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De-Westernising Journalism curricula in South African universities: Where are we?

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Introduction

Two weeks ago, when I started preparing this paper, I fortuitously received a video in my WhatsApp which I believe can help us to glean some useful lessons as we embark on our task today. The video showed an elderly woman trying to get to the first floor of a shopping mall via an escalator which, unfortunately for her, was going down. The harder she tried to climb the stairs the more impossible her attempts became as she kept being pushed back to the first step. The video does not show how she solved her problem, but I am inclined to believe that somewhere along the line she gave up her fight or some kind Samaritan came to her rescue and showed her the upward bound escalator which would have taken her to her destination. Instead of making me laugh, as was the whole point of sending the video to me, I was saddened by the futility of the old woman’s attempts to execute her task. She knew what her destination was, but, because she did not understand her environment and the technology she was dealing with, she chose the wrong strategy to try to fulfil that task.

This video set me thinking about our task today and the fact that Africanising/de-Westernising curricula in general and journalism curricula in particular is not a new narrative nor are we the first to grapple with the issue. Others before us have met, debated and written extensively about the very same issues that we are discussing today. As far back as 1992, Mukasa and Becker, noted with concern that colonial powers had imposed their epistemologies and philosophies to ensure dominancy of their cultures. The result is that indigenous histories, epistemologies and ontologies were vilified and completely excluded in any educational curricula of the time. Several African journalism scholars and professionals (Motsaathebe 2011; Ankomah, 2008; Groepe, 2008; Thloloe 2008; Botha & De Beer, 2007; Banda, Beukes-Amis, Bosch, Mano, McLean & Steenveld, 2007; Wimmer & Wolf, 2005;

Fourie, 2005; Mokegwu 2005; Rabe 2005; Wasserman 2005) have, thus, tackled this subject, with the aim of reclaiming space for Africa's epistemologies in the journalism curricula.

Several seminars, conferences and colloquia on the subject have been held. In 2008, for example, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) held a seminar in Cape Town in which focus was on the media and the African Renaissance. The African Renaissance narrative, which was topical at the time, had as some of its goals, rediscovering Africa's place in the world economy, rediscovering Africa's creative past, recapturing people's cultures and fostering African unity (ANC-NEC Bulletin, 2002:1). I also remember in 2008 attending a colloquium at Stellenbosch University where several papers on the Africanisation of journalism curricula were presented. Further debates on the subject of the de-Westernisation of journalism curricula were presented at the 2009 World Journalism Education Congress (WJEC) preparatory conference and the 2010 WJEC both held at Rhodes University in South Africa. The many papers presented at these conferences on the subject of de-Westernisation of journalism curricula gave many of us hope that scholars were determined to extricate journalism curricula from its dependency on Western-oriented models of journalism education and training (Banda *et al.*, 2007:157).

Yet, though calls to Africanise/de-Westernise journalism curricula have been raging inside Africa for a considerably long time, our curricula has not transformed. It is still framed within Western philosophies and epistemologies. Like the old woman in the video, we seem to be stuck on the first step. Despite all our vigorous debates about what is wrong with our journalism curricula, we have not moved an iota. This is aptly revealed by my PhD study of three journalism curricula in three prominent universities in South Africa which revealed, without a doubt, that journalism curricula in these institutions are still heavily entrenched in Western epistemologies and that there are no immediate plans to transform these programmes any time soon (Dube, 2013).

We, therefore, need to stand back, and ask ourselves fundamental questions about why we are not progressing, otherwise fifty years from now we will still be talking about Africanising our curricula. Some of these questions might be painful as they might require us to rethink and reformulate the foundations on which our academic and African identities stand. It is important that we guard against epistemic deafness in order to interrogate and grapple with some of the complexities and complications which I believe have kept us stuck on the first step of the escalator of transformation all these years. My paper does not claim to be the

panacea to our stasis in the Africanisation/de-Westernisation discourse, but it is aimed at provoking us to honestly and unemotionally look introspectively into why we have not made any progress, and, possibly, find ways of moving us from that first step towards our final destination. The focus of my presentation will be three possible areas [This is not exhaustive] which I strongly believe are implicated in our lack of progress in the Africanisation/de-Westernisation process, namely failure to understand the context within which we operate, the grammars we use to express what we want to achieve, and the capacity of the journalism scholars to transform journalism curricula. These three aspects are discussed next.

Understanding our context

Let me take you back to the video of the old woman I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation to illustrate the importance of understanding one's context when doing something. I contend that the old woman did not get to her destination, the second floor of the shopping mall, because she did not understand the modern environment and technology within which she found herself. She chose to treat the escalator like the traditional stationary steps that she is familiar with, and the result is that she chose the wrong strategy to get to the second floor. I attribute her lack of progress to her failure to fully grasp the context under which she was trying to achieve her task.

I am reminded, here, of the words of Skinner, Gasher and Compton (2001:357) who argue that "as journalism educators, we should reflect upon the extent to which the curriculum is a product of [...] larger social and political conditions. This implies that curriculum design in any society should be informed by its context. In her paper titled "Media Education in South Africa? Context context, context" Steenveld (2006) also reiterates the importance of appreciating our context in the education of media and journalism practitioners. She identifies four key elements of our context which she argues should guide us in our curricula as follows:

First, we live in Africa, with a particular relation to 'globalisation' (first in relation to colonialism and imperialism; second in relation to the 'information'/'knowledge' economy). Second, ours is a relatively new democracy. Third, we live in a country with one of the highest 'geni co-efficients', that is the ratio of the poorest to the richest [...] [Fourth] the problem of journalism education is linked to our wider problems concerning the legacy of apartheid, and apartheid education in all areas.

It goes without saying that we should understand our history because it has shaped us and made us who we are. I am aware that most of us here have felt the sting of both colonialism and apartheid and how those institutions undermined indigenous knowledge systems in favour of Western epistemologies and ontologies, the aim being to maintain colonial and apartheid interests (see Esakov, 2009; Ramose, 2004; Banteyerga, 1994).

Whilst, it goes without saying that understanding our historical context is fundamental to our exercise of ‘Africanising’ the curricula, my focus, today will be on the current context within which we are located. Very often we are so emotionally steeped in our painful history that we forget that any curriculum we design should serve our needs in the here and now; we should not remain stuck in the past. We live in a world of rapid technological changes which have changed the way news are gathered, distributed and consumed; A world in which audiences in general and our students in particular have become creators of knowledge and distributors of tons and tons of information; we have no control over that reality. African audiences are active participants on Western created social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, to name a few and the wiliness with which some of these audiences operate in these environments, at times, is far much superior to that of us intellectuals. They have access to search engines such as Google and Yahoo at their fingertips. These Western designed social networks and search engines have permeated African societies, raising questions about their place in an Africanised/de-Westernised curricula. Thus as we talk of ‘Africanisation’ we cannot lose sight of these realities which are a part of the world as we know it today.

The call to de-Westernise journalism curricula in South Africa should also be appreciated within the context of the overarching neoliberal macroeconomic environment which has underpinned all socio-economic institutions in South Africa since 1994. Neoliberalism, according to Harvey (2005:2), is a “theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade”. Harvey further argues that the state’s role, in a neoliberal environment is limited to simply creating a conducive environment for the individual, free markets and free trade to thrive. The main tenets of neoliberalism include cutting public expenditure for social services, deregulation, privatisation and individualisation, and the imposition of these tenets has resulted in only a minority of the world’s population benefitting while the majority are suffering and getting poorer by the day (Harvey 2005; Martinez & Garcia 2000).

Of interest to note is that neoliberalism, as we know it today, was imagined and forged by Western intellectuals and think tanks, and imposed on the rest of the world by powerful Western financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (Van Vuuren 2013; Martinez & Garcia 2000). Neoliberalism was also adopted by Western governments as an anti-communist strategy during the Cold War, thus effectively making it synonymous with the West.

It is this ideology that the African National Congress (ANC), at the negotiations which saw South Africa transition from apartheid to democracy, adopted under pressure from South Africa's corporate sector and international capital; the ANC abandoned its socialist ideology and adopted neoliberal policies which prioritised the needs of big business (Sparks, 2009; Narsiah 2002). According to Narsiah (2002:3), "Neoliberalism as a global hegemonic discourse [...] succeeded in capturing, colonising and repackaging the development imaginary of the African National Congress". Nowhere is the shift aptly demonstrated than when, in the early years of democracy, the ANC, because of pressure from market forces, abandoned its socialist development policy, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) for the neoliberal one, the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy.

The shift to neoliberalism influenced the policy framework of all socio-economic institutions in the country, the South African education system included. For example, the outcomes-based National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on which all South African national qualifications are located, for instance, is modelled along models borrowed from the West (Walters & Isaac 2009; Allais 2007). According to Walters and Isaacs (2009), South Africa's NQF borrowed heavily from Western models such as those from England, the USA, Scotland and Australia. While it is outside the purview of this presentation to interrogate the pros and cons of this model, it is important to note that South Africa's education system is entrenched on neoliberal foundations, which is contra-indicated in a de-Westernisation project.

Because this new qualification framework gave different stakeholders an opportunity to provide inputs into the creation of outcome statements for qualifications, control of knowledge was no longer the preserve of experts or intellectuals (SAQA 2000). Instead, industry in general, and the media industry in particular, as well as customers (students and parents) as key stakeholders, became significant contributors to knowledge creation in institutions of higher learning (SAQA 2000).

This new direction in the creation of knowledge in institutions of higher learning in South Africa, is aptly captured by the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) 'fit for purpose' policy, which effectively gives industry (the media industry included) latitude to determine the knowledge and skills offered in institutions of higher learning (SAQA 2000; Allais 2007). The 'fit for purpose' notion is a complex issue which, because of the nature of this occasion, is not fully explored in this article. However, according to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (2002), this notion gives the customer/stakeholder (students, parents, industry) the power to influence the kind of curricula offered in institutions. Berger (2005) notes that the customer/stakeholder perspective of the purpose suggests that 'universities exist(s) to follow rather than lead the "market" – let alone critique the "market"'.

The power of this 'fit for purpose' policy was apparent in three journalism education and training institutions in South Africa which I studied (Dube, 2013). The study revealed how influential students are in determining the kind of curricula offered to them. In one institution, students resisted modules that did not teach them marketable skills which would ensure that they got jobs easily in the market. In another institution, the programme coordinator stated that students refused to support the introduction of indigenous languages in the journalism curricula arguing that this would not help them to get employment in the media industry, which is predominantly English and Afrikaans. Again, in the recent Afrikaans Must Fall protest movement, students demanded that English should be used in place of Afrikaans. In light of this, it is ironic that most scholars who are calling for the Africanisation of the curricula have argued that African languages should substitute Western languages such as English. How then should we reconcile the students' demands and those of the narrative of Africanisation? Student demands are fundamental in our endeavours to transform the journalism curricula so that we do not come up with a curriculum that would put students and academia on a collision course.

The demand by students for programmes which would give them marketable skills in mainstream industry was also noted by Amner (2005), who argued that, the possible reason why most journalism schools in the country do not prepare students to work in the community media, could be because students are not keen to work in that type of media because of poor remuneration packages. Given that the mainstream media industry for which students want to be employed is underpinned by Western liberal values, a question arises how de-Westernisation, which seeks to eliminate or reduce those values will proceed in the face of this resistance from the students whom they are preparing for the media industry. The

implication behind this observation is that scholars within universities are not free agents in determining the kind of curricula they can offer to students. There are other stakeholders whose interests might not necessarily conflate with those of the educators.

The mainstream media, for which journalism schools are producing journalists and media workers, have also patterned themselves on Western models of gathering and reporting news by “largely operat[ing] on free market principles and according to neo-liberal functionalist logic” (Wasserman & De Beer 2005:38; see also Sparks 2009; Wasserman & Botma 2008; Jacobs 2004). Thus, given that neoliberalism is an ideology used by Western powers to spread their hegemonic influence to the rest of the world, there is, therefore, no doubt that the call to de-Westernise journalism curricula strikes at the heart of the media industry’s ideology of the market. This raises questions about how the de-Westernisation narrative, which seeks to either reduce or completely remove Western epistemologies from journalism curricula, will reconcile itself with the need to produce the kind of graduate who is expected to aggressively pursue Western ideals of neoliberalism such as competitiveness and individualism demanded by the neoliberally-driven mainstream media industry. This leaves journalism schools with a challenge of having to walk a tight rope in order to balance their beliefs and the demands of the media industry for which they are producing students.

Journalism scholars are all too aware of the vitality of a synergetic relationship between the media industry and journalism education and training institutions. Wasserman (2005), for example, in his contribution to the transformation discourses, acknowledges that it would be pointless for journalism schools to transform and produce journalists who are expected to do things differently from the media industry’s expectations. There is evidence that, as much as journalism educators want to maintain theoretical independence in matters pertaining to journalism curricula, so as to avoid ending up being ‘factor[ies] for big business’ (Tomaselli cited in De Beer, Tomaselli, Burger & Grobler, 2004:368) or as Wasserman (2005:164) describes ‘a production line delivering a work force for industry’, this is not easy as the media industry employs the graduates of journalism education and training institutions. It also offers bursaries to students of these institutions, affords them places for internships, seconds some of its professionals to teach in some of the journalism departments or to give guest lectures to students and the faculty (Dube 2013).

In South Africa, the media industry influences the curricula of some institutions, indirectly in the case of traditional universities and directly for Universities of Technology, where, for the

latter, an advisory committee made up of members representing all media sectors, together with the faculty, scrutinises and reviews journalism curricula once or twice a year (Dube 2013). Thus, as much as some journalism education and training scholars would like to de-Westernise their curricula, this is not easy because the relationship they have with the media industry for which they are producing students is of mutual benefit to both, in so far as material gains are concerned.

Whilst this, in itself, is not a bad thing, it raises a critical question about how successful journalism education schools would be in de-Westernising journalism education and training curricula and determining the kind of knowledge they want to promote and the kind of graduate they want to produce, given that the mainstream media industry for which they are producing journalists and media workers is driven by the Western Liberal model, which the de-Westernisation narrative seeks to displace. When one considers that the mainstream media industry is largely driven by bottom-line imperatives, over and above social ones such as redressing the inequalities and inefficiencies of the past, one wonders, therefore, how feasible it is for journalism education and training institutions to go it alone in determining the curricula of their programmes. All this underscores the complexities of the de-Westernization narrative in the context of a media industry which is driven by Western imperatives.

Grammars/Terminologies

One of the limiting factors in our attempts to outline what we want to achieve is the grammars or terminologies that we use to describe what we want to do. Grammar, by its nature has rigid rules and has a way of channelling our conversation or thought processes into a particular direction. For example, when we use terms such as “de-Westernisation” or “Africanisation” we put ourselves in a straight jacket which will dictate the direction that our conversation will take. We spend too much time trying to decipher what we mean by those terms or grammars rather than doing what we really want to do. For example, terms such as “Africanise” “de-Westernise” “Indigenise” are so heavily contested by scholars that we have spent valuable time just trying to determine what they mean. For purposes of this paper, I will just focus on two terminologies, namely ‘Africanise’ and ‘de-Westernise’. What do we mean by to Africanise or de-Westernise?

According to the Longman Dictionary for Contemporary English (2003), the suffix “ise” is a verb-forming suffix added to adjectives or nouns to form verbs with the general meaning “to render” or “to make”. When added to a word like ‘African’, it creates the word “Africanise”

which literally means to make African. Ramose (1998:iv) describes Africanisation in the following manner:

Africanisation holds that the African experience in its totality is simultaneously the foundation and the source for the construction of all forms of knowledge. On this basis, it maintains that the African experience is by definition nontransferable but nonetheless communicable. Accordingly, it is the African who is and must be the primary and principle communicator of the African experience...Africanisation is a conscious and deliberate assertion of nothing more or less than the right to be African.

Ramose's definition begs the question: Who or what is an African? Defining who an African is, is a complex task fraught with problems because the term "African" means different things to different people. In his article, "In search of an African Philosophy of Education", Ramose (2004:139) criticised some scholars for taking the "meaning of the term African for granted". More (2002:63) highlights the complexity of the term when he poses the question "Who or what is African...in African Philosophy, African humanism, African personality?" Thus, when Ramose (1998:iv), for example, says "it is the African who is and must be the primary and principle (sic) communicator of the African experience", the question is who exactly does he have in mind when he talks of the African? Similarly, when Botha and De Beer (2007:201) advise that a shift towards an African epistemology should include "African history, philosophy, cultures, symbolic forms, achievements and needs", what did they mean by African?

In apartheid South Africa, for example, "African" was a racialised category (More, 2002:63). It was used to refer to black people in contrast to other groups such as Coloureds, Indians and Europeans (White people). Using the term in this manner, unfortunately, results in a tendency to homogenise black people and essentialise their experiences. It ignores the diversity and variety that exists in Africa. Appiah (1992) challenges this belief when he argues that all black people did not suffer the same discrimination. Some were privileged under colonialism and slavery, thus resulting in different perspectives towards Africa and what being African entails. Appiah argues that just because one is black, it does not follow that "...cruelties that I have never known should spur me on in my fight for freedom because we are of the same colour" (Appiah, 1992:45).

The African-American writer, Richard Wright, on his first visit to the Gold Coast (present day Ghana) in 1953, reiterated Appiah's argument when he despairingly said "I could not

understand all, I was black and they were black, but my colour didn't help me" (Lopes, 1973:78). All this shows that sharing the same skin colour does not automatically mean that you share the same perspectives on Africanisation. Africa, the African experience and blackness should never be essentialised, as doing so will result in curricula that do not fully embrace Africa's experiences and diversity.

Thabo Mbeki's 1998 famous speech "I am an African" shows a departure from the racial categorisation of the term 'African' (see More, 2002). It raised serious questions about the identity of post-apartheid South Africans and whether the term 'African' still operated as a racialised category. When he declared that he was an African, F.W. de Klerk and other white members of the opposition parties also declared that they were Africans, thus challenging the racialised identity of apartheid South Africa (More, 2002:64). In his speech Mbeki de-racialised and de-ethnicised his identity by "attempting to encompass within it the full range of South Africa's experience that includes Whites, Indians, Coloureds and the Khoi" (More, 2002:64).

Mbeki, however, contradicts himself in his conception of an African and this is revealed in a 1999 media debate provoked by Max du Preez the former editor of *Vrye Weekblad* and the then producer of the SABC 3 investigative programme *Special Assignment* (Fourie, 2008:289). Du Preez questioned the use of the term 'African' by both ANC presidents, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, in their election campaigns. He pointed out that both men used the term "to mean exclusively black" because in their speeches they made reference to "Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Africans" (see Fourie, 2008:289). For example, Mbeki is quoted as having said that the predominance of the national question "...points to the amount of work we [Africans] still have to do in organizing among the white community. To a certain extent the same reality applies to the Indian and Coloured communities". Mbeki, in the above quotation, sets Africans as being apart from Whites, Indians and Coloureds.

The article drew a lot of responses from readers, the most notable being that of Professor Thobeka Mda of the University of South Africa (UNISA) who argued that white South Africans were Europeans and that they wanted to lay claim to an African identity for the sole aim of acquiring "a piece (huge pieces in fact) of land in this country, and therefore, this continent" (see Fourie, 2008:289-290). Professor Pikita Ntuli, the then Director of the Sankofa Centre for the African Renaissance, differed with Mda on the grounds that "it was

not easy to trap issues of definitions in neat packages for it is the nature of cultures to be hybrid” (see Fourie, 2008:290).

From this media debate, it is apparent that Africans, in general and South Africans in particular, are not agreed on what constitutes an African identity. Given that the suffix “ise” in the word Africanise means “to make” African, (*The Longman Dictionary for Contemporary English*, 2003), this begs the question how scholars intend to Africanise curricula if there is no common understanding of what entails African.

Similar concerns have been raised about the term ‘de-Westernise’. Many articles have been written on the subject of de-Westernising journalism curricula. However, most of them are not explicit about whether the process involves a complete rejection of Western epistemologies or a fusion of Western theory and non-Western philosophies and ontologies. This is not surprising because the prefix ‘de’ in the term ‘de-Westernisation’ is open to different interpretations. *The Longman Dictionary for Contemporary English* (2003) gives three possible meanings to the prefix as follows: (i) Removing something completely as in de-boning a fish; (ii) showing an opposite or becoming less as in de-industrialisation; and (iii) reducing something’s worth as in de-valuing a currency.

While the first meaning implies a complete removal or discarding of the undesired element, the last two imply that the undesired element can still be accommodated though its value and potency would be reduced. Applied to the de-Westernisation narrative, the first meaning would seem to suggest that Western theory and philosophy should be completely rejected in South African journalism curricula, while the last two seem to imply that they can be accommodated, but at a reduced level. In South Africa, whilst some scholars have argued in favour of introducing African-based knowledge systems, such as Ubuntu philosophy, in journalism curricula (see Thloloe 2008; Rabe 2005), it is not clear whether Western theory and philosophy are to be completely removed from the curricula or if they should be integrated with African ones.

However, pursuing either of the two trajectories is not without its complications. The latter, which is a blunt rejection of Western epistemologies would result in the production of an Africa-West dichotomy, which would simply promote essentialist and nativist narratives (see Iwabuchi 2010:404). A complete rejection of Western theory and philosophy begs the question whether there is a uniquely authentic Western experience or African experience. Iwabuchi (2010) describes, as impractical, in this complex interconnected world where

Western media cultures are deeply embedded in media cultures across the non-Western world, to see the world in binary terms.

Though African nationalists, in their fight against colonialism, urged people to return to an intact and untainted indigenous culture, what Cabral (1974) calls ‘a return to the source’, history has shown that there is no culture in the world which has remained static and insulated from other cultures (see Kasfir 1999:93). All cultures, including Western cultures, are always in flux, ingesting foreign elements from various sources and ‘naturalising’ some of these elements (Morley 1994:151). In fact, Massey (cited in Strelitz 2004:627) noted that a ‘reverse invasion’ seen through the ‘periphery [read former colonies] infiltrating the ‘colonial core’ [read former coloniser] was taking place, and that the West, which is often seen as the aggressor whose culture remains uninfiltated by that of its subordinates, is not insulated from outside influences (see Strelitz 2004). Iwabuchi (2010) also rejects the perspective which views the hybridization of cultures as a one-directional process, with the West forcing its culture on the rest of the world, while the latter simply receives, imitates and appropriates. Iwabuchi, for example, shows how East Asian media and cultural industries have made significant inroads into the bastion of Western cultural industries, Hollywood, thus proving that cultural inflows have been both ways, with the East and the West ingesting each other’s cultures. Other scholars such as Ray (2012) also argue that distinguishing between Western and non-Western knowledge is very difficult as there is a thin divide between the two. Painaino (2002:2) describes this thin divide as a ‘dynamic dialectic’ between the West and the non-Western world.

This, therefore, begs the question: If Western culture is equally as vulnerable to outside influences as that of the non-Western world, where then would one draw the line to determine what is African and what is Western? A complete removal of Western epistemologies from journalism curricula would require scholars to grapple with this difficult, if not impossible task of separating so-called Western cultural elements from the rest. In the case of the rest of the world, it has to be remembered that interaction has not only been with the West; it has also been between and amongst non-Western cultures themselves, making it difficult to establish what is authentic to a particular culture. It is a well-known fact that the African continent has had close trading relations with the Asian continent for centuries, meaning that African culture has also ingested many cultural elements from Asia and vice versa. Besides, Africa, itself, is characterised by heterogeneity, which will make it challenging to define an authentic African culture.

This argument would seem to suggest that hybridization is a global phenomenon which has been going on since time immemorial, and that it would be unrealistic for journalism scholars to completely remove Western epistemologies from African journalism curricula as what is Western or non-Western is not easily discernible. This appears to leave scholars with only one option, that is, to adopt the meaning of de-Westernisation which seems to embrace the hybridization of cultures.

While this might seem to be a logical step to take, it is also not without its complexities. Critics of the theory of hybridization are quick to note that it relies heavily (for its existence) on the presumption that a non-hybrid or authentic entity exists, which they argue does not exist or is a myth (see Frello 2005:2). If the authentic is a myth or has never existed, then it follows that the whole concept of hybridity is built on a faulty foundation. The hybridization theory has also been criticised for overlooking the fact that contact between a dominant and subordinate culture results in an uneven exchange of culture, with the newly formed culture leaning closer to the ideals and values of the dominant culture on the continuum (Iwabuchi 2010; Radhakrishnan 1993). To illustrate this point, Radhakrishnan (1993:775) poses the following pertinent questions:

Why is it more fashionable and/or acceptable to transgress Islam towards a secular constituency rather than the other way round? Why do Islamic forms of hybridity, such as women wearing veils and attending western schools [...] encounter resistance and ridicule?

Frello (2005) shares similar views with Radhakrishnan when she argues that the concept of hybridity can mask unequal power relations. Discourses which celebrate hybridity, such as multiculturalism, are thus seen as perpetuating the disempowerment of the subordinate cultures and glossing over painful histories of racism and colonialism (see Frello 2005). This argument problematises the second and third meanings of 'de' in de-Westernisation discourses by suggesting that when decisions are made to integrate Western and non-Western elements (that is provided they can be identified), there is a danger of an imbalance which favours Western epistemologies.

Besides, following the hybridization route raises another pertinent question about who is qualified to decide what passes as Western and what does not. Who makes decisions about what qualifies to go in and what is to be left outside? These critical questions are discussed in the next section.

It is, thus, apparent from the above discussion that using these terms to label the transformation process that we want to embark on will trap us in intellectual debates and refocus our conversation towards a war of words, rather than working towards making our curricula relevant to our context. It is important for scholars to destabilise and fracture the grammars that they use and to shift positions from which they speak so as to avoid epistemic deafness.

Do we as African Journalism scholars have the capacity to transform the journalism curricula?

Questions about the capacity of African journalism scholars to spearhead the de-Westernisation of journalism curricula have been raised on the grounds that South African journalism scholars who have set themselves as agents of resistance against Western hegemony in journalism curricula are either Western-trained or have been taught and trained by Western-educated and trained trainers (see Dube 2013; Ray 2012; Mokegwu 2005). According to Appiah (1992:149), the African university on which postcolonial intellectuals are almost entirely dependent is an institution whose intellectual support is ‘overwhelmingly constituted as Western’. Appiah also argues that African intellectuals also depend heavily on the European publisher and reader, a state of affairs that De Beer, Mukela and Banda (2007:1) also affirmed when they pointed out that American-published books dominate journalism institutions in English-speaking countries, resulting in a ‘new kind of knowledge colonialism’.

This begs the question whether it is possible for intellectuals in African universities to transcend their educational backgrounds to challenge the master narratives within which they have been bred. If the argument that journalism students who are educated within Western epistemologies would find it difficult to articulate Africa’s major concerns in their profession as journalists is to be taken to its conclusion, one would argue that, the scholars, like their students, would be incapable of articulating these same concerns. Appiah (1992:149) adds that it is not easy to resist from within when he argues that ‘even when these [intellectuals] seek to escape the West [...] their theories of their situation are irreducibly informed by their Euro-American formation’.

Most of these champions of de-Westernisation rely on Western theory to articulate their concerns and the very language they use is derived from the West (Chao 2011:28). For example, Gunaratne, a strong proponent of de-Westernisation, articulates his narrative in

Western categories (see Ray 2012). Thus, this raises questions whether these Western-trained academics, who have been co-opted into the levers of power of their Western masters through education (Edwards 2015), can understand and analyse the nature of non-Western societies with theories formulated in the West (Chao 2011).

This argument resonates with Foucault's (1978:95) pessimistic thesis that any existing hegemonic narratives would be filtered through the dominant discourse. He argues that the forces of power and resistance are 'caught up, sometimes indistinguishably, within each other'. This means that any proposed alternatives are constructed within the structures of the dominant culture, and would, therefore, serve the interests of the dominant discourse. According to Foucault, where there is power, there is resistance, and also that resistance is a necessary condition of power (Foucault 1980). Foucault is of the view that:

There is no guarantee that the state of affairs brought about by resistance will be better than the present, as any social arrangement or definition of community may become oppressive even if it is instituted by acts of resistance against a previous regime (see Simons, 1995:87).

What Foucault's thesis implies is that the educated elite, who have been educated within Western epistemologies are incapable of carrying out resistance against them as they have been co-opted into the power structures of that narrative, and are thus complicit to its perpetuation. In his words, 'Power is co-extensive with the social body; there are no primal spaces of liberty' (Foucault 1980:142). This argument implies that any attempts to resist or come up with alternative narratives by these educated elite would simply extend the hegemonic power of the narrative they are trying to resist.

Homi Bhabha's (1994) conception of power and resistance to hegemonic discourses, though different from Foucault, also denies agency to the subordinate to resist a hegemonic power. In his theory of mimicry, he argues that the native mimics the master, and that this mimicry is a form of resistance which destabilises and undermines the colonizer's hegemony. Hybridity, according to Bhabha subverts the dominant culture. However, he argues that this subversion is done unintentionally by the subordinate, thus denying the subordinate the power of agency. Young (1990) describes this as a kind of agency without a subject. Applied to the debates about whether Western-educated scholars, who have imbibed Western culture, are capable of rising above their educational backgrounds, Bhabha's notion of mimicry would seem to imply that these scholars, by being part of that culture, living and breathing it, are already

resisting it. This, like Foucault's thesis is problematic because it suggests that mimic men do not exist on their own 'outside structures' of the dominant culture 'nor does he allow the possibility that existing native knowledges and discourses may overlap with or impinge' on the knowledge of the hegemonic power (Al-Abbood 2005:31). It would appear that Bhabha is denying the Westernised subject agency to break out of the stranglehold of his subordination by the dominant culture. All the Westernised subject does is to mimic his/her master's life but with no intention to substituting it. If subversion takes place, it is unintentional.

However, Foucault's pessimism and Bhabha's ambivalent perception of human agency is dismissed by scholars such as Williams (1979) and Said (1994) who argue that hegemonic systems are not incontestable or universal. Williams (1979:252), for example, argues:

[H]owever dominant a social system maybe, the very meaning of its domination involves a limitation or selection of the activities it covers, so that by definition it cannot exhaust all social experience, which therefore always potentially contains a space for alternative acts and alternative intentions which are not yet articulated as a social institution or even project.

Said (1994), in his latter works, unlike in his earlier book *Orientalism*, where he ignores native agency/indigenous resistance, also argues that subjects can resist from within and from without the grand narrative. For example, in his article 'Foucault and the Imagination of Power' he argues that, no matter how powerful a hegemonic system is, it is not unassailable or omnipotent, meaning that subjects have the ability to resist from within or without the grand narrative (Said 1986). This, in his view, is possible because the subject is not constituted exclusively by the grand discourses, but that he/she is also constituted in relation to his/her native knowledges and discourses which overlap and impinge on the operation of the grand narrative. According to Said (1986:154), if power is constructed by humans, then it is neither 'invincible' nor 'impervious to dismantling'. This then, has huge implications for students emerging from curricula which is underpinned by Western epistemologies because it suggests that the hold that this curricula has on them is not complete. Thus, both William and Said reject the idea that the subject is incapable of coming up with alternative narratives if he/she is operating within a dominant one.

This argument is given credence by the fact that many leaders of the struggles against colonialism/apartheid were mostly educated elites who had been incorporated into the colonial enterprise and power structures to serve as buffers between the colonial masters and

the rest of the people (Edwards 2015). Edward further argues that, despite the oppressive colonial environment, the educated elite sought spaces of resistance and used the components of modernity, such as Christianity, schools, literacy and communication, to challenge the coloniser's claim to superiority. Said (1994:xii) shares the same views with Edwards when he points to the response of colonised people against Western dominance, which culminated in movements of decolonization across the 'Third World'. Falola (2001), in his much acclaimed book, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, also argues that, despite being incorporated into the power structures of the imperialists, Africa's educated elite still managed to craft discourses which challenged their colonial 'masters'. They challenged the dominant narratives from within (Zachernuk 2001) and transformed their thoughts into action (Lee, 2004).

Thus, historical evidence shows that, no matter how oppressive a space is, there is always room or space for resistance, implying that even if one is educated within Western hegemonic narratives, one can still become an agent of resistance. Arguments, therefore, that journalism scholars educated within Western knowledge systems are incapable of challenging the dominant narratives are ahistorical. I am of the view that African scholars have the capacity to transform the journalism curricula. We must, as intellectuals challenge ourselves. Yes, we have been schooled to think in a colonial/apartheid way, but that does not mean that we are incapable of challenging the system.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by saying that we need to think outside the box in order to avoid being engaged in a futile exercise which will keep us stuck on the first step like the old woman in the video. As already stated in my presentation, this discourse has been going on for a very long time, even as far back as the time of Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana, yet nothing has changed. It is time we changed our strategies so that we can make progress towards our goal. By revisiting our narrative and destabilising the terminologies we use to describe what we want to do, we would give ourselves new ways of dealing with problem. It is also vital that we fully understand the context within which our curricula are to be located. Our curricula should not only aim at helping students understand who they are but they should also help them to understand their context so as to enable them to navigate the complexities of the world they are living in. As intellectuals, we should

challenge ourselves, disrupt the status quo and defy the forces that have schooled us to think as colonial/apartheid subjects.

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