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Decolonising the University Curriculum in South Africa

A Case Study of the University of the Free State



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Abstract

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In the aftermath of the 2015-2016 student protests on South African university campuses, many universities are struggling with how to respond to the demands put forward by students to end epistemic violence and decolonise curriculum. The following research is an abductive case study, investigating the process of decolonising curriculum in higher education at the University of the Free State in South Africa through the perspectives of staff and lecturers. The views of staff and lecturers are captured through 12 semi-structured interviews and analysed with the help of a framework by Jansen (2017a), based on six conceptions of decolonisation. The findings reveal that the UFS appears to be taking an approach to decolonising the university curriculum that primarily is concerned with adding on to curriculum or placing Africa at the centre. In taking these approaches, the university risks implementing changes that will result in superficial changes, instead of seeing curriculum as a strand influenced by many other equally important issues which indirectly can assist in decolonising it. Moreover, decolonial changes at the UFS are found to be slow and despite some important progress, the question remains if it is deep enough to truly move towards a genuine epistemic openness. Regarding decolonial teaching methods, findings demonstrated incredibly diverse understandings among the informants, indicating that the UFS has not clearly communicated a way forward. Finally, the interviews revealed that the majority of the informants did not feel confident to teach in a decolonial way. If a decolonial pedagogy is essential for the curriculum to be decolonized, as is argued in earlier literature, then the sample group in this study indicates that most lecturers at the UFS are not well prepared to respond to this.

The study concludes that achieving a decolonised curriculum at the UFS is something which cannot be accomplished at a moment but the findings indicate that there are some progressive forces around the university which may speed up transformation. The study further concludes that the paper has reached some insights on barriers to transformation and the challenges that lay ahead for academics if the university is to truly decolonise the university curriculum.

Keywords: Higher Education, Decolonisation, Curriculum, Social Justice, Pedagogy

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

ITP Integrated Transformation Plan

UFS University of the Free State

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1 Introduction

After 1994, a democratic, non-racial, South Africa emerged on a rising tide of expectations. Education was expected to address and respond to the needs of all citizens. Great anticipation was in the air, with hopes that the education system would fundamentally transform by dismantling apartheid (Badat & Sayed, 2014). Yet more than twenty years later, the country experienced a wave of student protests erupting around many of its universities, as a result of their continued struggle to access equal and quality education.

The student protest movement of 2015-2016 on South African university campuses caught many by surprise. Within a comparatively short time period, events such as the defilement of a statue on Cape Town campus and complaints about increased student fees in Johannesburg transformed into an influential protest movement which affected nearly each of the country's 26 public universities. Not even during the dark times of apartheid, had any university ever experienced student protest on this level in terms of strength, scale and violence (Jansen, 2017a). During a short but intense period, demands were put forward to decolonise former white institutions, and more specifically, to decolonise the curriculum. Although issues around the curriculum were quickly replaced by more pressing demands like free higher education, it left a mark within many institutions who took the original demand seriously (Jansen, 2017b).

At most South African universities, epistemologies and knowledge systems have not changed considerably since the end of apartheid, but remain rooted in Eurocentric, colonial, and Western worldviews (Heleta, 2016). In response to this, the protesting students called for a decolonised curriculum in order to end what they regarded to be epistemic violence, by removing “the heterosexual, patriarchal, neoliberal capitalist values which have become so characteristic of the country's universities” (Le Grange, 2016, p. 2). However, a challenge that remains in the debate around responding to these demands concerns the fact that the call to decolonize curriculum is incredibly diverse, and seldom founded on similar concepts and ideologies when addressed by different people or groups. For some, a decolonized curriculum is based on a broad understanding, attaching it to the decolonization of the entire university – meaning a complete transformation of its nature and identity which is perceived to support a colonial legacy. For others, a decolonized curriculum is understood to mainly concern what is taught and therefore put forward demands to Africanise or indigenize the syllabus in order to increase its relevance (Webbstock, 2017).

Another challenge concerns the issue of implementation. Although many scholars agree on the symbolic significance of the call to decolonise curriculum, student activists and academics have yet to answer the question: How will all of this happen? Jansen (2017b) argues that it will not. Partly because, changing the curriculum requires a political commitment at the centre of the university in order to drive deep change. This is essential, even if only addressing issues at the level of content; meaning, “changes in the representation of curriculum knowledge towards an Africa-centred knowledge system” (Jansen, 2017b, p. 12). Moreover, it is unlikely that academics even know what it would mean to decolonise curriculum in their disciplines (Jansen, 2017b). In line with this, research done by Lockett & Shay (2017) suggests that many academics are uncertain about how they should respond to the decolonial challenge in terms of their own classroom practices. This brings into question what role academics, and lecturers in particular, have in the process to decolonise curriculum. Especially since many of them still see European knowledge as the most superior knowledge (Heleta, 2018). According to Webbstock (2017), Jansen (2017a) and Heleta (2018), lecturers are an essential part of the process to decolonise curriculum, as they argue that how you teach something is as much a part of transforming curriculum as what you teach. Even more, the symbolic value of the curriculum has little meaning if it is undermined by uncommitted and incompetent teaching (Jansen, 2017a). This has led to questions regarding the ability of lecturers to decolonise their pedagogy and their attitude towards the decolonial transformations that is happening across the universities in South Africa (Heleta, 2018).

Research Problem

The importance of acknowledging the role of pedagogy in the process of decolonising curriculum has received recognition in South African research up to date, but has mainly revolved around theories on how to transform pedagogy in order to support the objective of decolonising higher education. What research in this field has yet to cover sufficiently, is the actual views and perspectives of staff or lecturers at the universities who are going through these transformations. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to this research gap by interviewing staff and lecturers in order to better understand the progress and barriers to transformation within the academic sphere.

The universities that have seen the slowest progress in terms of embracing decolonial scholarship and practices are South Africa’s Afrikaans universities, due to their close alignment with

the apartheid regime. These universities have seen a clear resistance to decolonise the curriculum from the side of academics working at these institutions (Williams, 2018). One of the universities that belong within this category is The University of the Free State (UFS) which has had little attention in terms of research on decolonising curriculum. This provides an important opportunity to research the topic, as it has a history of ‘white, conservative classification’ (Alexander, Moreeng & Van Wyk, 2010, p. 1041). It also has a large number of staff who have been working there for many years, with qualifications from white, Afrikaans-dominated institutions (Ibid). Moreover, the UFS has a history of racial incidents on the student campus and strong racial divisions in the UFS student body (Mugume, Loader & Luescher, 2016). The university’s heritage therefore presents a number of challenges in respect of decolonisation which are interesting to investigate.

Purpose & Research Questions

In light of the research problem, the following research aims to investigate the process of decolonising curriculum at the University of the Free State in South Africa through the perspectives of staff¹ and lecturers. The research aims to first discern what concept of decolonisation the university is moving towards across the faculties and what progress can be seen so far. Following this it seeks to investigate what the understandings of a decolonial pedagogy are among lecturers and staff, and how prepared they feel to adopt such a pedagogy.

In order to achieve the objective of the research, the following questions are asked:

- What does it mean to decolonise curriculum according to staff and lecturers at the University of the Free State?
- Have staff/lecturers noticed or done any changes regarding the issue of decolonising curriculum within their field since the protests, and if so, what kind of changes?
- What does it mean to teach in a decolonial way from the perspectives of staff of lecturers?
- Do lecturers feel like they or their colleagues have enough knowledge to confidently teach students in a decolonial way?

¹ ‘Staff’ is used in this paper to describe academics at the university who do not teach in their professional role.

Relevance

The call for a decolonised and reformed curriculum in South Africa has given new life to academic discourses on the meanings of decolonisation, diversification, Africanisation and transformation of modern knowledge. At the very heart of this call and the other related discourses is a demand to fundamentally rethink how knowledge is produced and taught, which is central to the university. Moreover, it is part of a greater demand to decommission the complex structures which shape the identity, knowledge and power of universities. Zondi (2018) argues that this has implications not only for modern knowledge but for the nation state and the entire world system.

The influential power of student movements similar to the South African one can be seen in other parts of the world including the UK, where campaigns to decolonise knowledge eventually reached Oxford University (Zondi, 2018). Another example can be found in Chile, where student uprisings forced a nationwide discussion on the fundamental fault lines within the Chilean education system. Their cry to ‘end profit making in education, nobody owns our dreams’ resulted in significant educational reform and reconsideration of the linkages between the education system and social and economic inequality in a neoliberal context (Williams, 2015).

Likewise, the student struggles that arose in Brazil between 1962 and the 1990s gradually turned into struggles to transform the state and economy, which ultimately contributed to the country’s democratic transitions during the 1990s (Filho & Collins, 1998). The efficacy of these student movements caused the academic debates in the region to turn, giving impetus to ideas of a so called decolonial turn, which has been expressed in terms of ‘shifting the geography of reason’, ‘epistemic disobedience’, ‘second decolonisation’ etc. (Mignolo, 2009; Maldonado-Torres, 2011).

Considering these examples and the impact they had, it is reasonable to assume that the students’ call to decolonise higher education in South Africa, has the potential to have a similar impact on broad social struggles. Furthering research on this issue is therefore relevant and necessary, as it plays a vital part in moving the discourse forward by posing new questions and seeking new answers. Also, if a decolonized curriculum is to be realized, it is important to research the circumstances of the people and the environment in which it needs to happen.

This research will be an important contribution to the research fields of decolonisation, higher education and social justice in general, raising critical issues on the relationship between power,

learning and knowledge. In this way, it broadly belongs to the area of peace and development, as it addresses the process of societal transformation in post-colonial societies.

Structure

The following chapters of the paper are organized by first presenting a brief background of the situation at the university as chapter 2. Then a literature review follows as chapter 3, which sets the scene for the reader on the topic and establishes the research gap. Chapter 4 continues by explaining the methodology of the research along with its motivations, which is later followed by the analytical framework in chapter 5. Next, the paper presents the findings in chapter 6, answering the research questions posed in the introduction. Thereafter, an in depth analysis will follow in chapter 7 which reconnects with the analytical framework to explain the findings. The paper closes with some final concluding remarks and recommendations for potential directions of future research.

2 Background

UFS and South Africa's Afrikaans Universities

The space that the UFS and South Africa's other Afrikaans universities inhabit within the global conversation on colonial knowledge production is quite unique. In 1904 the UFS was founded as the Grey College School in the city of Bloemfontein and adopted Afrikaans as its only medium of instruction at the end of the 1940s. In doing this, the university aligned itself to the apartheid government and its racially and ethnically defined Afrikaner constituency. This policy persisted until the early 1990s but ended as apartheid collapsed. The university then adopted a "parallel medium Afrikaans/English language policy" (Williams, 2018, p. 88) and started accepting black undergraduate students. So, throughout the years of apartheid, the main focus of the UFS was to train the loyal Afrikaner elite. By doing this, the university resembled three of South Africa's other Afrikaans medium universities which were: Stellenbosch University, the University of Pretoria, and Potchefstroom University (now called North-West University). What these universities had in common was that they remained isolated throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s from questions regarding colonial knowledge (Williams, 2018).

From 1994 and onwards, university managements, faculties and departments have made considerable efforts to re-align many of the country's universities to meet the needs of what is now a post-apartheid democracy. This re-alignment has been particularly difficult for the Afrikaans universities, as many are still "linked to the inbred quality of their apartheid era knowledge production and the social dynamics which reproduce this legacy" (Williams, 2018, p. 91). Today, student demographics have changed considerably to reflect the country as whole, but the fact remains that a large percentage of academics at these universities have gotten their degree at an Afrikaans university or at the very same university where they currently work. What this means, is that academics at Afrikaans universities often haven't had any exposure to pioneering curriculum transformation or publishing in high-status international journals, since this requires that you immerse yourself deeply into global academic currents which some disciplines didn't take part of for decades at these universities. Therefore, the issue of decolonising curriculum is somewhat sensitive at Afrikaans universities because staff might feel threatened by 'outside knowledge'. This may be because "it and those who wield it undermine the expertise and authority of those trained under the previous regime" (Williams, 2018, p. 91). With this in mind, academics at these universities have many reasons to defend the status quo (Ibid).

Integrated Transformation Plan

In order to understand the status quo on curriculum at the university, it is necessary to review a recently published document by the UFS which is mentioned a couple of times by the informants. One of the ways in which the UFS has responded to the demands to decolonize curriculum, which all the informants in the study were aware of, is to develop an Integrated Transformation Plan (ITP) published in 2017, aimed at identifying areas of transformation that the university needed to focus more on in order to achieve increased social justice (University of the Free State, 2017).

In a list of four other focus areas, the ITP establishes the commitment to radically accelerate transformation by instigating "[...] a curriculum review which will interrogate the marginalisation of particular identities and philosophies of knowledge, incorporating scholarship from Africa and the global South" (University of the Free State, 2017, p. 2). The plan is very comprehensive and ambitious in its future vision, addressing issues like teaching and learning, where the aim is to transform and decolonise the teaching and learning function by offering a decolonised curricula reflecting different ways of knowing and which draws on locally relevant research.

3 Literature Review

Decolonising Knowledge

Before reviewing research of decolonising curriculum, it is first relevant to look at some influential literature that explains why decolonising knowledge is important and necessary. According to Mignolo (2007) decolonisation and decoloniality is about “working toward a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ, which is what coloniality does and hence, where decolonisation of the mind should begin” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 459). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) asserts that what decoloniality essentially addresses is the coloniality of knowledge, the coloniality of power and the coloniality of being. These areas of coloniality mutually reinforce each other and collectively create the experience of coloniality. While colonialism relates to “a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation” (Maldonado- Torres, 2007, p. 243), the concept of coloniality needs to be distinguished in that it outlasts colonialism. In other words, it perpetuates patterns of power and stays alive in books, in common sense, in criteria for academic performance and much more (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

One aspect that has made the modern/colonial world system particularly successful is its ability to make its subjects, located on the oppressed side, think epistemically like the people in dominant positions (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213). This ties in with the coloniality of knowledge which is argued to be represented by the domination of Western and Eurocentric philosophies. These have been considered universal and objective, and have been presented as the only knowledge that can achieve a universal consciousness – unlike non- Western knowledge which is considered particularistic, and therefore can’t achieve universality (Grosfoguel, 2007). Thus, decoloniality tries to shift the location of reason away from the West toward previously colonised epistemic sites (Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2013) to increase the legitimacy of the so called “subaltern epistemic perspectives” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213). In line with this, Mignolo (2007) asserts that epistemic decolonisation “is necessary to make possible and move toward a truly intercultural communication; to an exchange of experiences and significations as the foundation of another rationality” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 499).

In close relation to these ideas, Connell's (2007) work on sociology investigates the location of knowledge production by using the term 'Southern Theory', giving specific attention to sociology and how it tends to universalize ideas from 'the North'. Although considered universal, the theories are essentially Eurocentric and fail to include knowledge and voices from people that are non-dominant. 'Southern Theory' is an attempt by Connell (2007) to recognize that a diversity of knowledges have been denied voice in social theory and that these have valuable contributions to make. Connell (2007) seeks to explain how "colonised and peripheral societies produce social thought about the modern world which has as much intellectual power as metropolitan social thought, and more political relevance" (p. 7). This is knowledge that 'the North' should try to learn *from* and not just *about* (Connell, 2007). A continuation of this concept is developed by De Sousa Santos (2014) who talk about *epistemologies of the south*, consisting of: "sets of inquiries into the construction and validation of knowledge born in struggle, of ways of knowing developed by social groups as part of their resistance against the systematic injustices and oppressions caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy" (p. 10). De Sousa Santos (2014) suggests a pluri-university of knowledges, constantly in dialog. Knowledge must be neither valorized nor rejected but have an epistemic openness (De Sousa Santos, 2014).

While these authors provide a thorough understanding of concepts like decoloniality, Eurocentric philosophies etc. the primary inspiration for the 2015 student protests have been found among authors from the African continent like Fanon (1961/2005) and Biko (1978). Fanon (1961/2005) was among the first to theorise and describe the dehumanizing effects that colonisation has on the individual and the nation. In South Africa, these ideas were picked up and popularised by Biko (1978) as Black Consciousness, and the 2015 student movement drew heavily on these ideas (Luckett & Shay, 2017).

Curriculum Change in South Africa

The issue of decolonising social and natural sciences has been part of southern discourses for several decades (Ake, 1979; Wa Thiong'o, 1986; Chabal, 2012), and Africa has a long history of actions of rebuttal to colonial education and trying to achieve curriculum transformation in particular (Motsa, 2017). In South Africa, a series of curriculum reforms have been implemented since the 1990s and the policy goals formed during those years were breathtaking in their ambitions. However, as Lange (2017) notes, nothing truly changed the curriculum in terms of substance – that is, content, pedagogy and assessment (Lange, 2017).

The past three decades saw efforts to not only transform curriculum but also to create an ‘African renaissance’, initiated by the South African vice president in 1996 (Connell, 2007). What an ‘African renaissance’ means in the context of education, is founded on perceptions that the general character of most educational theory and practice in Africa is overwhelmingly European in its origins (Higgs, 2016). This has given energy to the ongoing debate in South Africa on the topic of decolonising education. Although there have been critical voices prior to the student protests that have raised issues on epistemology and curriculum, they have not gained much traction at universities and most often remained marginal concerns (Badat, 2016; Williams, 2018).

As the debate intensified after the events of 2015, academic contributions continue to be made that demand the dismantling of ‘epistemic violence’ and Eurocentrism in South African higher education, as can be seen in for example Heleta (2016), Fumunyam (2017a, 2017b), Le Grange (2016), Webbstock (2017) and Walker (2018). However, according to Horsthemke (2004) demands to Africanise educational institutions, curricula, syllabi or criteria for excellence are not unproblematic. It may lead to a false sense of ‘belonging’ and create further derogation and marginalization. Instead, Horsthemke (2004) suggests the framework of basic human rights as a more promising alternative to respond to the pertinent demands (Horsthemke, 2004). Another critique is given by Jansen (2017a), who argues that while the demand for the decolonisation of curriculum can be seen as a useful wake-up call to speed up the process of transforming the universities, “it is fundamentally misguided” (Jansen, 2017a, p. 171). In his view, the conception that South Africa is a postcolonial state is inaccurate in the context of a constitutional democracy which provides all citizens with a common national identity and shared rights. Adding to this, when used as an instrument of black nationalism, these demands are both offensive and dangerous in a nation which still struggles with inequalities around race, gender and class (Jansen, 2017a).

Williams (2018) acknowledges that considerable scholarship exists which illuminates how colonial power impacted the knowledge that academic disciplines generated about Africa, which stretches at least two decades back. “Despite the influence of this and related critiques globally, with their focus on power-knowledge relationships, such work has not substantially permeated South Africa’s Afrikaans universities” (Williams, 2018, p. 82). The reasons behind this slow

transformation are addressed in Heleta (2018) and Department of Higher Education and Training (2015) where institutional culture and language practices can be seen as examples of barriers to change.

What Would a Decolonized Curriculum Be?

In an article on Southern Theory and world universities Connell (2017) asks the relevant question; “what would be the curriculum in a higher education system dedicated to supporting, rather than preventing, Southern projects of knowledge?” (Connell, 2017, p. 10).

Practical examples of what this might entail include the work by Le Grange (2016) who gives different suggestions to possible strategies of decolonizing curriculum. In one such example, Le Grange (2016) argues for a curriculum founded on the philosophy of Ubuntu, moving away from Descartes *cogito*, ‘I think therefore I am’ to ‘I am because we are’. The research done by Kronenberg (2015) on Cuban education finds three focal points in the process of transforming the curriculum: literacy, teacher education and access to all services and facilities of good education. This Cuban model, especially its literacy campaign has been adopted in South Africa’s basic education domain to counteract levels of illiteracy. Another suggestion is outlined by Pett (2015) who presents seven points that are vital to decolonise curricula. Some of these aspects include ‘re-teaching’ teachers and making literature by women and people of colour in literary studies degrees mandatory. Motsa (2017) acknowledges that opinions abound on curriculum transformation but argues himself that curricular justice can’t be achieved “by immediately closing down departments of English and banning Shakespeare. Merely ‘Africanising’ some aspects of the mainstream cannot restore it either. Teaching the African syllabus parallel to and in comparison with the colonial is one way to grow the local epistemologies” (p. 34).

Of course, inspiration can also be drawn from other universities, such as the approach used at the Intercultural University of the Indigenous Nations and Peoples, Amawtay Wasi, in Ecuador (De Carvalho and Florez-Florez, 2014). Here, the curriculum is comprised in three cycles: cycle in the formation of ancestral sciences; cycle of Western sciences and cycle of interculturality. Another example can be found on the North Atlantic coast in Nicaragua where the community and grassroots university called Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense, is “successfully using higher education to empower indigenous and Creole students and intellectuals against a backdrop of long histories of racism, discrimination, poverty

and marginalization” (Cupples & Glynn, 2014, p. 57). In other postcolonial settler nations like Canada and New Zealand there are universities that started acknowledging their need for approaches that are more inclusive toward indigenous epistemologies. However, just like many other universities, such transformations continue to be challenging (Cupples & Glynn, 2014).

What is clear from these examples is that there is much more involved in decolonising a metropole-dominated curriculum than just inserting new content. For instance, the content of curriculum is highly influenced by concepts of research and methodology, as proven in the work of Māori intellectual, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) where she presents a strong critique of the entire Western concept of research and its cultural evolution. Smith (2012) describes how such research had devastating effects on indigenous peoples, leading her to articulate a new Indigenous Research Agenda. This research agenda disrupts the old rules of research by encouraging practices that are more sympathetic, ethical, respectful and useful. Its purpose is ultimately about building capacity among researchers in order to work towards healing, reconciliation and development (Smith, 2012). An echo of Smith’s (2012) critique is made by the Botswanan professor Chilisa (2012), who develops a "postcolonial indigenous research paradigm” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 289). This research paradigm is about decolonizing research as knowledge production by emphasizing indigenous knowledge systems and showing how social science researchers may engage with these, in order to integrate these methods into the “global knowledge economy” (p. 289).

In addition to this, an argument is being made that changing how you teach something is as much a part of transforming curriculum as what you teach (Webbstock, 2017). This aspect of decolonising curriculum is addressed by Jansen (2017a) who explains that the curriculum in itself is dead until it is brought to life in the teaching process. Moreover, one must not forget that teachers interpret the curriculum based on their own preferences, experiences, backgrounds etc. The symbolic value of the curriculum has no meaning if it is undermined by uncommitted and incompetent teaching. This inevitably raises the question: “who is going to teach this decolonised curriculum?” (Jansen, 2017a, p. 169).

Similarly, Heleta (2018) asks “[...] what about academics’ attitude to the readings and to the new ways of thinking?” (Heleta, 2018, p. 58). Many South African academics still see the European knowledge as the most superior knowledge (Heleta, 2018). Are those academics willing to make a change? What is their perspective on the debate on decolonising curriculum? Moreover, are they prepared to unlearn and relearn in order to transform themselves as academics?

These questions have yet to be answered sufficiently through field research at universities in South Africa. This invites for more research on the academic sphere and on the topic of decolonising pedagogy to better understand barriers to transformation, particularly among the Afrikaans universities, as these have been identified to have had the slowest progress in terms of embracing decolonial scholarship and practices.

Lastly, Winberg & Winberg (2017) have clarified that a great amount of the research on decolonising education and curriculum has been conducted in the arts, humanities and social sciences fields. Although the authors acknowledge a growing interest in looking at decolonisation of curricula within science, technology, engineering and mathematics it indicates the importance of including informants in the research from these departments to give these more voice (Winberg & Winberg, 2017).

4 Methodology

Case Study

This research was implemented with an abductive approach as a qualitative case study, focusing on the University of the Free State. Morgan & Smircich (1980) asserts that it is the nature of a social phenomenon that determines which research method is appropriate. The purpose of this study is to investigate the process of decolonising curriculum at one particular university. This means first: that the research aims to understand and analyze processes of social change; secondly, the focus is on one specific research object. This subsequently infers the research to apply a qualitative approach which can be best examined by choosing the research design of a case study. This research design is defined by Bryman (2012, p. 66) as “an intensive examination of the setting ... [that] is concerned with the complex and particular nature of the case in question”. The choice of doing a case study was made as the subject of the research is closely interlinked with social relations and processes which are quite complex. In such a context, Denscombe (2009) acknowledges that a case study is suitable, as it allows one to investigate in depth to untangle the complexities of any given situation. Moreover, it enables you to address the issue holistically and thus potentially discover how the many different factors influence each other (Denscombe, 2009). In relation to this study, the case in question, or the unit of analysis, is the University of the Free State. This university was chosen as an ‘exemplifying case’ (Bryman, 2012, p. 70), belonging primarily to a broader category of former Afrikaans universities, which in the literature review are described to be an interesting category for more research. Secondly, I also argue that it belongs to a narrower category of four Afrikaans medium universities, among which it shares much resemblance. This resemblance is founded on the purpose for which they were built, the time in which they were built and the function that they had (details on this can be found in chapter 2).

One of the arguments against focusing on a single scenario, group of people or event is the problem of being able to draw generalizations, also known as external validity (Bryman, 2012). This argument is often refuted by stressing that the purpose of the research design is not to generalize to other cases but to examine the area of interest in an in-depth manner. Furthermore, case study researchers are aware that it’s not possible to identify typical cases that are representative of a certain class or group of objects. Instead, Bryman (2012) argues that the central issue of concern is the quality of theoretical reasoning by the researcher, also known as ‘theo-

retical generalization' (Bryman, 2012, p. 71). This brings related criteria like reliability, replicability and validity to the forefront, which Bryman (2012) critiques scholars of qualitative research for not considering enough. Scholars like Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) claim that such factors can be tackled by triangulating information, as their view of qualitative methodology approaches to reliability and validity is different. However, writers like Yin (2002) supports the consideration of these criteria and suggests different ways to apply it.

For this research, the question of validity is very important when it comes to the data gathered from the interviews. When the interview concerns actual questions, it is possible to control the validity by checking if the informants' answers can be generally confirmed by other people or sources. Such controls are more complicated to do when the questions concern the informants' opinions, feelings or experiences, which is largely the type of questions that is asked in this research. Therefore, there is no easy way of verifying what someone has expressed regarding their own thoughts (Denscombe, 2009). The ways that the validity of the data of this research was controlled was to try to compare the data with other sources in the form of written documents and through observations made at the university. What also solidifies the validity of the data is the themes found in the results, which indicate that the opinion is shared by a wider group of people. The researcher can therefore have more confidence in the data than if it only originated from one statement. Moreover, considerations regarding the validity were made by asking myself if it was reasonable to assume that the informant was in such a position that he/she could answer the questions in a well-informed way.

Regarding the criteria of replication in research with qualitative approaches, this is difficult considering its foundational logic. Nevertheless, if the researcher is transparent about his or her procedures and clarifies them in detail, the possibility of replication increases (Bryman, 2012). The criteria of reliability can be influenced by variables such as the epistemological point of departure of the researcher, the researcher's skill set or even the very nature of the study itself. All of these variables are obviously relative. Techniques to ensure the reliability of the data is for example to triangulate or explaining the researcher's position in relation to the study (Merriam, 1998).

Furthermore, this research takes an abductive approach in line with the definition of Danermark, Ekström, Jacobsen, & Karlsson (2002). This approach entails interpreting phenomenon in the light of an existing frame of interpretation. The frame of interpretation thereby constitutes one of many possible frames, just as the interpretation of the researched phenomenon is one out of

many potential interpretations. Therefore, abductive reasoning can serve “to observe, describe, interpret and explain something within the frame of a new context” (Danermark et al. 2002, p. 91)

Analytical Framework

The conceptual framework chosen for this study has yet to be applied to a context where the aim is to decolonise curriculum. However, it represents one out of many contributions on what decolonisation of curriculum may mean, and is therefore not comprehensive enough to fully describe all the meanings of the debate. Acknowledging this, it serves as a foundation to understand the results but is also added on to, as the themes from the results unfold.

Sampling

In line with previous research (Winberg & Winberg, 2017), the choice was made to include informants at the university from as many different faculties as possible. During the available timeframe, it was possible to find respondents who were willing to participate from all faculties of the university, except Natural and Agriculture Sciences and Open and Distance learning. This meant that the research ended up with informants from seven different faculties with one informant from each, except for the humanities faculty which had a total of four informants that partook in the research. The focus on the humanities was primarily a result of sampling strategy and availability of the informants but also perhaps, due to the fact that the humanities are more familiar with the topic and were therefore more eager to participate. An effort was made to reach out to more faculties in order to balance out the representation of informants but there was not any replies. One of the 12 respondents works for the Centre for Teaching and Learning and another one works for the Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning, neither of which belong to any faculty.

In order to find staff and lecturers, key people were initially contacted and thereafter, the method of snowball sampling was applied (Bryman, 2012, p. 424). The risk that came with this sampling method was that staff at the university would refer me to people who they thought would be most capable to answer my questions. This entailed a risk of ending up with a sample group that consisted of the most progressive lecturers and staff at the university, as academics that are passionate about this issue were assumed to give me better answers than academics who don't care at all. In order to mitigate this, I also contacted people randomly by email without any recommendation, at various faculties. Four informants partook in the study as a result of those

emails and could not give as elaborate answers as those that were found through snowball sampling. However, they brought more diversity to the sample group and likely made it more representative of how reality looks at the university. With this said, there is a chance that the results would have looked differently if the sample group was chosen in a different manner.

Semi-structured Interviews

In order to answer the research questions, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 lecturers and staff at the university. Given the political sensitivity of the research subject (see chapter 2), semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method, as they allowed the respondents to develop their own ideas in a setting where I could observe their emotional responses to the interview. Through this interview method I could also endeavor to minimize any negative feelings or distress which may have arisen among the respondents as a consequence of taking part in the research (Bryman, 2012).

Prior to the interview, an informed consent form (see annex 1) was given to the interviewee to be signed, containing information such as the purpose of the research, procedures of confidentiality and contact information of the researcher (Bryman, 2012, p. 141). It was assumed that the respondent would decline to take part of the interview if the subject was perceived to be too sensitive, which would minimise the risk of emotional distress. When respondents agreed to take part in the research, the risks of emotional distress were mitigated by offering to conduct the interview in a relatively sheltered environment at a private office which was available to me. This enabled the interview to take place with minimal distractions and interruptions. It was important to ensure that the respondent would feel as comfortable and safe as possible, since it would not only protect the respondent but would also increase the chances of more elaborate and honest answers. In the circumstances where the respondent declined the offer to do the interview at my office, I made sure that they were comfortable enough with the place that they suggested, which was mostly at their own office or in a private lounge belonging to their department.

Two of the interviews had to be conducted through Skype, as my time on campus ended before I had a response from the last two respondents. The same procedure of providing a consent form to be signed in advance etc. was done for those interviews as well. After the interview, the collected data was transcribed and put through the process of thematic coding. Theoretical ideas were derived from the data rather than being formed before collecting the data (Bryman, 2012). To ensure the security of all interviewees, they have been given complete anonymity.

It is important to note that the views and perspectives of the respondents who partook in the research from each faculty are not representative of their own entire faculty. Rather, their views should be seen as their own individual opinions which might indicate in what direction the discourse is moving at the university.

Ethical Considerations

The subject of this research is an ongoing and highly debated issue in South Africa, as has been clarified in the literature review. This required careful preparation in order to ensure that the research would be conducted in a responsible manner. Hence, preparations for ethical considerations in this research began by taking guidance from the national Swedish guidelines provided in the publication *Good Research Practice* (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). They are summarized in eight general points which state the following:

- 1) You shall tell the truth about your research.
- 2) You shall consciously review and report the basic premises of your studies.
- 3) You shall openly account for your methods and results.
- 4) You shall openly account for your commercial interests and other associations.
- 5) You shall not make unauthorised use of the research results of others.
- 6) You shall keep your research organized, for example through documentation and filing.
- 7) You shall strive to conduct your research without doing harm to people, animals or the environment.
- 8) You shall be fair in your judgement of others' research.

(Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p. 10).

In order to conduct the research at the University of the Free State, an ethical clearance was required from the General/Human Research Ethics Committee at the university. This was attained after a few weeks into my visit in South Africa, allowing me to proceed with the data collection as planned. The application process to receive the clearance was very thorough and demanded me to articulate the preparations and considerations I had made to mitigate any potential risks.

In my view, there was a slight risk of emotional distress during the interviews, arising from the intersection of political sensitivity around the topic and participants' own history. This was mitigated in the research design in five ways: 1) A focus on the duty of care of me as a researcher towards participants in relation to their feelings about the topic. 2) Prior informed consent to

participate in the study, using both a verbal and text-based (see annex 1) process to enable potential participants to consider for themselves in advance whether they would like their point of view to be included. 3) A right to withdraw consent to participate in the study emphasized in the consent form and consent procedure. 4) Potential participants were approached about whether they would like to participate and if they agreed the interview took place in private so as to protect the sensitivities of the respondents. 5) As a Northern researcher studying decolonization in a Southern university, I treated the respondents as experts in a better position to make informed judgements than me, in order to set up a better relationship between me and the teachers at the UFS.

In addition to this, I always introduced myself as a Swedish researcher, and demonstrated an open, respectful and curious mind-set. My hope was that this would assert my objectivity and create more understanding from the side of the interviewee, in case I should mistakenly use the incorrect terminology or sound insensitive.

Lastly, all the necessary actions have been taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees. Each of the interviewees' perspectives were respected and taken into consideration when presenting the results and no data was changed or manipulated. Throughout the process of collecting the data, objectivity was at the core.

Criticism of Sources

All interviews in the research were conducted in English, which is a second language to the researcher and the majority of the respondents. This may have had an effect on the answers. However, since both the researcher and the respondents use the language on a master level or higher, it is reasonable to assume that this didn't compromise the quality of the answers significantly.

Limitations and Delimitations

The scope of this research was primarily limited to its timeframe which was set to six weeks. As a result, the number of interviews that could be conducted on campus depended on the availability of the staff to meet with me at the university during this period. In addition, considerable time was taken up in the early stages of the fieldwork with getting institutional ethics clearance, limiting the time available to carry out interviews. Even so, 12 interviews were carried out, and establish a starting point for making an analysis of the different positions at the

university. Given the sampling method, the conclusions cannot be said to be formally representative, and further research could establish a wider range of positions.

One limitation of the research is the problem of generalisation as it aims to be a case study. However, the pros and cons around this issue has been addressed under the previous heading called Case Study. Finally, being a researcher from the North, I acknowledge my positionality as a researcher trained and situated in a country with 'Eurocentric ideas'. Based on this, I acknowledge this to be a limitation of my own knowledge, which required me to open up to encounter different forms of knowledge with an attitude of openness and curiosity.

5 Conceptual Framework

Conceptions of Decolonisation

As established in the introduction, the literature on decolonizing curriculum is somewhat complex and heavily contested (Webbstock, 2017). However, according to Jansen (2017a) there exists at least six different conceptions of ‘decolonisation’ in terms of knowledge as embedded in university curriculum. These conceptions will be used as a conceptual framework in order to understand and analyze the results.

When introducing these conceptions, Jansen (2017a) emphasizes the importance of not reading them along lines of sharp distinction, as there are some proponents whose argument stretches across several categories. To clarify, “the distinctions lie in the emphases of meaning in various works by recent curriculum scholars” (Jansen, 2017a, p. 158).

Soft Views

Decolonisation as additive-inclusive knowledge

Described by Jansen (2017a) as a ‘soft version’, this concept of decolonization recognizes that current canons of knowledge are of value but requests that new knowledge should be recognized and added to established curricula. A professor at the University of Cape Town speaks of it as a content-driven additive approach that expands the already existing curriculum. The critique of this approach is that adding content is necessary but insufficient to fully decolonize the curriculum. Although it would be just to add in what has been left out, such as adding a new course to a degree or a new book to the syllabus, there is a danger of ghettoizing the new content from the mainstream disciplines. As an example, this approach was adopted by subordinate groups in the US during the 1970s, where courses in African and gender studies were simply added on to the curriculum, as a result of the civil rights and campus protests against exclusion. In time, departments were formed which specialized in these knowledges and were often given their own centres in special facilities with a group of staff. However, they never disturbed the dominant canons of the institutions.

Decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge

Within this view, the critique is put forward that educational institutions organize the content of curriculum around the ideals, values and knowledges of Europe, which is the location of colonial and postcolonial authority. As an example, under apartheid it was likely that South

African students would be taught more about Europeans fighting against fascism than about their own wars against colonialism. Another example concerns the war which was fought exclusively on African soil, yet the conflict was described as ‘the Anglo-Boer War’ – were the battle was between warring whites, instead of naming it ‘the South African War’ where black people fought on both sides. In simple terms, this is a conception of decolonization that is more generous and its supporters argue that Europe must be replaced with Africa at the centre of the curriculum. The idea is not to delete Europe from the curriculum but that the values, achievements and ideals of Europe must come second to a new knowledge system which places Africa at the centre. This concept of *recentering* could be described as a ‘soft version’ of Africanisation, restoring the location of African knowledge “at the heart of how we come to know ourselves, our history, our society, our achievements, our ambitions and our future” (Jansen, 2017a, p. 159).

Decolonisation as critical engagement with settled knowledge

This concept advocates the empowerment of students to engage with knowledge by critical questioning such as: “Where did this knowledge come from? In whose interest does this knowledge persist? What does it include and leave out?” (Jansen, 2017a, p. 161). Here, the though process goes that you can’t eliminate things about the past that you don’t like. Instead, you can invite critical involvement with such curricula in a way that ultimately transform what they essentially mean. Basically, one looks at the same set of problems with new eyes by making use of new theories, methods and perspectives.

Decolonisation as encounters with entangled knowledges

As a relatively new way of thinking, this idea on decolonizing knowledge doesn’t separate knowledge into neat binaries like ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘the metropole’ and ‘the South’ etc. Instead it views our knowledges, in likeness to our human existences, as intertwined. The argument goes that even scientific discovery owes its existence to ‘interwoven’ knowledge from both the colonizer and the colonized. Regardless how we try, we will never escape the fact that our lives are entangled and in so being, this invariably reflects in how and what we know. According to Jansen (2017a) this is especially valid in today’s South Africa, where old enemies find themselves sharing social spaces like universities, while engaging with the same knowledge inside the curriculum.

Hard Views

Decolonisation as the repatriation of occupied knowledge (and society)

In this ‘hard version’ of decolonization, curriculum is assigned great power to influence both settled knowledge and settler society. This repatriation approach has many supporters from people who are involved in struggles to help indigenous peoples regain control over their original land. In particular, these supporters are enraged by those who propose the additive-inclusive model for a decolonized curriculum. They claim that “this kind of inclusion is a form of enclosure, dangerous in how it domesticates decolonization” (Jansen, 2017a, p. 163). In comparison with other approaches mentioned, this approach has much more ambitious ends, including land repatriation to native tribes and nations. Moreover, they assert that it is impossible to compare demands to reconcile and decolonise, since reconciliation tries to rescue a settler future. Clearly, decolonization does not mean pampering settlers or granting them innocence by creating an accommodating curriculum. Instead, its purpose is to create awareness about the need to end modern forms of slavery, give back stolen land and overthrow the concealed imperialism which keeps indigenous people in subjection.

Decolonisation as the Africanisation of knowledge

Unlike the ‘decentring position’, advocating for an exchange of Europe for Africa, this ‘hard version’ of Africanisation wants to displace the Western knowledge, achievements and ideals as the standard that human progress is measured against. The pan-Africanist sees the call to Africanise the curriculum as a nationalist imperative which rejects the imitation of Europe and asserts African identity. In this context, it would mean that students read literature by African authors, learn about scientific achievements by Africans, explore art by African artists and so forth. In other words, a decolonized curriculum should be about Africa alone and not Africa in relation to Europe or the West.

6 Case Study

Perceptions of a Decolonized Curriculum

Lack of consensus

In regard to the first research question, four informants expressed that there is a lack of consensus on what it actually means to decolonise curriculum. In their view, it appears as if there is no consolidated approach at the university regarding this issue. However, one informant added, that if there are people at the university working specifically with this topic, then the respondent would like to know what their definition of decolonising curriculum is. Especially since her own perception of what it is, means much more than just inserting indigenous or local content.

Decoloniality is a process

Four informants expressed that decolonising curriculum isn't an event but a process. Therefore, "people may have to accept that the answer is not a one dimensional definite thing that can be delivered to you. So we should really start looking at curriculum as an object for discussion, not an object that is going to teach me one way" (Informant 1). One informant said that decoloniality is not just a once of methodology but more like a movement that must go on for a longer time until it achieves its goals. Another informant said that simply teaching people the names of some famous African mathematicians is a superficial way of looking at it. Instead, it is a long term process and not just a "once of and then we are done" (Informant 9).

Inclusion of different voices

One clear theme that appeared from the interviews concerns the inclusion of different voices in curriculum. For one informant, this meant including researchers more broadly and especially from more developing country contexts but more specifically from Africa. This would enable students to see different voices and learn to understand that the epistemological origins of knowledge isn't necessarily just western (Informant 9). Similarly, another respondent stressed the importance of including African scholars if you are in Africa. More importantly, universities must not focus on already established cultures that are out there but include those that are marginalised (Informant 6).

Continuing on the same theme, one Informant added, "I think we could work a lot harder at getting better South African and African examples in our classrooms. For me it's about including people that would have been excluded in the past. Not just disabled people but people of all

racism and backgrounds” (Informant 4). For one respondent, a decolonised curriculum could mean seeing an African or a female name as part of the list of books to read, without it shocking anybody. It would mean a fairly balanced list of thinkers and writers that are not just European. Or, perhaps seeing a black lecturer standing in front of you in the sciences, not just at the Centre for Africa Studies, without anyone asking where he/she got their degree. Essentially it concerns an “awareness to which different kinds of voices are required in order to shift narratives about ourselves, about our possibilities in the future, about our prospects and about our rights and visibilities” (Informant 5). Among the interviewees, one respondent saw the need for more diversity in the curriculum but was openly sceptic to the possibility of “catering for all the cultures in South Africa” since they are simply too many (Informant 8). Another Informant also touched on this theme when explaining that a decolonised curriculum would mean some form of balance and moving away from what we thought (Informant 1). However, this statement is so unspecific that it could arguably fit within the subsequent theme as well.

Pluriversality

One of the informants described a decolonised curriculum in terms of achieving epistemic freedom. For the respondent, this meant being transversal and pluriversal – meaning the ability to generate diversity. What the informant emphasized was the need to shift the centre of epistemology, the Eurocentric centre, which takes for granted how knowledge should be presented, what is true and what counts as knowledge. For the informant, epistemic freedom is about de-centring eurocentrism without replacing it with another fixedness.

“I think that’s the other danger. By flipping the coin, to eradicate what someone is thinking and jump to another side is doing the same thing, it’s just another form of reproduction. But having said that, I want to be clear that I think there has to be enough space and adequate space to hear the voice of black pain. To hear the effects of subjugation and oppression. I think that one has to give room for that but I don’t think it’s the end or an end. I think it’s another form of reproduction” (Informant 10).

Another informant expressed how the notion of pluriversality is a very important part of an African conception of decolonization and decoloniality. Nevertheless, to talk only about pluriversality is not enough (Informant 6).

Africa at the centre

Two informants said that a decolonised curriculum is a curriculum that puts Africa in the centre. This means that when you start to look at the world, you start from Africa and then you look elsewhere (Informant 9; Informant 6). According to one of the informants, Afrocentricity means that our analysis and intellectual activity has to take an African perspective without being parochial, essentialist or hold dogmas about what is African and what is authentic as the truth. At the same time, we have to commit to the universal drive for truth, for scientific validity and reliability etc.

Focusing on the indigenous perspective

Two informants understood decolonising the curriculum as a focus on the indigenous perspective but gave it different meanings. One of the informants was openly against the process of decolonising the curriculum, and understood the process as completely taking out the western perspective and going back to African indigenous knowledge, instead of seeing it from a global view (Respondent 11). The other informant saw the indigenous perspective as indigenous people in South Africa, Africa or the world as a whole. In her view, the critical question to constantly ask is, who is and isn't represented in the narrative. Many times, it is the indigenous perspective that is lacking, which therefore requires universities to centre the indigenous perspective with greater force (Informant 5).

The remaining views on decolonising curriculum are so specific and non-reoccurring that one cannot view them as a theme, but rather, individual factors that together represent important pieces of a greater puzzle. In order to get a better overview, they are presented as components of decolonising curriculum in table 1.

Additional components to decolonising curriculum

Table 1.

<i>Inclusive learning spaces</i>	<i>Relevance</i>	<i>African languages</i>	<i>Change of power</i>	<i>Understanding precolonial history</i>
Students need to feel a sense of belonging. In other words the way you do teaching and learning, the way you facilitate it, the environment you create, either an online environment or a face to face environment needs to be welcoming and inclusive (Informant 9).	Students want to see what the relevance is to contemporary challenges in South Africa. When working with academics around developing curriculum, “we need to help them to make sure that whatever theories they teach students, we show them the application and the relevance of contemporary issues in South Africa” (Informant 9).	It is truly limiting that the UFS, and many other South African universities as well, only see the African languages as the local languages. Today there are no strong programmes in other African languages and this is something that really should change (Informant 12).	One factor that needs to change regarding curricula, is the change of power in who determines the curricula. Since the power resides with the people who design curricula, there is a need to have better representation in the curricula board, talking on behalf on those that are marginalised (Informant 6).	Academics must think about what colonialism did to knowledge production and what it has done to how knowledge is disseminated. To understand the past and see how it is actually entangled in the present, one must look at pre-colonial history to come to grips with colonial legacies, content and pedagogy (Informant 12).
<i>Experiential learning</i>	<i>“Transformation” is not enough</i>	<i>Recruitment of staff</i>	<i>Politics of knowledge production</i>	<i>*Continuation from above column</i>
Students need to step out of the classroom and get experiential learning through an impact study during one semester. This is imperative to the learning process as the experience forces them to think and take responsibility for their learning process. “You kind of force that diversity and integration on them, with people they normally wouldn’t meet, because we don’t do this in classrooms today” (Informant 1).	A decolonised curriculum will never be realized if the university continues to manipulate the word ‘transformation’ and doesn’t address other elements that are essential for the curriculum to be decolonised. “You have transformation profiteers or transformation merchant, and I say the same thing when it comes to decolonisation. People who use these concepts twist them in a way to speak about a change that is nowhere to be seen.	A decolonised curriculum is connected to how staff members are being recruited, since they are the ones sharing and preparing the knowledge. Factors such as how the person is recruited, what the person has come to do, whether the person is a junior scholar, or a senior scholar, will all inform how this person prepares his or hers course outlines and what the person is going to deliver (Informant 2).	We cannot forget the issue of how we share and produce knowledge. The nexus between research and what is being taught should not be forgotten. The point made by the informant was that the whole issue of decolonisation percolates through the entire system. Whether we are talking about the knowledge production, the way institutions are organized or how knowledge is shared etc. Failing to understand that curriculum is just a strand that is influenced by many other	“A lot of my focus in my teaching is on identity issues, notions of race and identity, ethnic identity, nationality, gender and how the things that people claim to be their identity, are in fact a part of a colonial past and it’s sort of disentangling this” (Informant 12).

	They are simply moving the logic from here to there” (Informant 2).		things will only result in superficial changes (Informant 2).	
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Signs of Change at the University

No change

Six informants expressed that they had seen little or no change in their faculty/department (Informant 1, 2, 3, 4, 10 & 11). One informant answered that the field in which she teaches has a long tradition with decolonisation specifically and that brilliant work exists from both the African continent and South Africa. However, she knows for a fact that her department doesn't engage with any of it, which is difficult for her to understand. She added that she wishes that the field she teaches in would go through a transformation. Not only because it's of massive value but because 80 % of the students are now black. To her, this means that teaching the same old content to a completely new demographic in the classroom requires a lot of skill from you as a teacher that not everyone possesses (Informant 1).

Informant 2 said that there has been a general progress at the university regarding decolonisation but not especially within his field. He acknowledged that there are some honest scholars who are trying to do whatever they can to bring some change but he also said, “you can have a beautiful idea, but it is also clouded with hypocrisy. There are people who say they are transforming that are not transforming” (Informant 2). The informant explained that the unwillingness to transform has a lot to do with fear of the unknown. In addition, Informant 2 made a point that no change can happen quickly in the higher education institution if there is no proper work done in basic education where the whole process must begin from (Informant 2).

Informant 3 explained that there has been no discernable change in the curriculum within his faculty, or any other considerable changes during the last years. He added that his faculty has no formally structured engagement with the ITP that he is aware of. As a result, his faculty has not started to think systematically or in a disciplined way about the implications of the ITP for their programs. The informant felt certain about this because he is one of the foremost people in the faculty thinking about such issues. On a positive note, the informant said that if you look at the South African law teaching today, there are some important changes. For example, the judges are not all white so the court decisions you read are truer to the diversity of the South

African society. The examples that are used in class include multi-cultural elements and on the issue of language you will find much more diverse names, indicating a generally more inclusive environment. Regarding such aspects, informant 3 felt that credits are absolutely due but much of it is symbolic more than it is deep (Informant 3).

Informant 4 said that there has not been a lot of changes within his department. However, he thought that the case teaching methods, the examples used, the student body and how the students are assessed has changed a lot over the years in a positive direction. For example, progress has been made in highlighting African success stories and case studies. Such studies can be for example how companies moved into new markets in Africa or developed new products for the African environment (Informant 4).

One informant explained that she hadn't noticed any changes but recalled that when she was the head of department, there was a couple of times she had to fill out reports with input on where her department stood in terms of decolonisation at the moment. Nevertheless, nothing has been operationalized and the department has received no word of the next step, which made the informant feel that it is not being handled as an urgency. She did notice a heightened sensitivity on some issues like transport for students who live off campus, students who can't get to school early in the morning to write tests and the high printing costs for students who must print a lot of reports (Informant 10).

Informant 11 hadn't noticed any changes from the side of her faculty but acknowledged that she has been increasingly challenged by her students in that they don't always accept the answer she gives them. Nowadays she said, students are braver to stand up and say that they don't agree with the ideas and concepts of the lecturer or even claim that the lecturer is wrong (Informant 11).

General change

Two informants spoke about what can be viewed as a general change at the university but not specifically where they work (Informant 5 & 12). One informant described how she could see some positive changes in that there are more frequent talks and conferences on decolonisation at the university than before. However, she felt that there is a mentality at the UFS of thinking that decoloniality is other disciplines' duties. This was according to the informant particularly true among the hard science disciplines where staff don't see the ways in which they might still

be continuing the colonial agenda and where the opinion often is that it is the humanities' job to address this issue (Informant 5).

Informant 12 said that he thinks there have been places on campus where people are truly trying to change things. However, regardless of the small changes happening, it is happening in a decentralised way within the departments. The informant was very clear about the fact that efforts were made to make decolonial changes at the UFS long before 2015, within both content and pedagogy. Such efforts regarded for example, attempting to open up the university to global conversations, after having been cut off from global communication during the apartheid years and earlier. It was particularly difficult within the humanities context, as it was not viable for departments of anthropology, history, sociology etc. to possibly be in conversation with the global knowledge and simultaneously support the apartheid system. By opening up these global conversations, the UFS leadership expected to see a curriculum change in terms of engaging with the outside world – whether this was done by for example drawing in scholars from outside of the UFS or for more scholars to publish internationally. Other interventions related to pedagogical issues where there were attempts to expose students to things outside of their field of specialisation, to develop critical thinking skills and to move pedagogy from just the reproduction of facts.

Today however, the informant described the discourse on decolonisation as a hot button term and said that a lot of change happened between the emergence of decolonisation as a politically powerful term in South Africa, the student movements, and the change in administration at UFS. One of the major changes was the creation of the ITP (Informant 12).

Actual change

Three informants spoke about seeing several tangible changes at the university or in their faculty (Informant 6, 7 & 9). One informant expressed how changes have been happening at his faculty since at least two years ago, where the lecturers have started to use new approaches in the study of the Old Testament. This is done by using traditions within the old testament that align with African views in order to help the student understand the world of the Old Testament better. The informant felt that his faculty is in the process of decolonising the curriculum design, seeing that they try to recommend books and study material – especially from the global south – which they feel should be included. Moreover they recommend students to look at other traditions that have been marginalised and work actively with the ITP to guide their teaching. The

informant acknowledged that you cannot decolonise something like the Old Testament but the interpretation thereof can be challenged and viewed from an African perspective (Informant 6).

Informant 7 said that there are a number of new changes, such as, staff members trying to form what they call “the progressive staff forum” where they try to discuss the issues that the students are raising. In addition to this, there is an academic who organized seminar series whereby they read about decolonisation. In these seminars, academics come together and read about decolonisation to see how these ideas can filter into the practice of what they do. Another transformation is that the UFS is dealing with the imbalance of white and black staff, by trying to employ more black staff members, so that the students can see a representation of themselves in the academic staff. Moreover, the university has implemented a new language policy where English is now used in all classrooms. In relation to this, there is an institution which funds the development of African languages to be used for academic purposes, which is an explicit decolonial approach. This filters in to the decolonisation of curriculum as it expands the languages of teaching and learning, helping students to understand the material better. The informant also expressed that there are certain things that happen within the institution which attempt to deal with decolonial issues, but are not articulated explicitly as dealing with decolonisation. Instead, the concept used in relation to changing things is “transformation” or sometimes “curriculum change”. As a result, the majority of what is actually decolonial issues are discussed in the transformation debates and highlighted under the transformation agenda (Informant 7).

Informant 9 said that there must not be an assumption that curricula in South Africa has stayed the same in the last 20 years. There was a massive effort after apartheid to create one national qualification framework where 24 departments of education created one qualification framework in which all qualifications rest. That did not leave the curriculum untouched and resulted in significant changes. In terms of the latest demands for changes in curriculum and decolonial examples specifically, the informant said that there are faculty specific examples that are quite unique in the approaches that they take. For example, Informant 9 said he knew about the people in the humanities discipline who formed discussion groups to think about how to integrate the African perspective and African researchers and writers in to the work. There are various examples across the university where change is happening according to the informant, but there are also people who still think that this doesn't apply to them. Currently, faculties have their own specific approaches and the university is developing institutional processes and programmes to which lecturers can go to further decoloniality.

After the protests, a ‘decolonisation hub’ was created which is a digital resource found online in the university’s own programme called Black Board. In this place teachers can find articles on decolonisation and examples of how to decolonise your module or your course for all the different faculties. Although the informant made it clear that he didn’t know of all changes going on since he hasn’t spoken to each faculty he said that he did know that there are people who have fundamentally changed their pedagogy or started to do so. All the faculties are thinking about decoloniality and how to approach it (Informant 9).

Informant 8 did not develop a long answer but simply said that she didn’t know anything about it.

Perceptions of a Decolonised Pedagogy

Informant 10, 8 and 5 could not answer the question as Informant 10 didn’t know what the concept of a decolonised pedagogy meant and Informant 8 and 5 did not feel qualified to answer the question as they didn’t have any experience of teaching. Informant 10 said that everyone talks about teaching methods and teaching activities but that she believes it’s more than that. What is evident about the current pedagogy however, is that the university carries a lot of driftwood with it from the authoritarianism that was part of the apartheid epistemologies. This she meant, can be seen in the tacit codes of the university, expecting students to be passive recipients who should do as they are told and that too much questioning is not good (Informant 10).

The answers that follow were so diverse that no themes could be distinguished. Therefore, they are put in one large theme as *Diverse perceptions*.

For Informant 1, the essence of teaching in a decolonial way is about teaching the content of the curriculum as a critical dialectical object. In addition, a critical point is to decolonise the teacher’s mind, to reach a point of decolonial attitude shift in the teaching process in order to truly see the students. The informant said that if academics truly want to look at pedagogy, they must be a lot more inward and self-reflective about it. What frustrated the informant was that many departments give an attitude of having the true knowledge, or ‘the good news’, that they are to bring to the students without consideration of any alternative. Alternatives to the traditional ways of teaching could for example be to teach outside of the classroom or use different kinds of media to access students’ way of thinking (Informant 1).

Informant 2 answered the question by describing a problematic chain of events in the political economy of knowledge production, making pedagogy a complex issue. Initially, academics research to gain knowledge and this knowledge is to be transferred to students. However, the money that is needed for the research taking place in South Africa for instance, may not necessarily come from South Africa. It often comes from elsewhere, together with criteria and conditions explaining what you have to produce, based on what the donors want to see. Already, the knowledge that is being produced is not a true reflection on what is on the ground, simply because the researcher wants to fulfil the conditions, get the money and have some papers published out there. This is where the problem starts from as pedagogy is about conveying what is already in the curriculum. When the curriculum itself is flawed, because of the knowledge that is being used, it becomes problematic (Informant 2).

According to Informant 3, teaching in a decolonial way means that academics have to re-school themselves, and unlearn much of what they have known to be true, in order to be qualified to facilitate a decolonial epistemology. This requires intellectual bravery and adventurousness that many lack. The biggest challenge ahead, is that the academics of the university are, for the most part, products of an un-African education. What they have is a colonial education in concept, design and manifestations which at its heart is Eurocentric. As a result, the teachers are undoing much of what the students know about African knowledge systems and force feed the students with an alien epistemic concept, which the students are questioning more and more. What teachers could do in order to develop more decolonial teaching methods, is to work with the same material but develop a different perspective of Europe and add to it from Africa. The informant suggested that lecturers ask, “how do I look at Plato in a different way? What is Plato saying to Africa that he didn’t say perhaps to ancient Greece or to Europe? How is he saying it differently to Africa than the way he might have said it to ancient Greece?” (Informant 3).

One informant said that a decolonised pedagogy is hugely important but underestimated by his faculty partly because they might not understand. It concerns according to the informant transforming how you teach, new technology and the way you do exams and assignments. However, the informant said that there doesn’t seem to be a clear road map of where the university is going on this issue. This he explained, is often because there are people at the top of the university who don’t have the ability to drive transformation. They are employed because of their academic ability or academic credibility being a professor, but they are not employed as somebody who can drive a transformation in an organisation (Informant 4).

Informant 6 described a decolonised pedagogy as firstly, teaching students in their mother tongue, making learning more enjoyable and understandable. Secondly, including African epistemologies to help African students relate to the content and the subject much easier. When something is not familiar, you have to start memorizing for the sake of passing, not for the sake of understanding. However, starting from their own context, students can then expand it to the general world. This is what's missing in the pedagogy today, according to the informant (Informant 6).

One informant described a decolonised pedagogy as fundamental. Teaching in a decolonised way means that academics have to know where the students come from and understand their community. Today there is a very meritocratic approach to things within the academic system, meaning that; you do the assignment and then you pass, or, you attend the lectures and then you pass etc. A teacher with a decolonial understanding will understand that there are people who are not able to attend the lectures, not because they are not well behaved but because they cannot afford the train ticket. At UFS there are students who are care givers at home and students who go hungry. They may not understand what you are teaching but this is not because they are bad students. It is because things are more complex than just the content of the material. The informant added, "if you are not trained to be compassionate to understand the position of your students, then you are going to chase pass rates and most are just going to fail" (Informant 7).

Informant 9 stressed the importance of creating a good classroom space and pedagogy by being organized and structured, as this is something that many students require. The informant also explained that he has developed a new learning and teaching strategy for the university by looking strongly at the values of Ubuntu. This is a humanising pedagogy that validates, promotes respect, care and compassion for each other. The informant believed that if this wasn't modelled in the classroom, then the curriculum changes would ring hollow. In other words, teachers could include certain authors but still teach or refer to them in a disparaging way which would be counterproductive.

One informant understood a decolonised pedagogy as teaching from the African perspective, which according to her would eliminate the possibility of using for example different kinds of technology, as this was brought in through colonisation. Based on this she said, "I think you would have to revert back to chalk and black board" (Informant 11).

According to Informant 12, a decolonised pedagogy is one where there is a viable tutorial system at the UFS, or discussion sessions, where you have student to teacher ratios that are small

enough for students to articulate themselves. This could be realized by making use of post graduates or post-doctoral fellows at the university to lead such spaces, as it would be extremely difficult to get lecturers to be a part of such a project with the current student teacher ratio at the UFS. In this way, you create conditions in which students can grapple with material, articulate their views in relationship to it and exchange ideas, instead of just reproducing facts like they are doing today. This is also a chance for the instructors to get a sense of what students' knowledge is about. However, the infrastructure is not there and it's very hard to create right now (Informant 12).

Are Academics Confident to Teach in a Decolonial Way?

Some confidence exists

Four informants expressed that they had good knowledge on the issue of teaching in a decolonial way (Informant 1, 3, 6 & 9). Part of this knowledge had been obtained by actively engaging in different activities/events on decoloniality which helped them understand the subject deeper. One of the four informants felt that these had been extremely valuable experiences and that she had learned a lot from them (Informant 1). As an example, Informant 6 had attended a conference on decoloniality in addition to several workshops and work sessions on the same subject. This enabled the informant's faculty to sit down and go over the ways in which they could improve and address the issues that were brought up during these events. Informant 6 also explained that at his faculty, staff are already using different approaches to decolonise their teaching methods. One way in which they do this, is by highlighting things within their subject that align with African views, which according to Informant 6 helps students to better understand the concept of what is being taught. Other examples of activities that these four informants had participated in was listening to guest speakers, joining a reading group on decoloniality and helping out in the creation of a new curricula renewal institute, in which decolonisation will be integrated.

One of the informants clarified that his knowledge on decolonial teaching methods was not only based on attending different events but was also acquired through his own academic research on the topic within his field:

I am a product of an almost entirely colonial education. But the reason I can do some of the things I'm doing in my own teaching is, I've invested time and energy in re-training myself and reframing some of what I know and looking at it differently. That process of re-engineering of the teacher, I believe is essential, if we are to stop trotting

out the same old truths that we were taught without a sense of their relatability and without a sense of context relevance (Informant 3).

However, two of the previously mentioned informants said that they didn't think that their colleagues feel the same way they do.

Lack of knowledge

Informant 9 answered that he didn't think many of his colleagues feel like they have enough knowledge because decolonisation, and how to do it, has not been clearly defined. He further explained that it's not only a challenge because it's still an ongoing debate, but also, because the context in which that demand came up is traumatizing for some lecturers. During the protests, the disruption that the staff experienced traumatized them psychologically and the negative media depictions of decolonisation, often chasing headlines, made it even worse (Informant 9). Another explanation to why colleagues do not have enough knowledge was given by Informant 1 who said that she didn't think the majority of lecturers take it very serious or are willing to make the effort to teach in a new way. Moreover, she didn't believe that a teaching plan 'recipe' saying 'this is how you teach in a decolonial way', is going to help. What is needed is attitudinal adjustment that naturally lead you away from the fixed teaching traditions (Informant 1).

The remaining informants, eight out of twelve, said that they either didn't teach or lacked knowledge on the subject of teaching in a decolonial way. Among the reasons for the lack of knowledge that was given by the informants, three themes emerged.

Attitudes

The first theme concerned the challenge of what Informant 1 called 'attitudinal adjustment'. This appeared in the answer of three informants where one not only expressed that she lacked understanding on the subject but said, "most of my life in education has been very western, so it is a little bit challenging to see things from the other perspective and accept viewpoints that clash with my own" (Informant 11). Another informant described the challenge of negative attitudes among the academics, saying:

Students feel that the academics don't care about them. On the other hand the academics feel that the primary school system doesn't provide the best students, so we don't have the best students. The way some of the academics look at the students is that they are students who don't deserve to be in those classes. When

you step in between that relationship and say we want to decolonise the curriculum and it's the students who demand it, the teacher thinks 'this student don't even deserve to sit in my class room, how can they tell me to decolonise the curriculum?' (Informant 7).

A third informant explained that there are professors who form the senate, and academics in general, who are resisting change because they are afraid of becoming irrelevant (Informant 2).

Openness but also confusion

The second theme that emerged was an openness to the idea of making changes in their teaching methods, but lack of knowledge how to do it. This can be seen for example in the answer given by Informant 4, who said, "it's not that we don't want to respond, I think we are not quite sure how to do it" (Informant 4). Similarly, Informant 10 said, "I think it will have a very powerful role if we can just conceptualise it, which I don't think we have done yet. What is it? What does it look like?" (Informant 10). According to Informant 4 who himself had little knowledge on the topic, the challenge is not only in the attitude of some teachers but also, there is not enough time, energy, effort or course work spent on the employees of the university to address the lack of knowledge on this issue. In order to encourage lecturers to review their own teaching methods, he suggested that some form of toolbox be put together that give advice on how to start the process of teaching in new ways.

More education is needed

The third theme that emerged from eight different interviews, was the desire for some form of education of the staff and lecturers, in order to bring more clarity around what decolonial teaching methods could actually look like. Informant 3 asserted, "we definitely need to reorient, to re-school ourselves, we need to unlearn quite a lot" (Informant 3). Another informant said "training is always helpful because it prepares them to handle themselves. If you are a lecturer the assumption is that you have all the wisdom, you know it all. Some students read about decolonisation and challenge the teacher, so if you are not trained to deal with that you won't know how to respond to the students" (Informant 7).

In addition, most of the informants expressing this view gave elaborate suggestions on what kind of education this might entail. For example, there was an interest in attending conferences or workshops who engage with decolonial modes of teaching (Informant 1, 7, 10 & 11). One informant suggested a more formalised training in the form of staff development programmes

for academics at the university. Alternatively, you could have working groups on the issue within each department, or review the expertise in each department to ensure that there is at least one professor in every department who has thorough knowledge on decolonisation (Informant 7). Other suggestions that were proposed included watching videos, attending lecture series or taking a course to see how academics with more experience in the area approach the subject (Informant 4, 10).

7 Analysis

Conceptions of Decolonisation on Curriculum

When reviewing the answers to the first question collectively, it appears as if they primarily align to the soft views of *Decolonisation as additive-inclusive knowledge* and *Decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge*.

The first two themes, *Lack of consensus* and *Decoloniality is a process*, are difficult to place within either one of the conceptions as they don't address any sort of definition. Nevertheless, they are interesting themes as they indicate how the university has a challenge to communicate a clear way forward that all the departments can understand, agree to and follow. It also shows that some academics feel like it's not possible to simply decide on one approach, as the ITP has done, and then just sit back and relax, waiting for things to change. Although this point is valid and it is important to keep the discourse alive by continuously debating it, there could still be purpose in establishing some form of consensus on the meaning of a decolonised curriculum, like the university has tried to do in the ITP. This is because the lack of the latter maintains confusion around its meaning, which ultimately slows down the process of transformation as lecturers and staff may not understand what is expected of them.

The theme *Inclusion of different voices* clearly speaks to the conception of *Decolonisation as additive-inclusive knowledge* while the theme *Pluriversality* could be argued to align with both the *additive-inclusive* conception and the *decentring* conception, as it doesn't support the notion of Africa at the centre but still supports the idea of decentring eurocentrism by learning from different truths and voices.

The themes *Africa at the centre* and *Focusing on the indigenous perspective*, together with the latter aspects of *Relevance* and *African languages* place within the conception of *Decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge*. However, it needs to be pointed out that although one informant spoke of the indigenous perspective, it is questionable if her understanding of it can truly count, since it is not in line with how global literature describes the indigenous perspective.

The remaining aspects found among the answers show that informants feel like there is much more to decolonising curriculum than what the theoretical framework manages to describe. One such aspect is the importance of pedagogy which only two informants mentioned briefly while talking on *Creating inclusive learning spaces* and the importance of not forgetting how we

share knowledge. This is a little bit surprising as many of the informants taught on a regular basis. The remaining informants only acknowledged pedagogy as a vital part of decolonising curriculum when they were asked about it in the third question.

The other aspects that were mentioned point to how intertwined curriculum is with other practices of the university, such as the recruitment of staff, the politics of knowledge production and so forth. The fact that the answers were so diverse also indicate how some academics at the UFS are very much aware of the complexity of the issue and are thinking way beyond the narrow lines of what should and shouldn't be taught. It is however clear that the overall perception of decolonising curriculum at the university revolves around the idea of what to include and is far from radical or bold. Instead, staff and lecturers seem to be either confused around its meaning or believe that it entails measures which could quite easily be addressed, by for example including more diverse scholarship in the curriculum. The same thing can more or less be said about the group of informants who understood it as taking the 'African perspective'. This is because they limited its meaning to the context of narratives, theories, analysis and content (with the exception of one informant who addressed African languages). Although this amounts to a good start for a university that saw next to no change in its curriculum for many years, it is an understanding of decolonisation which, if it is adhered to, only will result in superficial changes as it fails to understand that curriculum is just a strand influenced by many other things.

A future framework on conceptions of decolonising curriculum might therefore include some aspects pointed out in the results which stretches further than issues on content. This could for example mean, that some of the conceptions are simply expanded to include aspects like language and experiential learning while on the other hand, some new conceptions could be added on. Such a conception might concern the decolonization of the entire university, changing both its nature and identity by addressing aspects like how staff is recruited, creating inclusive learning spaces, changing power structures and how knowledge is produced.

Based on this suggestive framework, I argue that if staff and lecturers at the UFS truly want to work towards undoing the epistemic violence of colonial knowledge, many more need to start thinking in wider terms than they are doing today. Moreover, they need to start asking themselves if they want to settle for a supplemental concept of history, adding on African Studies to the current curriculum, with the risk of perhaps ghettoizing it from mainstream disciplines like Jansen (2017a) described. Similarly, there are risks with taking the decentring approach and putting Africa at the centre, as it might mean replacing one fixedness with another. Like one

informant mentioned, by flipping the coin, it may just become another form of reproduction. Regardless of this risk, curricular changes with an additive-inclusive approach are a step in the right direction as they open up the doors for new scholarship at the university, which will gradually increase the legitimacy of subaltern epistemic perspectives.

Decolonial Changes at the UFS

There seems to be quite a discrepancy between informants who perceive that not many changes are happening at all in their field or department, while another group are aware of changes happening in several places. The reason for this could be that the more ‘aware’ informants are expected to know of these things as they have a high level of responsibility in their professional role. Additional reasons could be that the informants have personal history relating to the issue, or have a greater personal interest and therefore make the effort to find out ways to engage in the decoloniality debate at the university. Regardless of which, the results show that many of the mentioned changes are a result of the staff’s own initiative, rather than a result of centralised directives from the university trying to implement the ITP. The discussion groups, the progressive staff forum, the seminars, the academics who changed their own pedagogy and the faculties who developed their own approaches to decolonise curriculum and practices, are all described to be implemented based on the own initiative of the staff. These are admirable efforts that show how some of the lecturers and staff at the university are doing far more than what is required of them, and thereby drive transformation of the institution forward at a faster rate than what would otherwise be the case. This also proves that in an academic environment known for its rigidity, things are slowly beginning to turn.

On the side of the implementations initiated by the university, one informant mentioned the digital resource called the ‘decolonisation hub’. This resource is likely a very useful guide but its level of influence depends on teachers’ and staff’s enthusiasm to seek it out and incorporate the advice given into their own teaching and material. This means that if you belong to the group of academics who think that decoloniality is everyone else’s responsibility, you are free to ignore it and continue in your traditional ways.

There are however some concrete measures among the answers that constitutes some important decolonial steps initiated by the university, such as the new language policy, which means that English is used in all classes, the increased employment of black staff, a number of conferences on decolonisation and the funding to develop African languages for academic purposes. Some

‘decolonial’ changes were also occurring under the banner of ‘transformation’ but the informant did not specify what these were.

Taking all this into consideration, it seems that decolonial changes in curricula are happening at a slow pace at the university, seeing that more than half of the informants didn’t perceive any significant changes within their department at all during the last years. Only one informant described how his department actually started using a new approach in their teaching and recommending new literature that they feel should be added to the study material. However, one informant did describe how the humanities discipline are discussing how to integrate the African perspective and African researchers but are not yet doing it. Based on this, the described changes at the university are too few in order observe any kind of approach or conception of decolonisation that could be valid across all the faculties. However, the changes that have occurred so far, in combination with what can be understood from the ITP (see chapter 2) are mostly in line with the conception of *Decolonisation as additive-inclusive knowledge*. This is clear from informants’ statements such as “integrate the African perspective”, “added to the study material”, while a quick overview of the ITP describes a curriculum review that entails the “inclusion of local and other voices” and “incorporating scholarship from Africa and the global South” (University of The Free State, 2017, p, 2 & 6). In other words, there is no reference to ‘starting from Africa’, ‘decentring’ any knowledge or taking a ‘new focus’ but simply, adding on more to what is already there.

Despite the slow changes, the situation at the UFS appears hopeful seeing that there are several examples of progressive staff who are trying to learn and move the discourse forward at the university. It is also clear that the university has made several efforts during the last years to slowly but surely transform. The question that remains is if these measures are deep enough to truly move towards a genuine epistemic openness that De Sousa Santos (2014) talks about, or an intercultural communication and exchange of experiences that Mignolo (2007) advocates.

Views on Decolonial Pedagogy

The understandings on what a decolonial teaching method means are incredibly diverse among the informants. The answers touch on issues found in several of the conceptions of decolonisation. One informant mentioned the need to include African epistemologies to help African students relate to the content, which relates to the conception of *additive-inclusive knowledge*. Another informant spoke of developing a different perspective of Europe and add to it from

Africa, while another informant stressed the importance of teaching the curriculum as a critical dialectical object. Both these views could be argued to align with the conception of *Decolonisation as critical engagement with settled knowledge*. An additional perspective was given by one informant who advocated for a new learning and teaching strategy that was founded on the values of the African philosophy called Ubuntu. Such a teaching method could arguably be representative of a knowledge system which places Africa at the centre, and therefore speaks to the conception of *Decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge*.

Among the informants, there is one who understands the concept of decolonial teaching as *Decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge*, but clearly misunderstands it as some form of backwardness or perhaps isolation from the rest of the world. She implies that this approach would mean that higher education rids itself of all forms of modern technique, reverting back to how society looked a century ago. This is an understanding far from the actual meaning and goal of the decolonisation project, which is evident if one considers global literature on decolonisation of knowledge. Although only one of the informants expressed this type of understanding, it is an indication that there might be several, or perhaps many more academics at the university who misunderstand decoloniality in a similar way. Such misunderstandings could definitely be a barrier to transformation, which points to how important it is to counteract this by reaching out to lecturers with more and better information on what decolonial pedagogy and practices actually could mean.

This shows that, overall, the opinions that can be related to the conceptual framework reside within the soft views, without any one of the conceptions being overrepresented. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the informants are reflecting on the issue which is positive, although it is clear that everyone has their own idea of what it means. The same diversity can be seen in the remaining answers given by the informants which do not relate to any of the conceptions. What is evident from these answers is how a decolonized pedagogy, just as curriculum, is incredibly complex and multi-faceted. For example, issues like student to teacher ratios highlight how the environment in which you teach needs to be conducive to learning if a decolonized pedagogy is to be successful to begin with. The informant who mentioned the need to understand the community where students come from, indicates that a decolonized pedagogy also requires a foundation of empathy in order for students with disadvantaged backgrounds to have a chance of succeeding. These are not issues that can be explained in a textbook and delivered to teachers to quickly consider. This is especially true of the need to unlearn and re-learn, which was mentioned by one informant. Re-educating oneself could take years and motivating academics to

do it in the first place would take even more years. Undoubtedly, decolonising pedagogy would therefore be a long term process.

With this said, it is evident that the UFS needs to communicate in a clearer way what is expected of lecturers at the university. Seeing that the ITP talks about decolonising the teaching and learning function, what is the strategy to achieve this goal and more importantly, how is a decolonised teaching function defined? Based on the array of understandings among the informants on what a decolonial pedagogy is, not many appear to have a grip on this.

Abilities to Teach in a Decolonial Way

The research question on the ability of staff and lecturers to teach in a decolonial way was not asked with the purpose of making connections to the conceptual framework, but rather, to get an idea of the lecturers' competencies and what needs to happen for transformation to occur. The results demonstrate that the questions asked by Heleta (2018) and Jansen (2017) about academics' attitudes towards decolonial teaching methods and new ways of thinking are clearly justified, as there are indeed negative attitudes among staff and teachers at the university regarding these issues, as well as a substantial lack of knowledge. Although one third of this sample group expressed that they felt confident to teach in a decolonial way, one cannot assume that one third of the lecturers at the entire university feels this way, considering that this sample group is not big enough to be representative of the university as a whole. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see that it is possible for academics to develop good foundational skills, like some of the informants have done, if only the motivation is there. In other words, the lack of knowledge is not necessarily a negative thing as long as the staff and lecturers are open to the idea of doing something to address it, which some informants appeared to be.

So, to answer Heletas (2018) question – are academics willing to change? – the answer at the UFS appears to be, yes a few, but many are still negative. Seeing that more education is needed, the question that naturally follows is: who will teach these teachers when the existing faculties are limited in both interest and expertise? Suggestions put forward such as implementing staff development programmes for academics are interesting but require a clearer strategy of what staff and lecturers are expected to deliver. Considering the diverse ideas among the informants on what a decolonial pedagogy means, it is questionable if the management at the university has a stronger consensus on its meaning than what is seen among the informants. This is clearly a barrier to transformation that the UFS needs to grapple with in the future, while also working toward removing the fear that some academics have of becoming irrelevant.

8 Concluding Remarks

The findings of the research reveal that the UFS appears to be taking an approach to decolonising the university curriculum that primarily is concerned with adding on more to what is already there, or shifting the centre from one point to another. In taking these approaches, the university risks implementing changes that will result in superficial changes, instead of seeing curriculum as a strand influenced by many other equally important things which indirectly can assist in decolonising it. Nevertheless, the approaches are a step in the right direction, opening up the doors for new scholarship at the university, which will gradually increase the legitimacy of subaltern epistemic perspectives.

The findings further show that decolonial changes regarding curricula are happening at a slow pace at the university, and that some of the academics at the UFS are key in driving transformation of the institution forward at a faster rate than what would otherwise be the case. While there are too few decolonial changes occurring at the UFS to discern a clear direction, the concrete changes that can be seen align with the conception of *Decolonisation as additive-inclusive knowledge* in Jansen's (2017a) framework. Despite some clear efforts by the UFS to transform during the last years, the question remains if these are deep enough to truly move towards a genuine epistemic openness.

On the subject of decolonial teaching methods, the findings demonstrated incredibly diverse understandings among the informants. The answers further revealed how a decolonized pedagogy, just as curriculum, is incredibly complex and multi-faceted. In so being, implementing a decolonised pedagogy at the UFS appears to be a long term process. Moreover, the university needs to communicate a strategy more clearly and what they expect from lecturers if a decolonized teaching function is to be realized.

In relation to this, the majority of the informants did not feel like they had the competence to teach in a decolonial way, and among the small group who did, the perception was that they were pretty unique in having this ability. If a decolonial pedagogy is essential for the curriculum to be decolonised, then the sample group in this study indicates that most lecturers at the UFS are not well prepared to respond to this requirement.

Regarding the conceptual framework, this research concludes that the framework was helpful to analyse the findings in general terms but needs to be expanded as it failed to cover many of the issues that appeared in the results.

Taking a step back, it is evident that achieving a decolonized curriculum at the UFS is something which cannot be accomplished at a moment but the findings indicate that there are some progressive forces around the university which is a great starting point. Moreover, capturing the views of staff and lecturers have given insights on some barriers to transformation and the challenges that lay ahead for academics if the university is to truly decolonise the university curriculum.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research identifies mainly one area which requires further investigation. That is a need to develop a more comprehensive framework that can better describe the different conceptions of decolonising curriculum. Such a framework does not only have to be descriptive but could also be developed to serve as a guide/strategy to inspire universities when reviewing their institutional practices. This is of great importance as lacking a clear strategy might mean that curriculum won't look much different in 10 years than it does today.

This case study investigates an issue which is very much a process, enabling it to be studied over time, and could therefore also be considered a longitudinal case. This invites for further research at a different point in time to see how the progress have been. What would be of interest is if the university has made significant progress and if so, how this was achieved.

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9 Appendices

Appendix I. Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY

Decolonising the University Curriculum in South Africa: A Case Study of the University of the Free State

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PURPOSE OF STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the issue of decolonising curriculum in higher education at the University of the Free State in South Africa. The project aims to contribute something new to the research debate, by examining the perspectives of lecturers/staff on what the process of decolonising the curriculum means to them.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Interviews will be conducted with lecturers/staff at the University of the Free State. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

Audio will be recorded during the interview if consent is given. Alternatively, notes will be taken. The records of the interview will be stored safely by the researcher, and only they and their supervisor will be able to access it. Audio or notes will be kept for 6 months after the dissertation has been handed in for grading and will then be deleted.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your responses to this interview will be confidential. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.
- Electronic data to be kept in an encrypted, password-protected file.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents

of abuse and suicide risk. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

RISKS

No risks to participants are foreseen by taking part in the interview.

BENEFITS

There will be no immediate benefit for your participation in this study. However, the project aims to contribute something new to the research debate, by allowing the voices of students to define what knowledge they want. This is an important research as it could potentially assist students in their effort to shape higher education in a way that will make them feel less alienated and marginalized.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the researcher, please contact her supervisor by email: chris.high@lnu.se.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix II. Interview Guide for Semi-structured Interviews

For lecturers:

1. What do you know about the #FeesMustFall movement and its calls for a decolonised higher education?
2. What do you know about the process of decolonising curriculum at the UFS?
3. Do you have any knowledge about the UFS integrated transformation plan and its aim to transform curriculum?
4. Have you been consulted by the university on the issue of reviewing the curriculum within your field?
5. What does it mean to you to have a decolonised curriculum?
6. Do you believe that the content of the current curriculum within your field is anchored in the cultural and intellectual environment of the students?
7. Have you noticed or done any changes regarding the issue of decolonising curriculum within your field since the protests, and if so, what kind of changes?
8. Is there anything outside of the current curriculum that you believe should be taught?
9. What does it mean for you to teach in a decolonial way?
10. What role can pedagogy have in the process of decolonising curriculum?
11. Do you feel like you/your colleagues have enough knowledge to confidently teach students in a decolonial way?
12. Have you actively engaged in some activity to decolonise higher education or curriculum?
13. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

For staff:

1. What do you know about the #FeesMustFall movement and its calls for a decolonised higher education?
2. What do you know about the process of decolonising curriculum at the UFS?
3. Do you have any knowledge about the UFS integrated transformation plan and its aim to transform curriculum?
4. What does it mean to you to have a decolonised curriculum?
5. Do you believe that the content of the current curriculum within your field is anchored in the cultural and intellectual environment of the students?
6. Have you noticed or done any changes regarding the issue of decolonising curriculum within your field since the protests, and if so, what kind of changes?
7. Is there anything outside of the current curriculum that you believe should be taught?
8. What role do you think pedagogy can have in the process of decolonising curriculum?
9. Do you think that lecturers at the university have enough knowledge to confidently teach students in a decolonial way?
10. Have you actively engaged in some activity to decolonise higher education or curriculum?
11. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

Appendix III. List of interviewees

# of interviewee	Code	Actor	Gender
1.	Informant 1	Lecturer	Female
2.	Informant 2	Lecturer	Male
3.	Informant 3	Lecturer	Male
4.	Informant 4	Lecturer	Male
5.	Informant 5	Staff	Female
6.	Informant 6	Lecturer	Male
7.	Informant 7	Staff	Male
8.	Informant 8	Staff	Female
9.	Informant 9	Lecturer	Male
10.	Informant 10	Lecturer	Female
11.	Informant 11	Lecturer	Female
12.	Informant 12	Lecturer	Male