



Centre for International Teacher Education



**Towards a transformative and decolonial approach to preparing teachers in post-apartheid South Africa: the case of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa**

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# Overview

Introduction

De-/ colonial-/ ity

Views of leadership

Teacher education programmes

Background and methodology

Findings: from university and faculty level

Questions for discussion

# Introduction

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**Context:** #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall 2015

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**Aim:** to deconstruct the (neo) colonial and apartheid legacy in teacher preparation programmes through an in-depth and fine-grained case study of an initial teacher education programme offered by a university of technology in South Africa.

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**Research question:** What are university leaders' views and experiences of decolonisation within a teacher preparation programme at a university of technology in the Western Cape Province of South Africa?

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**Argument:** ITE programmes have the ability and should sensitise student teachers about what a decolonial education system can and should look like validating and centring diversity and Southern knowledge systems.

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**Contribution:** contributes to epistemic disruption in teacher education, providing insights into the potential pitfalls of decentring teacher education in the African context.

# Framing the field

Decolonial(ity), Leadership and Teacher Education Programmes

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# De-/colonial-/ity



# Views of leadership

## Challenges

- **limited knowledge about decolonising the curriculum**
- **reluctance when it comes to decolonise the curriculum**
- **historically racialized identities of their faculty staff**

## Ways forward

- **attitude and concrete teaching practices of lecturers**
- **giving voice (and power) to the previously marginalised**
- **knowing the context of students' realities**
  - **engagement, dialogue and a social justice approach**
- **Du Plessis (2021)**

# Teacher preparation programmes

- What is the situation in South Africa ?

1. First, lecturers' curriculum decisions are shaped in multiple ways.
2. Second, lecturers often occupy a problematic space as mediators of teaching and learning.
3. Third, lecturers often seem unable to articulate in concrete terms what a decolonised curriculum might look like (Sayed et al., 2017).

- Ways forward:

- Decolonising the curriculum in HE must transcend binary forms of thought, paying attention to
  - colonial language issues
  - and systemic shifts
- Epistemological decolonisation challenges debates on excellence and relevance in HE (Motala and Sayed, 2018)



## Context of Research Site

- University of Technology formalised after 1994
- Teacher colleges merged to form the Faculty of Education which has a presence on two campuses.
- Medium of Instruction is Afrikaans at the rural campus and English at the urban campus
- Urban campus is more racially diverse than rural campus





Sample



University  
Management



Faculty of  
Education  
Management

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# Sample Overview

	Respondent	Campus	Age Range	Gender	Race	Role/s
1	AT	A	50+	F	White	Deputy Dean
2	HD	B	50+	F	White	Deputy Dean
3	RB	A & B	50+	M	Indian	Deputy Vice Chancellor
4	MS	A	50+	F	Coloured	Head of Department
5	CO	A	50+	M	Black	Head of Department

# Findings: Tier 1 Leadership

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*ensuring the kind of smooth transition between the old and the new phasing out of new, old programs and bringing in new programs. This is probably one of the biggest changes this university has experienced, even from a financial point of view... and then also to ensure development of our, our teachers.... I'll be spending a lot of time there...I think one of the areas we've been lacking as a university to ensure that our heads of department are well-equipped to handle the kind of challenges we have today and then we had very archaic policies (RB, A&B, M, I)*

# Findings: Tier 1 Leadership

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*We had to ensure that there were other elements within the curriculum... around the de-colonisation project, but also aspects around ensuring that our graduate attributes were well taught, ideas around good citizenry, apart from just the discipline acumen, but just about being, developing individuals for future society. It was an important element and we had to start thinking about those things. So those were some of the important aspects that we had to consider within our curriculum and then of course, the whole idea around internationalisation, the whole international, aspect around our curriculum was, you know, was lacking and we had to ensure that we, we, we, we incorporated that (RB, A&B, M, I)*

# Findings: Tier 1 Leadership

*You know people sat down and kind of theorised the fact that we needed this change... but nobody sat down and worked out how this was going to actually take place...*

*we've just been inundated with these areas around enrolment planning, around professional bodies and, and, and so on. So, so I think the large part of our energy has just been trying to get that going. We've also put in quality assurance aspects. I've introduced a committee called the QEC, Qualifications Evaluation Committee, which takes it, which is made up of kind of experts that look, that looks at submissions between the different universities and these submissions, before they go to the CHE and the Department of Education...I'm spending a lot of time managing our student experience, so one of the things was that we, you know, we had to ensure that our rules, our student rules, especially the exclusionary ones, we had to have, to be revisited to ensure that these rules were sensitive to the needs of the student (RB, A&B, M, I)*



# Approaches to decolonisation within the institution

## Three key strategies:

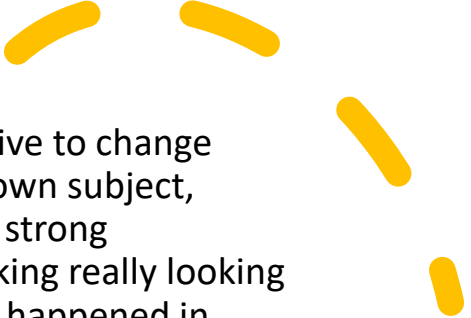
- to overhaul the programme offering
  - new programme offerings and curriculum centred around the values of internationalisation and good citizenship
  - ensuring qualification compliance with the necessary education authorities and ensuring the delivery of quality and relevant programmes also influence student experiences
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# Curriculum

If I look at the curriculum and I think a lot of the focus is only on curriculum and curriculum change and that the curriculum must be more Africanized and more made to fit the African way of thinking and the indigenous knowledge of South Africa... and Africa to be incorporated into the content knowledge of the different subjects. So that is the one way of decolonizing higher education. But then on the other side of this ... that has to do with transformation in our education where it opens up access where it allows for the moment. I think more of multilingual approach where we acknowledge the languages of the students, and we try to address their needs and that area and also try to open up the knowledge in their home language. And that is also something that is embedded in our language, policy of the university, the move in that way, but I think that is also something that happens very slowly. (AT, F, W, A, Deputy Dean)



# Curriculum



I think there was a very strong drive to change content. I can only speak for my own subject, which was English where we had strong transformation element, and looking really looking at books. ... but I can't say that. It happened in Math's or in Science or History necessarily.... I am not so sure what the reason is [that the change in curriculum has been so slow]. You know, as I said, we have many training sessions with staff. We have speakers from outside to come and talk to staff to equip them with knowledge that they will be able to change the content of their subjects. But then on the other hand, also must remember, sorry. We have to also prepare our students to teach in a schooling system that has a prescribed curriculum. (HD,F, W, B, Deputy Dean)





# Pedagogy

I think the biggest changes in the curriculum was not so much the content, but maybe in the way in which the curriculum is delivered. And also the way we assess students. I think if you really go and look at the curriculum per subject and certain subjects, will lend themselves more to change and focusing on decolonizing the curriculum, for instance, I spoke a lot with the history lecturer, who were there a few years ago and he started, you know, looking at the curriculum, the history curriculum and what should be covered and what to be added not taken away, but added and the different views on the history. That was brought in, you know, not only one perspective but looking from different perspectives and angles at the history of South Africa, for instance. (AT, F, W, A, Deputy Dean)

# Pedagogy

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And then I always like to refer to Adichie's, the single story, ...And I usually start with that in the first year to make students aware and then we end off by reading Americana in the fourth year. So that they experience this whole idea of this wonderful author in Nigeria and what she experienced. And I think Americana's to me very much, you know based on her own life probably when she went to America the first time and many of our students will go to other countries and going teach there. So it opens up very interesting debate.... So what like, what literature do you select? .... And I think my umbrella over all of this is critical thinking, because we want to send our teachers who will enhance critical thinking in the schools and in the classrooms and to be able to do that, especially the Campus A students who are actually very protected and come from very [sheltered] context where they have not exposed too much diversity, to open up their minds and to let them see a bigger world out there. (HD,F, W, B, Deputy Dean)

# Approaches to decolonisation at faculty level

## **Decolonisation as....**

- Africanisation/indigeneity/transformation/access

## **Approaches by Teacher Educators....**

- Changes in selection of literature/content
- Pedagogy of peace/inclusion

## **Drive from Faculty management....**

- Staff training and development

## **Other salient points....**

- Some course lends itself better to discussing affective issues than others
- The drive to decolonise TE programmes should be balanced out with developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions student teachers need to teach a very prescriptive curriculum and within very challenging contexts

# Partial absence in policy documents

- The absence of “decolonisation” in policy texts
- The global-local nexus of knowledge production in the curriculum
- Social justice and in-/equality matters in policy texts
- Caps
  - Foundation
  - Intermediate
  - senior and
  - FET
- SACE
  - Teaching standards
  - Teacher Registration Requirements /Standards
- National Qualification Framework (NQF)



# Discussion

Is decolonizing (teacher) education a bottom-up movement? What are the implications for university leaders and policy-makers?

What are the hallmarks of a decolonised teacher education programme?

What role does leadership play in ensuring programmes and staff remain committed to the project? How do you measure accountability in this regard?



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