivotal endeavour in the pursuit of the independent and prosperous Africa envisioned by the continent's leaders and scholars. However, the AU, thus far, has struggled on various key issues, such as policy development, regional collaboration, funding and investment in tertiary education, leading and co-ordinating research and innovation, and improving access and inclusivity. There are areas where some strides have been made, such as skills development and knowledge exchange. As the AU celebrates its 20th anniversary, there are several key actions it should consider taking to advance tertiary education on the continent. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. encouraging member states to increase funding for tertiary education, preferably as a percentage of either their gross domestic product (GDP) or annual budgets;
2. initiating scholarship and exchange programmes among member states, managed by a dedicated division within the AU secretariat; and
3. developing regional and continental quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms aimed at addressing the proliferation of 'diploma mills', fake and doubtable

qualifications – and, in the process, enhancing the credibility of Africa's tertiary qualifications.

Most importantly, the AU must lead the reimagination and rethinking of the curriculum away from the current colonial model to a decolonial model of tertiary education which confers epistemic and cognitive independence to Africans. This way, research and innovation can be done that address African problems. Digital learning can also be incorporated to enhance access and promote the use of technology in education. However, this must be undertaken with cognisance of the challenges posed by technology in enhancing the digital divide, and, in the process, creating further marginalisation of already marginalised communities.

Additionally, the AU must pursue private-public partnerships to enhance the quality of tertiary education. In the same vein, the issue of gender and intergenerational balance is key in delivering efficacious education. There is no successful programme that negates more than half of the population, i.e. women, youth, and other minority groups. The AU must be bold and deliberate in putting youth and women at the forefront of its endeavours to deliver a transformed curriculum in its member states' tertiary institutes.

Curriculum transformation is an ambitious undertaking that seeks to address historical injustices, promote inclusivity, and empower future generations with the knowledge and skills required to shape Africa's destiny. The transformation of educational curricula is not merely an academic exercise, but a profound reimagining and rethinking of the continent's identity, values, and purpose. It is about epistemic and restorative justice. It is also an acknowledgement of the rich and diverse African epistemes, which deserve recognition and utilisation as knowledge that is equal to other pieces of knowledge. Curriculum transformation is an emblematic journey toward the epistemically independent "Africa We Want". It is a testament to the continent's determination to break free from the shackles of the past and forge an autonomous decolonial future that is defined by African voices, histories, agencies, perspectives, and aspirations. The

path ahead may be challenging, but it holds the promise of a more equitable, prosperous, and self-reliant Africa.

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