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South Africa's Curriculum Transformation: Insights from Post-Independence Africa and Post-Civil Rights Movement in the United States[1]

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Abstract

The #MustFall campaigns, student-led protests that began at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2015 and reverberated across South African universities, ignited calls for curriculum transformation, the abolition of Eurocentric epistemologies, and the embrace of indigenous knowledge systems. Given that despite more than two-and-a-half decades of majority rule, South African universities continue to promote hegemonic Western thought, the call for genuine curriculum transformation is understandable. Against this backdrop, this article investigates the challenges associated with curriculum transformation efforts in South Africa. It offers potential solutions by drawing lessons from transformation efforts in the humanities in postcolonial African states and African-American studies in the civil rights movement in the United States (US).

Keywords: South Africa, Curriculum Transformation, Decolonisation, Africa, United States

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1. Introduction

The removal of Rhodes' statue in 2015 at the University of Cape Town (UCT) symbolises recent calls for curriculum transformation in South Africa. Although the country achieved black majority rule in 1994, South African universities continue to reflect the hegemony of Western models and paradigms. Post-apartheid policies towards transformation, such as the 1995 National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) and the 1997 Education White Paper 3, have not resulted in meaningful curriculum transformation (Bawa 2020). This begs several fundamental questions: Why has curriculum transformation not been successful in South Africa? What are the challenges, and how can they be addressed? What lessons can be drawn from other states?

It is against this backdrop that this article engages curriculum transformation efforts in post-apartheid South Africa by analysing the various policies as well as the bottlenecks that confront the transformation process, including the hegemony of Western thought and the alienation of black students. I argue that beyond the use of internally constructed policies to drive curriculum transformation in South Africa, it is critical to draw lessons from curriculum transformation efforts in the humanities in post-independent Africa and African-American studies in the era of the civil rights movement in the United States (US).

The end of colonialism in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s ushered in the golden age of curriculum transformation efforts on the continent, resulting in decolonial schools such as the Ibadan School of History, the Dar es Salaam School of Political Economy and the Dakar School of Culture. In the US, African-American Studies emerged during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s to challenge notions of white supremacy and racist ideas and structures, leading to the establishment of two vibrant schools – the Atlanta School of Sociology and the Howard School of International Affairs. The experiences of African decolonial schools and the US' anti-racist schools offer potential lessons for South Africa's curriculum transformation efforts in the 21st century.

2. South Africa's Curriculum Transformation Efforts

South Africa celebrated 25 years of black majority rule in 2019. While there has been a visible transformation in the composition of the country's governing

elite, other spheres, including economic and social frameworks, remain mostly untransformed. This is particularly evident in the country's higher education system, as South African universities continue to embrace international practices to be well-positioned in global university rankings (Dlamini 2016). Despite more than two-and-a-half decades of black majority rule, South African higher education embraces European models and paradigms. Paradoxically, concepts such as Africanisation, indigenisation, and decolonisation of the curriculum have become buzzwords, especially post-2015 (Mahabeer 2018). Nonetheless, in general, the country's universities continue to reflect Eurocentric, colonial, and apartheid designs and concerns have been expressed about the over-representation of white academics and Western scholarship in the upper echelons of academia (Garuba 2015).

The #MustFall campaigns, student-led protests that began at UCT in 2015 and reverberated across the country's universities, ignited calls for curriculum transformation, the abolition of Eurocentric epistemologies, and the embrace of indigenous knowledge systems (Ndelu 2020). The protests also raised issues around access, fees, and the slow pace of transformation across South African higher education institutions (Motala 2020). The student movements emphasised that South African higher education remains untransformed, evidenced by persistent racism and curricula ignoring African experience and context. The country's universities are thus seen as a site of oppression, where Western literature and Eurocentric world views are prioritised at the expense of African positionality. Universities are thus failing in their primary responsibility to enhance social change as higher education spaces continue to perpetuate marginalisation and exclusion (Kotze 2018). Lange (2017: 34) observes that:

> If South African universities are to get anywhere in terms of addressing the unrealised aspects of institutional transformation that students and some staff are raising [...] It is necessary to explore more carefully the relationship between curriculum, knowledge and identity as currently they are being defined and see where universities stand in relation to these.

The apartheid regime's 'separate development' legacies are visible in South African higher education in the democratic era. In 1949, the apartheid government set up the Eiselen Commission on Native Education that was saddled with the

primary responsibility of modifying the content and form of the curriculum taught to black South Africans. Its recommendations led to the passing of the Bantu Education Act of 1954 that created a segregated schooling system and the subsequent 1959 University Extension Act that extended the Bantu education system to higher education institutions, giving rise to historically black universities such as Fort Hare, Limpopo, and Zululand. These universities were established to train black students – in fields such as teaching and administration – that would serve the colonial and later apartheid administrations to maintain their racist agenda. In other words, while white universities promoted white supremacy, black universities wallowed in the mediocrity of Bantu education as they trained black students to become servants to their white counterparts (Heleta 2016). Relative to historically white institutions such as the universities of Cape Town, Pretoria, and the Witwatersrand, these institutions are under-funded and ill-equipped, with negative impacts on the quality of research and teaching (Mngomezulu 2020).

While black students now account for the majority in South African universities, only 16 per cent of black youth between the ages of 18 and 24 are enrolled, and failure and drop-out rates are very high, with around 27 per cent of students completing their undergraduate and diploma programmes in regulation time and one in four students in contact universities either failing or dropping out in their first year of study (Vorster 2016; CHE 2016). The failure rate is racially skewed, with black students forming the majority of those that drop out and fail (Vorster 2016). A major contributor to this perennial problem is that the curriculum does not reflect the realities (particularly the lived experiences) of the black majority in South Africa but the hegemony of Western thought and white supremacy, alienating black students. The purpose of these universities – to promote white supremacy and the colonial project – persists. Another factor is the nexus between access to language and access to education. English is the dominant language of instruction in South African universities, disadvantaging black students whose home language is not English (Henricks 2016).

Since 1994, successive governments have adopted policies and initiatives to transform the South African higher education sector, including the 1995 NCHE and the 1997 Education White Paper 3. Several institutions have also been established to fast-track the transformation of the higher education system, including Higher Education South Africa (HESA) (established in 2005 and

now known as Universities South Africa) and the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET). The CHET, in particular, aims to tackle the bottlenecks inhibiting transformation in this sector. However, South African universities remain significantly untransformed as Eurocentric worldviews remain dominant. This has led to calls for a curriculum that speaks to the socio-economic and political realities of the post-apartheid era. While curriculum transformation does not necessarily imply delinking from Western epistemologies, it advocates that Africa be at the centre of curriculum design and delivery. This manifests not only in the composition of academic staff but also in the curriculum content. The racial composition of an institution does not always determine success in terms of curriculum transformation. Transformation should go beyond fee reduction or free education, removal of statues of colonial administrators, and renaming institutions. Genuine transformation calls for serious engagement with knowledge production and delivery and a disruptive shift labelled a decolonial turn in the academic space (Garuba 2015). The necessity of a decolonial turn is illustrated by Eurocentrism's tendency to shape other people's thoughts, determine who is rational, and set the standards for publication (Zondi 2018). Indeed, attempts to disrupt the status quo often lead to sanctions such as work being rejected by publishers, failure to secure academic positions, and is regarded as an academic outcast (Zondi 2018).

South African universities have perpetuated Eurocentrism by the reward system, which offers academics financial rewards for publishing in accredited journals. While this is commendable, it suffers from two shortcomings. First, Western journals are more valued and rewarded (Melber 2018). Preference for international journals reinforces Western epistemic hegemony. Second, there has been an alarming increase in South African academics publishing in predatory journals that appear on an accredited list. While the bodies responsible for compiling lists of accredited publications are culpable, academics who publish in these journals are also to blame. Black students and academics are expected to assimilate, integrate, and conform to this discriminatory and alienating culture (Badat 2017). Essentially, universities are sites for South African students and academics to whiten up. Thus, the inclusion of black students and academics is not an emancipatory one but is of a subordinate nature (Badat 2017).

Post-apartheid South Africa has not taken the issue of curriculum transformation seriously enough. The period between the 1990s and 2001 was

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concerned with three major objectives: access, equity and redress. Institutional frameworks such as the 1995 South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act, the 1996 National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), the 1997 White Paper 3, and the 1997 Higher Education Act were established to achieve those objectives. The era from 2001 to 2016 was mainly associated with teaching and learning as extended programmes were introduced and efforts were made to improve teaching practices (Lange 2017). The focus was on language and academic literacy, neglecting the core aspects of curriculum transformation, such as the purpose of knowledge and a comprehensive review of the curriculum (Lange 2017). This put serious attempts at curriculum transformation on the backburner. 'For profound curriculum change to occur in higher education and in particular teacher education, there has to be a deliberate shift away from a position of instrumentalism and reaction, and an exercise of counting numbers; towards a deep intellectualism of the curriculum' (Mahabeer 2018: 2). This statement is apt, given the pressure on universities to increase the enrolment of black students and recruitment of black academics.

Earlier decolonial and transformation efforts include attempts by academics like the late Archie Mafeje, who vigorously argued for curriculum reforms in 1968 (Mngomezulu and Hadebe 2018) and the 1976 student protests against the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in schools and oppressive Bantu Education. The development of isiZulu and isiXhosa as languages of instruction at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and Rhodes University are recent concrete attempts towards decolonisation (Rossouw 2018). It is believed that the use of indigenous languages will facilitate a better understanding of academic concepts and theories and also enable students to relate well to content as many think in their indigenous languages. However, it remains to be seen if these efforts will yield the desired results, given the slow pace of implementing this initiative. Jansen (2017) highlights specific activities across South African universities that reflect some level of curriculum transformation, including cardiovascular research at UCT championed by Bongani Mayosi and AIDS research at UKZN led by Quarraisha Abdool Karim and Salim Karim. These programmes are well funded, not controlled by Western knowledge agencies, and African students across the continent enrol in them.

Transformation of the humanities should take into cognisance the need to draw on the ideas that have shaped contemporary South Africa, including

indigenous, precolonial, colonial, postcolonial African, and Western ideas. There is also a need to rethink research methods and methodologies because Western epistemic dominance rested and has continued to rest on them (Zondi 2018). South African academics' attitudes towards the curriculum regarding the teaching and learning process are equally germane. This prompts Vandeyar (2019) to ask critical questions: 'Are they ready to unlearn, re-learn and fundamentally transform as individuals and academics? Are they literate about the historical injustices and diverse intellectual debates within their disciplines?' Clear answers to such questions are essential to determine the direction of South Africa's curriculum transformation efforts.

The 1997 Higher Education Act notes the need to redress past discrimination and ensure representativeness and equal access. However, the overarching theme of curriculum transformation debates is the re-awakening of indigenous knowledge, practices, and languages that have been relegated to the background. It is important to embrace Afrocentric scholarship to thwart Western episteme's hegemony. While Western scholarship is critical for the development of the West, it does not sufficiently capture the African experience (Matthews 2018). Nevertheless, it is crucial to strike the right balance between Africanisation, Westernisation, and globalisation. Against this backdrop, Higgs (2020) argues for the revival of indigenous African knowledges – which have been relegated to the backburner – in the quest for curriculum transformation in the discipline of philosophy. This is critical for South Africans' socio-economic circumstances to find expression in the country's educational spaces. In contrast to scholars who have argued for Africa to delink from Western thought, Higgs advocates for what he refers to as a 'fusion of epistemologies,' a synthesis of indigenous African knowledges and Western epistemologies.

Transformation, especially in curriculum, language and access, is thus crucial if South Africa is to confront contemporary challenges such as high levels of poverty and inequality (Mthembu 2019). In other words, curriculum transformation is critical to societal transformation. Indeed, the education system was used by the apartheid administration to perpetuate discriminatory and segregation policies. Accordingly, higher education institutions should play a pivotal role in addressing the challenges that confront contemporary South Africa.

The salience of transformation stems from the hegemonic notion that

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Western epistemologies are universal and that indigenous knowledge systems are of less value. This is evident in the neglect of traditional knowledges and indigenous languages. Decolonisation and transformation thus connote the struggle against epistemicides with the ultimate objective of understanding other knowledge systems such as the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* (Mahabeer 2018). Le Grange (2016) highlights five key factors that could transform the South African curriculum. The first is assessing the relevance of Western disciplines to the domestic context, while the second is trans-disciplinary knowledge that incorporates indigenous communities. Thirdly, the curriculum should reflect local and regional realities and fourth; students should be taught about the cradle of humankind. The fifth factor is drawing lessons from the Inter-cultural University of the Indigenous Nations and Peoples in Amawtay Wasi, in Ecuador. The last-mentioned approach – learning from the experiences of other countries – forms the crux of this article. Beyond using internally constructed strategies to foster curriculum transformation in South Africa, it would add value to draw lessons from the curriculum transformation efforts of other African countries and African-American studies in the US.

3. Insights from Post-Independence Africa

Given that quality education results in the mastery of one's environment in pursuit of innovation and advancement, Western colonialism robbed Africa of this benefit as the continent's originality and authenticity, particularly in the area of lived experiences, cultural values, and indigenous knowledge system, were relegated to the back burner (Ezeanya-Esiobu 2019). The end of colonialism on the continent in the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the rise of struggles to transform its universities in light of the realisation that students were being exposed to European history, politics, geography and literature as opposed to an Africanised curriculum, disregarding the continent's precolonial scientific, literary, and other achievements. Africa was portrayed as a primitive, inferior, barbaric, and incapable continent that needed Western civilisation (Jansen 2017). In 1952, the Advisory Committee on Education in British Tropical Africa observed that the education in the British African colonies reflected the content of the English elementary school as opposed to the African environment (Ndille 2018). Hence, the quest to transform African higher education. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017: 61) notes: 'This

struggle entailed formulating a new philosophy of higher education informed by African histories, cultures, ideas, and aspirations as well as a fundamental redefinition of the role of the university'. This marked the most important era in curriculum transformation efforts in African higher education, evident in the rise of leading scholars such as Nigeria's Kenneth Dike, Guyana's Walter Rodney, and Senegal's Cheikh Anta Diop, who championed decolonial schools, including the Ibadan School of History, the Dar es Salam School of Political Economy, and the Dakar School of Culture, respectively. These centres used rigorous research techniques such as nationalist historiography and oral sources to challenge Eurocentric epistemologies. Their academics drew on nationalist historiography to debunk colonial epistemological depictions of Africa.

Falola (2020: 214) defines African nationalist historiography as

> an academic and cultural movement seeking to redefine the African identity by fiercely defending Africa's past and looking to it as inspiration for future progress. African nationalist historiography is about the authority of Africans calling out the racism and wrongs accumulated against them. For this reason, it is also about resistance. Rather than cowering before the oppressor, African nationalist historiographers fight against the oppressor, as their ancestors did when they fought for their own independence. To clarify: African nationalist historiographers do not want to eliminate Europeans from history altogether. That would rewrite history completely, which is not their aim. They aim to focus not on the Europeans' impact, but rather on the African response to it.

Prior to the emergence of the Ibadan School of History at the University College, Ibadan, Nigeria, the history curriculum and, by extension, the university's curricula were framed by the University of London; they were thus Eurocentric and reflected British values (Omer-Cooper 1980). Kenneth Dike provided leadership in the decolonial school as his Afrocentric publications utilised archival materials, African oral tradition and nationalist historiography to debunk the hegemony of Western epistemology and depict African achievements (Falola 2020). Dike took full advantage of his emergence as the university's vice-chancellor as he mobilised the history department to promote nationalism and recruited many Nigerian academics to diminish the influence of Western

scholars on the institution's transformation strategies (Falola 2020). Beyond its imprint on history departments across Nigerian universities, the Ibadan School of History also influenced the curriculum of Nigerian secondary schools as history textbooks adopted nationalist historiography (Omer-Cooper 1980).

Then-President Julius Nyerere's Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) adopted an African socialist ideology which was a bold alternative to Western capitalism. The 1967 Arusha Declaration underscored Tanzanian policymakers and citizens' commitment to socialism and self-reliance. In an early sign that the declaration would filter into the University of Dar es Salaam's curriculum, a meeting between representatives of the university, policymakers, and members of the ruling party on the role of the university in the state's socialist ideology was held a month after its proclamation (Rugumamu 2020). The university was urged to produce knowledge that promoted socialism and self-reliance and tackled domestic socio-economic challenges (Rugumamu 2020). Within this context, the Dar es Salaam School of Political Economy emerged, boasting of distinguished scholars such as Walter Rodney and Jacques Depelchin. They adopted a radical political economy approach in their teaching and research as they transformed old and introduced new curricula and programmes that Marxian Political Economy underpinned. The school ignited revolutionary consciousness among Tanzanian youth through its 'Great Debates' that attracted African scholars such as Dan Nabudere, Archibald Mafeje and Mahmood Mamdani (Rugumamu 2020).

The Diop-led Dakar School's contribution to nationalist historiography can be summed up in two fundamental notions: 'first, Africa is the Cradle of Humankind and human civilisation; and second, there is a profound historical, linguistic, anthropological and cultural unity among African peoples' (Mboup 2020: 257). However, these schools were criticised on many levels. The Ibadan School was chastised for presenting a narrow historical perspective, while detractors pointed to the Dar-es-Salaam school's emphasis on economic determinism.

Beyond the efforts of these scholars and their schools, many first-generation African scholars vigorously fought Western epistemological dominance. They included political scientists such as Ali A. Mazrui and Claude Ake; anthropologists such as Archibald Mafeje and Maxwell Owusu; geographers like Akinola Mabogunje and Simeon Ominde; historians including Adu Boahen and Jacob

F.A. Ajayi; and literary icons such as Chinua Achebe, Ousmane Sembène, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Okot p'Bitek, and Wole Soyinka (Arowosegbe 2014a). South Africa can draw lessons from these African countries and create similar schools and adopt research techniques such as nationalist historiography and oral sources to capture the socio-economic and political realities of contemporary South Africa. The newly launched Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs at the University of South Africa, which seeks to train thought leaders and change agents towards the development of Africa, is critical in this regard. Indeed, post-apartheid South Africa continues to suffer from the legacies of the colonial and apartheid periods, and its universities serve as a microcosm of the realities in the wider society. As the case of Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere shows, a charismatic South African leader committed to genuine societal transformation and mobilising the country's universities towards this end is critical to the realisation of de-Westernisation and Africanisation.

At a conference organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1961, African leaders agreed that the rise of consciousness of African values would only be achieved if there was a deliberate attempt on the part of each state to conduct research on African tradition and ways of thought (Ndille 2018). Other seminars such as the 1963 Tananarive conference and the 1973 Accra conference were organised to engage how African universities could promote African identities because of their colonial heritage (Ndille 2018). The efforts of various academics and universities resulted in the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in 1973. The Council's pan-African publications that underscore African values and contexts have significantly enhanced African scholarship's global visibility and accessibility (Nyamnjoh 2019).

> For CODESRIA, a relevant African university that champions African values and predicaments, is one that enjoys academic freedom as articulated in its various declarations. By academic freedom, CODESRIA understands full autonomy of thought and practice at the service of knowledge production on the African condition and of relevance to African predicaments. It is also about facilitating unlimited access to the knowledge thus produced. CODESRIA thus relates to universities as autonomous institutions: Free from the logic and practice of those who expect to call the tune merely because

they finance research, publication, and teaching (Nyamnjoh 2019: 8).

Against this background, CODESRIA funds research that promotes the Council's pan-African vision and mission (Nyamnjoh 2019) to curtail Western funding bodies' influence on African scholars' academic freedom.

However, the efforts of these schools of thought, centres and first-generation scholars have been eroded as many African universities continue to perpetuate the hegemony of Western thought and wallow in epistemic crises as seen in perpetual academic dependence on Europe and the US. Africa's research funding compounds this, and its volume of internationally recognised publications are infinitesimal (Arowosegbe 2014b). This challenge was especially daunting in the 1980s when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank imposed structural adjustment programmes. The significant negative impact on African higher education was seen in the rise in fee-paying institutions, departmental autonomy instead of centralised administration, and a market-friendly curriculum that led to increased fees and a colonised curriculum (Mamdani 2018). The emergence of military regimes and the attendant human rights abuses and Cold War politics across Africa further dampened academic freedom (Mazrui 2003).

Although most African universities have successfully Africanised their academic staff profile, they have failed spectacularly to Africanise their curricula despite many attempts towards transformation (Nyamnjoh 2019). This is complicated by the continued use of colonial languages such as English and French as the medium of instruction, relegating indigenous languages to the backburner despite increasing evidence that indigenous languages enhance students' understanding of content and, by extension, performance. Indeed, rather than having African cultural and language centres across African universities, what is visible across these institutions is non-African centres such as China's Confucius Institute and France's Alliance Française. The overarching effect is the African humanities' limited influence in society as these disciplines cannot shape societal directions and struggle to offer lasting solutions to societal challenges.

These are pitfalls that South African universities should avoid. While their research funding is relatively high compared to most African universities, conscious efforts are required to ensure its sustainability. Furthermore, unlike most African counterparts, the top echelon in South African universities remains

largely white, hindering transformation. Like other African states, South Africa has also struggled to transform the curriculum. This herculean task requires serious commitment from all stakeholders, including policymakers, academics, and students. Like other African states, the use of a colonial language – English in the case of South Africa – as the primary medium of instruction remains a challenge. Thus, efforts by universities such as UKZN and Rhodes to develop indigenous languages should be encouraged and emulated by other institutions.

Western epistemology is characterised by methodological and ideological bias that manifests in teleological thinking and equating the Western ideal to reality. While the former practice symbolises the developmental or historical analysis of society – from a primitive one (Africa) to a developed one (Western); the latter notion presupposes that Western society is the ideal (Ake, 1979). Therefore, true curriculum transformation in Africa must provincialise Europe and deprovincialise Africa. While provincialising Europe connotes a drive towards counteracting 'Europeanisation of the world' by unequivocally revealing that European epistemology reflects knowledge from one geographical centre, deprovincialising Africa entails putting the continent at the centre in our interpretation of the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). The West remains the generator and exporter of concepts and theories tested in Africa. It continues to attract many students from Africa, and African scholars continue to pride themselves on validation of their scholarship in the West through publication in so-called 'high impact journals' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). Ali Mazrui (2003: 147) poignantly notes that 'African universities have been the highest transmitters of Western culture in African societies. The high priests of Western civilisation on the continent are virtually all products of those cultural seminaries called 'universities''. This has led to scientific dependence, culminating in research without invention (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018) and teaching without originality.

Using neo-liberalism and neo-Marxism as case studies, Oyovbaire (1983) points to the tyranny of borrowed paradigms. He argues that while neo-liberalism was a legacy of colonialism, neo-Marxism represented an 'intellectual import-substitution' that critiqued neo-liberalism. Both paradigms were adopted and championed by African academics to explain African realities, ignoring the continent's unique features (Oyovbaire 1983). Against this backdrop, Ake (1979) argues that Western social science perpetuates imperialism, although it embraces a subtle academic rather than a forceful economic form. Ake (1979: xiv)

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highlights that Western social science

> continues to play a major role in keeping us subordinate and underdeveloped; it continues to inhibit our understanding of the problems of our world, to feed us noxious values and false hopes; to make us pursue policies which undermine our competitive strength and guarantee our permanent underdevelopment and dependence. It is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot overcome our underdevelopment and dependence unless we try to understand the imperialist character of Western social science and to exercise the attitudes of mind which it inculcates.

Of particular concern is that some African scholars continue to adopt an intellectual tradition that has become globally obsolete and is patently unsuited to African circumstances (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). 'A whole generation of African graduates grew up despising their own ancestry and scrambling to imitate the West. Those early African graduates who have later become university teachers themselves have on the whole remained intellectual imitators and disciples of the West' (Mazrui 2003: 142-143). Ugandan academic Mahmood Mamdani (2018) poignantly illustrates how modern African universities have relegated African values and institutions to the background and replaced them with a Western model characterised by a gated community with three major groups: academics, administrators, and students. He argues that the African university emerged as an integral part of the Western colonial agenda to build institutions and individuals to champion 'excellence', irrespective of the domestic context. However, after World War II, intellectuals emerged that prioritised relevance over excellence. These scholars were primarily concerned with the specificities of their domestic context (Mamdani 2018). The efforts of this generation of African academics have largely vanished. This is another important lesson for South Africa. It is not only important to call for curriculum transformation; all and sundry must internalise the process in order to guarantee generational mobility.

Contemporary African universities continue to confront colonial legacies evident in monolingualism and the rabid adoption of Western standards. Thus, 'the most serious challenge for the universities in Africa today speaks to the need to simultaneously Africanise global scholarship while also endeavouring to globalise African scholarship' (Arowosegbe 2014b: 243). African universities must

position themselves to build theories that explain and predict the continent's realities rather than relying on imported theories and models designed for the Western context. Africa also needs to embrace the development of indigenous languages as the medium of instruction and curtail the neglect of these languages and the hegemony of Western languages in the classroom (Mboup 2020). More importantly, African countries need to develop their universities and vice versa as higher education is critical to development. They must also be well funded to conduct rigorous research, improve teaching techniques, and attract and retain the best academic minds. 'In reality, no university is ever able to help develop a society unless the society is first ready to help develop the university. It is a symbiotic relationship' (Mazrui 2003: 135). In other words, transformation efforts encompass a strong relationship between the university and society.

Transformation of the African higher education landscape has manifested in replacing foreign staff with African academics and the proliferation of modules that engage contemporary African issues (Onuka 2017). However, effective and efficient transformation will require the continent's higher education institutions to look inward. This could be achieved by embracing academic exchange programmes to learn from one another (Onuka 2017). In doing so, each institution should be cognisant of its comparative advantage. African universities could play a critical role in championing and achieving some of Africa's aspirations, including sustainable development and self-reliance, which are crucial aspects of the continent's various development plans, with Agenda 2063 being the most recent.

4. Lessons from African-American Studies in the US

The African-American scholar, Molefi Kete Asante, has often argued that the education offered to African-Americans alienates them from their culture and traditions and glorifies Western culture. An emancipatory education would consider the need to engage Africa and America's history using Afrocentricity as a framework. Thus, teaching and research must be framed from an African standpoint. This implies that African-Americans should be the subjects rather than the objects of education to counteract inferiority and marginalisation (Asante 1991). Asante (1991) identifies white scholars and black cahoots who write on multiculturalism whose underlying agenda is to impose Western views

on other regions. These scholars resist and obliterate meaningful transformation and defend white privilege in universities.

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were founded primarily to offer education to African-Americans. In a country that confronts racial discrimination, HBCUs seek to, among other things, maintain black tradition; serve as a source of leadership for the black community; and produce competent black graduates (Brown and Davis 2001). Similar to the realities in apartheid South Africa, before the American Civil War (1861-1865), higher education was racially segregated, and African-American students were denied access through institutional and legal frameworks such as Jim Crow and Black Codes (Allen et al. 2020). No wonder then that by the end of the Civil War, literate African-Americans only accounted for 5 per cent of a population of around 4.5 million (Brown and Davis, 2001). The end of the Civil War saw the burgeoning of HBCUs. However, in contrast to the realities in South Africa's post-apartheid era, there was significant financial support for HBCUs in the post-Civil War period, and they emerged as veritable sources of socio-economic and political mobility among black Americans (Allen et al. 2020). Thus, these institutions are critical to African-American influence and roles in an exclusive and discriminatory society. Nevertheless, HBCUs remain underfunded compared to historically white universities and colleges (HBCUs). Indeed, before the 1960s civil rights movement, most African-American scholars were recruited by black institutions that had a reputation for heavy workloads and minimal research incentives (Banks 1992). Nonetheless, these scholars were influential beyond the classroom, with many seeking to make a meaningful contribution to society. For example, George Williams emerged as a legislator in Ohio, DuBois was instrumental in the Niagara Movement and the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), and Frazier was a civil rights activist who championed the struggle for equality (Banks 2001). It is against this backdrop that African Studies emerged in the US. The Ford and Rockefeller Foundations and the Carnegie Corporation contributed by funding research, curriculum development, and recruitment of academics (Ferreira 2010).

In summary, the development of African studies was directly linked to the independence of African countries and the civil rights movement in the US in the 1960s (Ferreira 2010). While independence resulted in more African students attending American universities, the civil rights movements ignited the entry of

African-Americans to predominantly white universities and colleges. However, these students and academics were shocked by the racism they experienced in these institutions. This led to the embrace of Pan-Africanism and calls for curriculum transformation, relevance, and social justice (Zeleza 2011). However, some of these African scholars were insensitive to the racism in US academia as they internalised the stereotypes of African-Americans, thereby becoming accomplices of European Americans, a relationship that resulted in some African academics enjoying a preferential treatment in recruitment and promotion (Zeleza 1997). This is an important lesson for African academics in South African universities. It is critical for them to be conscious of the racial dynamics that play out in South African higher education institutions. Indeed, these dynamics often created subtle bad blood between black South African and African academics.

Cold War politics propelled interest in African studies and area studies. Aside from funding received from the foundations mentioned above, the US government was actively involved in developing this discipline to promote national security and global hegemony. For example, the 1958 National Defense Education Act VI provided for the teaching of African languages (Ferreira 2010). Thus, African studies during this period was determined by US foreign policy as the imperial power attempted to universalise Euro-American knowledge across the globe, including Africa.

It should be noted that African-American scholars in HBCUs developed African studies and African-American studies long before they gained traction in HWCUs in the Cold War era. Western scholars did not consider Africa as a continent worthy of academic inquiry during this period. African-American scholars exposed the economic and epistemic violence perpetuated by American racism and revealed African-Americans' remarkable contributions to the development of the US (Zeleza 2011). While African studies – dominated by European Americans – engaged Africa from the perspective of modernisation and development, African-American studies – dominated by African-Americans – explored the continent from the lens of the ancient past and Africa's connection with the diaspora (Zeleza 1997). African-American studies emerged in the US as a Pan-African project and focused on decolonisation in Africa and civil rights struggles in America in the post-World War II era (Zeleza 2011). It is against the backdrop of the gains of the civil rights movement that African-American studies was imposed on many higher institutions in the US and was widely perceived as

'the child of an illicit relationship between social struggle and the conventional disciplines' (Hanchard 2004: 140). At the top US universities, African-American studies were situated in basements and dilapidated buildings and were at the margins of administrative considerations. However, African-American studies began to rise to prominence in the late 1990s (Hanchard 2004).

Its main proponents were scholars such as Edward Blyden from the Caribbean and African-American W.E.B Du Bois, who challenged Eurocentrism, colonialism, and racism in Africa and the US. They noted the centrality of Pan-Africanism to liberate Africa and the US from colonial and racial oppression, respectively (Zeleza 2011). Two important schools emerged, namely, the Atlanta School of Sociology championed by individuals such as Du Bois and Richard Wright, and the Howard School of International Affairs with prominent scholars such as Ralph Bunche and Merze Tate. Both relied on rigorous research techniques – surveys, field interviews, and ethnography – to debunk the notion of black inferiority. The onus lies with South African academics to take a cue from this approach to confront the ubiquitous legacies of apartheid in higher education.

The Atlanta School of Sociology proved that black people could develop agency in pursuit of the decolonisation of the mind despite intense oppression and domination, illustrated by conscious efforts to construct inferior black institutions instead of well-equipped institutions to maintain white supremacy (Wright 2016). The radical school emerged in the 20th century in a black community and was successful due to the support it received from Atlanta's black community. Its academics were predominantly black and not well remunerated, with limited access to research facilities compared to their white counterparts (Wright 2016). Through innovative research, the Atlanta School of Sociology debunked the intellectual foundation of scientific racism. It offered an alternative narrative of the causes and effects of racism, particularly the impact of white oppression and segregation on blacks' low status in society (Morris 2020). In doing so, the school was guided by a fundamental principle – 'accurate scholarship would prove black people were not inferior, thus laying the grounds for black activism and the building of a liberation movement' (Morris 2020: 351). It relied on rigorous research techniques, including field interviews, ethnography, and census analysis, to engage black people's socio-economic and political circumstances (Wright 2016). The Atlanta School of Sociology's contribution to knowledge has four pillars: first, African-Americans were equal to their racial

counterparts as racial oppression as opposed to biological traits informed the low status of black people. Second, 'black crime' was a misnomer as social conditions rather than racial traits determined crime. Third, the black community was not homogeneous as there were many social classes with different circumstances. Finally, the black church played a dominant role in promoting the culture of the community (Morris 2020).

The Howard School of International Affairs engaged in 'first, problematising hegemonic paradigms, theories and schools of thought; second, demythologising history; and third, decolonising knowledge production' (Johnson 2020: 358). It engaged hierarchy as the crux of the pecking order of the international system and its implications for slavery and colonialism (Henderson 2017). Howard scholars also made an important contribution to the way the North-South gap is viewed by stressing relational research, which explains the nexus between the wealth of the North and the impoverishment of the South. Like the Atlanta School of Sociology, the Howard School opposed the narrative of race as a biological trait and emphasised that it is a social construct. While realism, which emphasises the anarchical nature of the international system and power politics between states, was the dominant theoretical lens of international relations, Howards scholars, led by individuals such as Ralph Bunche, underlined the place of racism in the hierarchical structure of the international system (Johnson 2020). They, therefore, challenged Eurocentric views on relations between the Global North and Global South.

Both schools offer important insights into the South African context. Despite the challenges that confront historically black universities and black academics in South Africa, it is clear that efforts towards curriculum transformation will require black academics to be resilient in conducting research using rigorous techniques to reveal the socio-economic circumstances of the black majority in the country and challenge racism in its diverse manifestations. As the Atlanta and Howard Schools show, it would also add value for South African academics to continue to debunk the tendency to define the stereotypes associated with black South Africans such as crime, rape culture and corruption as inherently biological traits. Black academics should be bold in conducting rigorous research that reveals realities determined by social conditions orchestrated by colonial, apartheid and modern-day white oppression rather than racial traits.

African-American Studies was critical in legitimising non-Western cultures

by debunking Eurocentricism in the US curriculum, including African studies programmes and promoting multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary studies (Zeleza 1997). The contestation and negotiation about knowledge production and exclusion in US higher education institutions spearheaded by the African-American studies movement resulted in the rise of courses in African-American Studies, Africana Studies and Black Studies such that by the 1980s, more than 600 US higher education institutions were offering courses in these disciplines (Zeleza 1997). Many of these programmes embraced Pan-Africanism and Afrocentricity in their outlook as African theorists such as Cheikh Anta Diop and Frantz Fanon were engaged (Zeleza 1997). In efforts towards curriculum transformation, African scholarship should constitute the dominant texts in South African academics' bibliography in their publications and the reading lists of students across the country's universities. Only when students are exposed to African scholarship across the continent and academics develop conscious efforts to rely less on Western scholarship and rigorously engage African scholarship will South African transformation efforts produce concrete results.

5. Conclusion

This article engaged the recent clarion call for curriculum transformation in South Africa by drawing lessons from decolonial schools such as the Ibadan School of History and the Dar es Salaam School of Political Economy in post-independence Africa. It also offered insights from African-American Studies with special attention to the Atlanta School of Sociology and the Howard School of International Affairs in the era of the civil rights movement in the US. Efforts towards curriculum transformation in South Africa have not yielded the desired results as the country's universities continue to perpetuate the hegemony of Western thought. It is against this backdrop that the article argued that beyond internally formulated strategies, South Africa could learn from the transformation efforts of Africa and African-American Studies in the US, such as in the areas of establishing similar schools in the country and the rise of vibrant black academics to conduct rigorous research on the social conditions that breed racism in post-apartheid South Africa. The extent to which South Africa can achieve genuine curriculum transformation will be determined by all stakeholders' seriousness and commitment, including policymakers, academics, and students.

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