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Decolonising management education: An empirical study

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Abstract
Conversations in South Africa around decolonising higher education since the 2015/2016 #RhodesMustFall movements have remained largely theoretical. Recently, much of the attention in many higher education institutions seems to have moved on from these conversations to apparently more 'interesting' topics like the fourth industrial revolution and the impact of Covid-19. The aim of this article is to rekindle the desire among participants in higher education, specifically in management education, to respond in a practical manner to the call for decoloniality. Towards this aim, we present findings from a constructivist grounded theory study in which we interviewed 31 participants in the management education space on how to decolonise management education. We describe the following six themes that emerged: 'globalisation', 'race', 'capitalism', 'meaning of decolonisation', 'lekgotla', and 'critical pedagogy'. Drawing on these themes we propose a tentative conceptual framework on how we might begin to construct a meaningful decoloniality movement in the context of management education.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, decoloniality, lekgotla, management education, #RhodesMustFall,

Introduction
During the 2015/2016 #RhodesMustFall movement, calls to "decolonise higher education" in South Africa escalated into screams. Indeed, although this movement raised a whole basket of issues (including gender issues, tuition fees, and labour outsourcing), it was in no small measure ignited by a protest specifically targeting the persistent spectre of colonialism in higher education when Chumani Maxwele threw excrement on a statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town (Hodes, 2017). According to Ngcaweni and Ngcaweni (2019), Maxwele's act of defiance was not capricious. Rather it was a conscious intellectual battle, seeking justice for African epistemologies and intellectuals who have been persistently relegated to the side-lines by higher education institutions on the continent. The fallout of Maxwele's protest was, however,

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not limited to South Africa. His action catalysed, or at least energised, an international movement under the banner of decolonising higher education (Pillay, 2016).

But what was meant by decolonising? The movement that followed was organised to address inequity under the notion of social justice (Bhambra, et al., 2018) and the call to decolonise higher education forcefully exposed universities as being governed by western epistemologies (Peters, 2015). Implicit in this was the recognition of other knowledge systems and epistemologies, with the goal of dislodging hegemonic western paradigms (Pimblott, 2020). These hegemonic paradigms are premised on what Quijano (2007) referred to as "coloniality", a system that continues to inform the political, cultural, sexual, spiritual, economic, and epistemological agenda of the subaltern long after the physical withdrawal of colonial administration from colonised states. In this study, therefore, we identify decolonisation with the decoloniality specifically. In this, we follow the definition advanced by Maldonado-Torres (2011: 117) who noted that

> by decoloniality it is meant here the dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geo-political hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world.

However, there is room for persistent ambiguity when the word is used as a verb (i.e., "to decolonise").

Despite the screams to decolonise higher education, and the fact that there seems to be widespread agreement that decolonising higher education might promote emancipation, enlightenment, and greater equity in the education system, there has been limited empirical research regarding how best one might confront coloniality. Inevitably, several authors have responded by proposing interventions and techniques from purely theoretical perspectives (Heleta, 2016; Le Grange, 2016; Fomunyam, 2017; Chitonge, 2018; Goldman, 2020). On a practical level, actual responses within universities have varied from university to university and across disciplines. However, the overwhelming sense is that, where there have been responses at all, these responses have often been of a 'quick fix' variety that just serve to give a false impression of some attempt at decolonised curricula and pedagogies. Le Grange, et al. (2020: 26) have referred to this as 'decolonial washing'.

In the case of management education specifically, "decolonial washing" appears to have been the norm as the underlying technical landscape of the field seems to have remained almost entirely unscathed by the calls to decolonise higher education (Goldman, 2020). As Goldman (2020: 45) puts it, the management field remains 'a very colonially ubiquitous domain'. Management praxis and education remain firmly grounded in, and yet at the same time seemingly wilfully ignorant of the historical appropriation of capital (through what Marx (1990: 873) referred to as 'primitive accumulation') and people (through slavery) and the ideas and practices of the coloniser (Cooke, 2004; Prasad, 2003; Srinivas, 2013). Management education in

Africa in general, and South Africa in particular, remains a replication of a western version, which has been framed as "universal management knowledge" (Alcadipani & Rosa, 2011; Jack, Calás, Nkomo & Peltonen, 2008; Nkomo, 2011). Management education based on this 'universal management knowledge' is then portrayed as *the* modern solution to everything, where modernity and neoliberal[1] capitalist ideologies coalesce (Mandiola, 2019).

It can, however, be argued that this "universal management knowledge" has failed management students in Africa, and Africa herself, precisely because of its unconscious parochialism, its lack of morality beyond egoism, its reliance on a myth of rationality, and its misguided valorisation of *supposed* neutrality in dealing with management issues, sustainability, and social justice (Millar & Price, 2018). Following this vein, textbooks by African authors that promote the same "modern" ideologies do not address the problem of decolonising the curriculum (Ruggunan, 2016). The fact that management education appears to have remained largely impervious to calls to decolonise really comes as little surprise. Flaws not dissimilar to those identified through a rising consciousness of coloniality that emerged out of the #RhodesMustFall movement have been noted in the literature on management education for many years (e.g., Cooke & Ryan, 1988) and yet narratives of "crisis" and injustice continue to emerge (e.g., Grey, 2004; Beverungen, Dunne & Hoedemaekers, 2013). Of particular interest, since it points to a mechanism and an antidote, management as a science has been criticised by Dehler, et al. (2001) because it is technocratic in nature, discouraging any form of self-reflexivity, subjectivity, or individuality.[2] Technocratic reasoning is dehumanising because it erodes subjective judgement (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012). In this malaise, management education has been accused of creating followers rather than leaders because of the dependency students have on their lecturers (Vince, 2010), who are in turn trapped in the technocracy of the field. In the case of coloniality specifically, it seems that with every day passing since the passionate days of the 2015/2016 #RhodesMustFall movement, participants in management education drift further away from any concrete reflection on coloniality and decoloniality. Perhaps this is because they are 'too busy' with their publication records which implies writing to serve the curiosities of western audiences (Currie & Knights, 2003). Perhaps it is driven institutionally as business schools and management faculties chase "international" accreditation (Nkomo, 2015), rather than encouraging any form of dissent.

[1] The term "neoliberal" is perhaps too widely used and certainly too seldom defined. We follow Harvey's (2005) Marxist inspired conceptualisation of neoliberalism as a political project undertaken by a capitalist class from the late 1960's / early 1970's to liberalise markets (including the financial and labour markets), reduce government to the minimum required to protect private property and the 'free' market, and to privatise everything else.

[2] The discouraging of individuality specifically, is perhaps somewhat paradoxical given an underlying ideology which outwardly celebrates the centrality and sovereignty of an "individual". This individual of course in this context is reduced to an economic individual (*Homo economicus*) – an individual that is exclusively characterised by "rational" self-interest, private property ownership and individual consumption agency.

These shortcomings in management education are vitally important. Besides the fact that management graduates increasingly occupy positions of power in society, or perhaps because of it, the number of enrolments in management qualifications has continued to grow in South Africa. As a result, large numbers of students continue to be exposed to an uncritical management education, and from the perspective of our study in particular, an education grounded firmly in coloniality. How might one respond to this though? Goldman (2016) argued that to respond to the demand to decolonise the curriculum in a fair and equitable manner, management academics would need to step outside of themselves and garner wisdom from all inhabitants of South Africa. This could be extrapolated to Africa as a whole. And then, as Fanon (1963: 196) put it, 'everything depends on the masses … demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people'.

In summary then, it seems that coloniality in the context of management education is a resilient state of being. Given this, it is evident that efforts to raise consciousness of, and to challenge coloniality, requires equivalent resilience. Our aim in this article is twofold. Firstly, we give some expression to Goldman's (2016) call to garner wisdom from others by asking participants in the management education space the question:

How might the call to decolonise higher education apply to management education?

Secondly, based on the discussions that this question provoked, we then move to develop a conceptual framework on how to decolonise management education. All this effort presented us with opportunities to once again raise consciousness of coloniality.

Research Methods

In reflecting on our research methods, it is necessary to start at the beginning. We are both management scholars, admittedly with critical management (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012) tendencies. As such, our methodological imaginations were (and to a significant degree remain) steeped in western epistemic and ontological lore. Therefore, when our consciousnesses were pricked by the screams to decolonise higher education, and the question of how this might apply in the context of management education specifically, we instinctively reached for tools familiar to us. Specifically, we turned to a qualitative research approach which, at a philosophical level, combined social constructivism with critical theory as a basis for this study. Social constructivism allowed us to rely on the views of participants and their understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This is because social constructivism assumes a position that is dependent on the experiences of individuals to develop understanding, meaning, and significance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In line with social constructivism, critical theory provided an opportunity for us to interrogate human struggles specifically, contributing to the construction of meaning that affects them (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012). At a research design level, we adopted Charmaz's (2000) constructivist grounded theory. This allowed us to pursue a slightly more "relaxed"

grounded theory approach in which we were able to bring certain preconceptions – especially our critical and protest preconceptions – into the study.

However, as we progressed through the actual doing of this work, and as we read more, a discomfort began to emerge in relation to all of this. Here we were conducting a study purporting to confront coloniality in management education using the epistemic and ontological tools attributed to the "coloniser". This essential contradiction is dealt with in beautiful personal detail in Bhattacharya (2021). Our initial response to this was to turn to literature which has reflected on, and in some instances concluded, a decolonising character of qualitative research (e.g., Chilisa, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Seehawer, 2018; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). And we noted in particular Barnes' (2018) assertion that decolonising methodologies are mobilised under a constructivist qualitative approach and serve a political function to legitimise indigenous epistemologies. From these lines of argument, we tried to construct a post-hoc linkage between the methods to which we were already committed in the study and so-called 'decolonising methodologies' (Smith, 1999). Indeed, this was the stance which we adopted in the first draft of this paper which we submitted. However, deep down we were acutely aware that there was a lack of authenticity to this post-hoc arrangement, a fact noted by one of the reviewers.

So, how then do we defend the approach that we adopted? We advance two possible, but highly incomplete answers to this question. The first is simply to acknowledge the contradiction and to put it down to our own tentative first steps in a 'journey through a process of un/learning' (Bhattacharya, 2021: 179). And interestingly, the mere act of consciously acknowledging and sitting with this contradiction sparked a consciousness of a number of similar contradictions in our engagement with our findings. This perhaps speaks to the second justification which we advance, which is to turn to the essentially pragmatist sentiments expressed by Fanon 'to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through colonial universities' (Fanon, 1963: 121). Neither of these are entirely satisfactory. But they are what we have.

Based on this admittedly imperfect philosophical grounding, we conducted 31 interviews with five different groups of participants (Table 1). These interviews were conducted in two distinct phases. In the first phase, we interviewed participants in Groups 1 to 4 comprising 1) Master's-level students in the field of management, 2) management academics, 3) academic managers in management faculties (deans and heads of department), and 4) management recruitment specialists as a proxy for 'the market'. By and large, we used a combination of convenience and snowballing sampling to select the participants in these four groups. However, in the case of management academics (Group 2), we reverted to a more theoretical sampling approach after the first few interviews. This was because we found that the first few participants seemed to have little, and sometimes no understanding or perspective on the subject. While the presence of an "uninformed" voice was certainly noteworthy, it was not enriching in and of itself. Theoretical sampling allowed us to specifically target management academics who had 'something to say' about the subject of decoloniality and to probe emerging theoretical ideas. To ensure some level of heterogeneity among the participants in these four groups specifically,

efforts were made to select members who might represent different social, gender, and racial backgrounds. It was felt that not paying some attention to these historically 'real' categories in constructing the sample would have resulted in less rich results.

In the second phase, we interviewed three outliers or vastly different participants. This was really precipitated by our growing sense of unease about the somewhat parochial character of our initial sample drawn from within *our* field of management. This persisted in spite of the theoretical sampling that we resorted to in the case of management academics (Group 2) as discussed above. The first two of these outlier participants were speakers at a decoloniality summer school and a decoloniality conference respectively that we had attended. The third was a management academic in Cuba. Our selection of this third participant emerged specifically in response to the prominence of capitalism as a theme in our results. As such we went in search of a perspective on the research question from a management academic situated in an ideological context beyond the absolute control of neo-liberal capitalism. The selection of Cuba specifically was in no small measure, the result of us having been intrigued by the discussions on the revolutionary pedagogical approaches of Che Guevara (Martî, 2014; McLaren, 2000).

Table 1: Details of participants interviewed from Groups 1 to 5

Code*	Age	Gender	Race[3]	Current position	Type of institution	Highest qualification	Category
MS 1	33–38	Female	White	Senior Manager Finance	ICT company	Masters	**Group 1**
MS 2	33–38	Male	White	Key Account Manager	Investment company	MBA in progress	**Group 1**
MS 3	38–43	Female	Black	Manager: Human Capital	Financial institution	MBA in progress	**Group 1**
MS 4	33–38	Female	Black	Banker	Financial institution	MBA in progress	**Group 1**
MS 5	28–33	Female	Black	Academic trainee	Public institution of higher learning	Masters in progress	**Group 1**
MS 6	38–43	Male	White	Software Development Team Manager	Private institution of higher learning	MBA	**Group 1**

[3] In this, we make use of essentially apartheid race categories. While these may be uncomfortable, in the South African context of this study they represent a historical "reality" that persists in informing much of how society remains structured.

Code*	Age	Gender	Race[3]	Current position	Type of institution	Highest qualification	Category
MS 7	28–33	Male	Black	Master's student	Public institution of higher learning	Master's student	**Group 1**
AC 1	33–38	Female	Black	Senior Head of Programmes	Private institution of higher learning	Masters	**Group 2**
AC 2	33–38	Male	Black	Lecturer	Public institution of higher learning	Masters	**Group 2**
AC 3	53–58	Male	White	Lecturer	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**
AC 4	43–48	Male	Black	Head of Department (HOD): Research	Private institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**
AC 5	48–53	Female	Black	Lecturer	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**
AC 6	48–53	Female	Indian	Senior Lecturer	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**
AC 7	48–53	Male	Coloured	Senior Lecturer	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**
AC 8	48–53	Male	Black	Senior Lecturer	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**
AC 9	43–48	Male	Indian	Associate Professor	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**
AC 10	43–48	Female	White	HOD	Private institution of higher learning	Masters	**Group 2**
AC 11	48–53	Female	White	Senior Lecturer	Private institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**
AC 12	43–48	Male	Black	Lecturer	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 2**

Code*	**Age**	**Gender**	**Race**[3]	**Current position**	**Type of institution**	**Highest qualification**	**Category**
MGT 1	53–58	Male	White	Dean	Private institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 3**
MGT 2	48–53	Male	White	Dean	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 3**
MGT 3	48–53	Male	White	HOD	Public institution of higher learning	PhD (Prof)	**Group 3**
MGT 4	48–53	Male	Indian	Director	Public institution of higher learning	MBA	**Group 3**
MGT 5	58–<63	Female	White	Director Business School	Public institution of higher learning	PhD (Prof)	**Group 4**
MKT 1	33–38	Male	Black	Recruitment Specialist	Recruitment company	BCom	**Group 4**
MKT 2	38–43	Female	White	General Manager	Recruitment company	MBA	**Group 4**
MKT 3	28–33	Male	Black	Recruitment Specialist	Recruitment company	BCom	**Group 4**
MKT 4	53–58	Female	White	Senior Research Associate	Recruitment company	BA(Hons) Industrial Psychology	**Group 4**
DS 1	53–58	Female	Coloured	Director of research centre (Humanities)	Public institution of higher learning	PhD (Prof)	**Group 5**
DS 2	63 >	Female	Black	Professor	Public institution of higher learning	PhD (Prof)	**Group 5**
DS 3	43–48	Female	Black	Researcher	Public institution of higher learning	PhD	**Group 5**

To achieve the aim of this study, Phase 1 interviews started with the following open-ended question:

> Since the 2015/2016 #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements, there has been a growing call to decolonise higher education. How do you think this applies to management education?

The responses to this open-ended question guided the creation of sub-questions for further probing and in-depth investigation of the phenomenon both within the interview when they occurred to us, and more concretely in subsequent interviews after we had had an opportunity to formally reflect on an interview. Sub-questions that emerged included:

1) Can management education be decolonised?
2) Why should management education be decolonised?
3) How could management education be decolonised? and
4) Have any attempts been made to decolonise management education?

In our interviews with the three outlier participants, we reflected directly and extensively on the themes that we had seen emerging in the first phase interviews. The interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes.

Our data analysis was guided by our constructivist grounded theory approach which comprised a three-step approach to coding (Charmaz, 2000). The coding process evolved from initial coding, to focused coding and lastly theoretical coding. Initial coding was done manually on Atlas.ti and happened concurrently while conducting interviews. During focused coding, significant codes were generated from the initial coding to make sense of the large amount of data (Charmaz, 2006). We had to "act" (exercise our subjectivity) on the data by making decisions regarding which codes made the most analytical sense to generate categories and themes in an incisive manner. In this step memo writing took place to sort and interpret the data. Finally, theoretical coding dealt with integration and story line techniques. This process allowed for substantive theory to develop from the data.

In accordance with the research ethics clearance conditions for the study, interviews were conducted under principles of informed consent and anonymity. In terms of ensuring the rigour of the study, beyond the process described above, we made use of triangulation between-sample group perspectives, reflexive journaling, memoing, and code validation.

Findings and Discussion

Our discussion of the findings proceeds in more or less the same way that our 'feelings' evolved in response to what we were hearing in our interviews. In this regard, the first half of our presentation is gloomy, cynical, and pessimistic, and languishes in seemingly insurmountable contradictions and barriers thrown up in the themes of "globalisation", "race" and especially "capitalism". In places these "feelings" threaten to overwhelm any norms of conservative academic writing. However, in the "meaning of decolonisation" theme, shoots of optimism begin to emerge and these persist and indeed grow through the themes of "lekgotla", and "critical

pedagogy". Eventually these shoots of optimism coalesce into the tentative conceptual framework that we propose as a possible starting point for a meaningful decoloniality movement in the context of management education.

Globalisation

The concept of globalisation evolved through interviews conducted with participants from all five of the groups that we interviewed. Participants attributed different meanings to the term "globalisation", consistent with Tikly (2001) and Beerkens (2003) who both lamented on the lack of a precise conceptualisation of the phenomenon. Of course, singular conceptualisations of such a phenomenon are highly unlikely. It is simply too political with too much at stake.

Our data showed three different interpretations of globalisation in relation to a decoloniality agenda in management education. The first of these might be framed as "Africanisation versus globalisation". Many (it must be said) participants were sceptical about decolonising management education because they argued that this would mean alienating Africans from the 'rest of the world' (most specifically the west) thus making it impossible for management students to 'fit in globally'. One management academic had this to say:

> We live in a global society, as much as … we are part of Africa, but Africa is also part of the world and I think if we are not going to consider Africa as part of the world, we're doing a disadvantage to our students in a business curriculum. If we're just going to get African epistemic, we're disadvantaging students, we're giving them half of what they're entitled to. (AC 6)

There are interesting undertones to this argument![4] For one, there is the simple irony that when African content is completely excluded it seems that we are apparently not 'disadvantaging students' even though 'we're giving them half of what they're entitled to' (AC 6). So, there is an obvious asymmetry very much consistent with coloniality. Beyond this simple irony, it is assumed that an Africanised curriculum would be completely exclusive of so-called 'global' content. This is, we suppose, not entirely surprising. After all, this is being viewed from within the realm of the practice which *is* – the so-called "global" management education. And this practice is fundamentally characterised by exclusion. Beyond assuming the practice which *is* would form a template for the practice which *might be*, it is also not entirely unreasonable that the coloniser might harbour some anxiety that the colonised would seek to exact a form of revenge should they assume a position of influence. However, such a possibility was noted, and warned against, by Freire (1996) who emphasised that liberation of the oppressed is not achieved by the oppressed becoming an oppressor.

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[4] In case the reader is wondering, this exclamation mark is entirely intentional even though the use of these is generally frowned upon in academic writing. We use this grammatical device to give expression to the feelings that this comment evoked within us.

The second perspective on globalisation which emerged presents the antithesis of the first, rather conservative perspective. As such, it might be framed as “globalisation versus Africanisation”. In this case participants rejected the parochial western-centred visions of what it means to be ‘global’. As one decoloniality scholar put it:

> So, what happens is that we are made to believe that we are the particular and they are global. It depends on how you see the world. The global north thinks of the south as just .... no, you’re being very particular. When you say Africa, you have to think of the world. When they say the world, they mean France. When they say the world, they mean England. (DS 1)

This critical perspective on globalisation is not new. As Maweu (2011: 36) observed, globalisation has ‘catalysed the colonisation of African ways of knowing’. Altbach and Knight (2007) went on to caution against globalisation in education, stating that this has the propensity to concentrate knowledge from and around those who already ‘possess’ it. They defined globalisation as ‘the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement’ (Altbach & Knight, 2007: 290). Tuck and Wang’s (2021) warnings about materiality vs metaphor should not be forgotten at this point also. After all, it is, not just knowledge that is at stake here. As Foucault argued, knowledge is power (Foucault, 1980), and power defines the flows of the benefits and burdens of living in society. Or, as Shizha (2013) noted, globalisation makes powerful nations more powerful, as it promotes their ontological and epistemological experiences as reality.

Such critical perspectives have been translated into ‘positive’ proposals in relation to education systems. For example, Mampane, et al. (2018) called for a system which would provide African students with an education that is relevant and aligned to their socio-cultural context. Higgs (2012) recommended something similar: an African education system with a distinct African identity that engenders an appreciation for diversity and a better quality of life for Africans. Higgs (2012) specifically proposed that communalism would be central to the development of such an “indigenous” African education system since this is apparently aligned with an African world view. Golby (1997) argued that communitarianism could serve as a corrective measure to various forms of individualism. According to Golby (1997: 127), communitarianism is ‘a movement for moral renewal’ that could become a revolution to overthrow capitalism. Reedy (2003) also emphasised that communitarian ideals could become the basis of critical engagement between teachers and management students. In such a context, educators are called to consider a participatory pedagogy that is cognisant of the values and strength of the community in developing African education systems. It must be said that these suggestions are not without their embedded contradictions. Most bothersome perhaps is the fact that, while they rally against the historical colonisation of the minds of Africans, they seem to be premised on the assumption that the minds of Africans remain firmly grounded in axiologies (such as communalism) which are widely attributed to pre-colonial contexts.

This brings us to the third perspective that emerged in our findings. We interpret this as *attempting* something of a synthesis between these contradictory first and second perspectives. This perspective, as articulated, might be labelled as “Africanisation in globalisation”. As one participant put it:

> So, I think that one grapples with fundamentally what is the notion of African management and I think that part of that is that we have to be locally relevant but globally connected. (MGT 3)

Or, as another stated:

> So, people have had to understand, the local context, the continental context and the global and the question of Africanisation is how Africa asserts itself within this matrix. We call it the matrix of domination. So, a few nations dominating the world. So quickly, decolonisation is how do we change the position of Africa, not as a place where people come and sell products but how does Africa develop its competitive advantage within that matrix and what can we offer to the world. (DS 2)

In some ways, this attempt at a synthesis should be a source for optimism. However, we struggled to ignore the apparent subsuming of African notion inside the so-called global ‘matrix of domination’ (DS 2). This was in no small measure cemented by this participant’s emphasis on ‘competitive advantage’ excerpt, an especially capitalist ideal, which seems to locate even decoloniality as a market phenomenon.

Race

Before we begin to reflect on our results in relation to this theme, it is necessary to first anticipate a backlash. The backdrop to our study was South Africa. This is obviously important in relation to this theme given South Africa’s very particular and infamous recent history where race and racism are concerned. From this perspective, it might be tempting for some to argue that our findings here are local or “particular” rather than general. In our view this would be an error. Issues of race and racism are, it seems, almost omnipresent in human society (Lopez, 2003). And certainly, all modern instances when coloniser and colonised have confronted one another they have played, and continues to play, a (if not the) central role (Quijano, 2007).

Turning then to our findings, our analysis of the data revealed two noteworthy perspectives on the issue of race in relation to decoloniality in management education. The first was one of avoidance. As one participant put it:

> And from what I realised that the White people aren’t people to have these discussions around … . what’s this, what do we call this? Racism. So I don’t think they’re able to talk about racism and decolonisation because most of them, they don’t have the ability to

> recognise or to accept their privileges and they don't want to come to a point where they realise that, okay, they've been getting a lot of benefit just for being White … (MS 5)

The connection between race and coloniality is named in this excerpt, and race is advanced as a fundamental barrier to even having a conversation about decoloniality, let alone attempting to pursue it. Or, as another participant put it, the decoloniality agenda in academic circles becomes "taboo":

> So, the call for the decolonisation of the curriculum is something that has become a daily topic, although it is somewhat of a taboo in some circles, particularly amongst White colleagues. It's something you don't mention or speak about and some of them are very resistant to it. (AC 2)

The second perspective to emerge was, on the surface, altogether more positive. This was the call for collaboration among different races in pursuit of some form of decoloniality inertia in the context of management education. One participant encouraged White people to engage in and contribute towards installing decoloniality in management education:

> I think White people don't understand that they can be part of 'something', but they don't have to disengage. Or you know if you make yourself open you can be part of 'something' and I think, I do understand the frustration that Black academics may feel. Because they've been living in this perpetual kind of narrative. (AC 11)

This perspective is not without difficulty. Freire (1996: 26) framed this as follows:

> The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only the power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both.

In Freire's evaluation, is would appear that there might be little place in the process of decoloniality for the coloniser. There is good reason for this, grounded in lived experience. This was captured as follows by one of our participants:

> I think we still have folks who think that when they say transformation, … . We have to work with White people … . What you have to offer has to be your thinking and your thinking has to be about accepting that you are backward, and the White person who is there is going to help you and transform you. This kind of discussion is across the board. And it's in finance, it's in accounting, it's everywhere. (DS 1)

In *I Write What I Like,* Biko (2005, 65: 22) seems to bring these two strands together:

> The myth of integration as propounded under the banner of the liberal ideology must be cracked because it makes people believe that something is being achieved when in reality the artificially integrated circles are a soporific to the blacks while salving the consciences of the few guilt-stricken whites.

This has gloomy implications both in terms of the perspective captured in the excerpts above and in terms of to our own positionalities as researchers as articulated in the Research Methods section above. Freire does, however, leave a glimmer of hope open by introducing a category of oppressor who 'are truly solidary with them [the oppressed]' (Freire, 1996: 27).

Capitalism

Capitalism emerged as by far the most substantive barrier to any sort of decoloniality movement in the context of management education in our interviews. Two different perspectives on capitalism emerged. The first perspective was the enormous popularity and almost complete prevalence of capitalist ideology in management education. Management students, in particular, tended to be very staunch advocates of capitalism. As one Master student put it:

> So, capitalism, I strongly, strongly believe in it. (MS 7)

Indeed, among this particular group of our participants it seemed that, as Fisher (2009:1) put it, '[i]t is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'. Beyond this, it was also evident that capitalist ideology provided the ideological backbone of management education. As a member of academic management put it:

> There is this hugely dominant body of knowledge or way of thinking. That sort of, that sort of comprises 95% of what and how we think … comes from the ideology of capitalism. (MGT 2)

This assertion is confirmed by Maserumule (2015). So, it seems that students arrive as enthusiastic disciples of capitalism (at least at a Masters level), and that during their learning journeys their faith is reinforced through the body of knowledge and way of thinking that management education feeds them. This reign of capitalist ideology in management education is not just a South African idiosyncrasy. In fact, since as early as the 1970s there has been a series of critical literature on how education in general has long served capitalism while maintaining inequality (Apple, 1979; Baudelot & Establet,1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Freire, 1993). The neoliberal era, which became prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s among academics in the management sciences (and indeed in the political arena), really cemented the dominance of capitalist governing rationality in education generally (Klees, 2020).

Following on from this first perspective which highlighted the popularity of capitalism and its ideological dominance, the second perspective which emerged in our findings dwelled on the ills of capitalism. Perhaps most viscerally (for South Africans at least) one academic stated that:

> I mean we've got Marikana[5] as a classic case of how capitalists' profit driven desires can lead to 32 people dying. So ja. (AC 2)

One of the few Masters students who expressed any unease associated with capitalism highlighted the inherent egoism and individualism associated with it:

> [T]hat's what capitalism does. It breeds selfishness, it breeds people wanting – greed as well. (MS 3)

But most substantively in terms of the ills of capitalism, was the recognition of the intimate relationship between capitalism on the one hand, and colonialism and coloniality on the other. This was particularly emphasised by participants in Group 5. One participant described capitalism as:

> … [T]he wheels of capitalism have been grinding for centuries but what has been the labour that has been put into it? If we ask ourselves why most of the money in the country where 90% of the population is Black, 10% of the population is white, why is 90% of the wealth in the hands of 10% of the population? (DS 1)

Another of our Group 5 participants noted, in relation to our observation of the general popularity of capitalism among Masters students, that:

> I think if students understood the intimate relationship between capitalism and colonialism, they would think about capitalism differently, but they haven't read that history, they don't understand it … (DS 2)

The assertion that 'they haven't read the history' could of course, just as easily have been stated as 'the haven't had the history prescribed to them for reading'. In other words, no effort has been made to raise their consciousness of central roles played by 'primitive accumulation' (Marx, 1990: 873) in colonies and slavery in providing the seed capital for global capitalism and the accumulation of wealth in the west. And they have not been made conscious of the linkages between coloniality and the preservation of material relations between the coloniser and the colonised to this day. This is all part of the hegemony.

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[5] The so called "Marikana massacre" occurred on 16 August 2012 when South African police opened fire on a crowd of striking miners with live ammunition, killing 34 and wounding many more.

So, on the one hand, we see the utter dominance of capitalist ideology in management education, at least in the context of South Africa but almost certainly far beyond. On the other hand, we see the pervasive individualism associated with this. And we see the intimate relationship between capitalism and colonisation historically and coloniality presently. The gloomy implication of this is that it seems that management education, as it currently stands, and any sort of decoloniality project might simply be incommensurable.

That being said, while management education in the study context might currently be overwhelmingly dominated by capitalist ideology, this dominance is absolutely not cast in stone. It is quite conceivable that management education *could* be grounded in different ideological perspectives. The management scholar from Cuba who we interviewed was at pains to emphasise the centrality of the community (rather than the individual or capital) in the Cuban management curriculum:

> It's mandatory. It's mandatory, university makes them to work with the community. And inside the quality is indicated on objective of the university. One of them is students working on community projects. (DS 3)

Some may hold up the community 'centred' modules and projects which are increasingly popular in many western business schools as evidence that the western business school is 'on it' so to speak. These, however, appear to be quite fundamentally different to the Cuban approach. From our experience, the community "centred" efforts of western business schools are almost of a missionary character. Their overarching aim seems to be to take the gospel of capitalism and entrepreneurialism into communities. In contrast, the Cuban model described by our participant from Cuba appeared to be more aligned with a Freirean 'problem posing pedagogy' (Freire, 1996: 60) characterised by communities which 'themselves were able to identify and solve the problems' (DS 3) and by a much more 'collective participation' (DS 3).

Once again, the tantalising possibility arose in our minds that the communitarian character of African ideologies could potentially offer an antidote to capitalist ideological dominance. Or is it that the individualism of capitalism poses an insurmountable barrier to even beginning to imagine the communitarianism characteristic of African axiologies as we noted under the theme of "globalisation"? Either way, at the moment, capitalist ideology reigns supreme, almost unchallenged in South African management education, and this is almost impossible to reconcile with any meaningful decoloniality movement.

Meaning of decolonisation

In terms of the 'meaning of decolonisation', as one would expect from such a violently contested space, a variety of meanings emerged. These ranged from the material through to the philosophical, from pop-notions through to ideologically quite revolutionary perspectives. For example, one master's student suggested that decolonising management education simply

meant that no-one should be excluded from higher education because of the cost associated with it:

> Decolonising management education basically to me means just being able to have access to management institutions at an affordable cost. (MS 4)

While obviously not quite equivalent to Tuck and Yang's (2021: 61) 'repatriation of land', this is certainly an essentially material, rather than a "metaphorical" definition. On the more revolutionary (but also perhaps more "metaphorical") end of the spectrum, many participants argued that any decoloniality movement in management education would involve the adoption of a 'radical reform' space. One management academic said:

> My understanding is that it's an antithesis to Eurocentrism which has come to characterise management education, higher education in Africa. That is my understanding. It's an alternative yah. An alternative paradigm. It's an antithesis, an alternative paradigm, a contending perspective that seeks to appreciate African experiences, African perspectives, African mindset, African philosophy. (AC 4)

In the context of higher education more generally, what is meant by decolonising education has been unpacked by several authors. Mukaddam, et al. (2015) referred to the transformation of political thinking in institutions of higher learning. This, they argued, would entail a reduction and possible elimination of western methodologies, ideas, theories, epistemologies, and ontologies in higher education curricula. To Mbembe (2015) and Wa Thiong'o (2004), the focus of decolonisation involves moving away from western thoughts and theories that have dominated the African worldview, with the aim of legitimising and re-centring African theories culturally and intellectually. Modiba (2018) argued that decolonisation is an often-violent movement to create a new humanity. In this regard at least, his thoughts are aligned with those of Fanon (1963). Modiba (2018) went on to describe this decolonised higher education as one that would be relevant to current and future needs of the society and nation that has the potential to promote principles of critical pedagogy, such as critical consciousness and learning, as well as citizenry. In management education specifically, Goldman (2020: 47) described a truly decolonised curriculum as one where 'scholars understand the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions that the management discourse is based on to critically examine and challenge these assumptions'.

There is some alignment between these meanings and the meanings (or process) as articulated by participants in our group of outliers (Group 5). We identified four key elements from our interviews with them specifically. Firstly, they conceived and positioned decoloniality in the context of management education as an unravelling of the history of the entity or subject, in this case, management education:

> any form of decolonisation needs to unravel the history of the entity or the subject. So, if we unravel, we are looking at the history of how that entity how that entity came to exist. So, unravelling that history and looking at how the mind, the mind of the colonised was used and how the coloniser was the manager. (DS 1)

Secondly, they highlighted the need for surfacing coloniality of what is taught in management education:

> you have to … surface the colonial aspects of what we currently teach. You can't decolonise unless you understand what the colonising effects will be. What does that mean in terms of knowledge? What does that mean in terms of what we expect managers and businesspeople to do? So, the first step is to extract out what we mean by colonial. What is the evidence of colonial influences? (DS 2)

Thirdly they called for the removing the colonial ideology, which is manifested in the form of capital and "the mind":

> So, we have two things here which are our main criteria (for decolonising management education]. One is the question of capital, and the second is the question of the mind. (DS 1)

Lastly, they noted that decolonisation of management education requires Africanisation:

> Then … I do think the key is to Africanise … I see decolonisation as a revisioning, revisioning more than transforming, I think we have to revision because as I said there's no way to know what it would have been. (DS 2)

Lekgotla

Many participants referred to the need for consultation and collaboration to find ways to decolonise management education. For example, one management academic said:

> So, for me it's a matter of people sitting down, putting their heads together, make decisions and then consult if need be with the students because they don't understand what exactly is going on but what's important is that change must happen. (AC 5)

The strong element of the academic hierarchy in this suggestion did not go unnoticed, with the central act of 'sitting down' being exclusive of students. Other participants seemed to suggest a more inclusive sort of 'sitting down':

> Having practices that are diversified, many conversations, dialogs I think are really important, putting things on the table, critical issue, allowing that critical issue to kind of be discussed from a variety of perspectives, one academic, one locally context, one from people on the ground so diversified opinion and practice is really important to us thinking about how we become a decolonised space, institution, transformative and diversified society. (AC 10)

Or as one of the Masters students put it:

> But I definitely believe that interaction and viewpoints sitting around the table with people who do not come from the same background that you do, have struggles and options, makes you used to do this. The amount of things that I've learned, these guys came out of a richer or poorer background and it influences how you approach things. (MS 1)

We were initially tempted to label this theme 'sitting around the table', given how frequently references to sitting around the table appeared in the excerpts. This would have opened up a vista of discussion anchored in Hannah Arendt's (1958: 52) rich table metaphor:

> To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.

However, we instead elected to make use of the indigenous African concept and methodological intervention of 'lekgotla' as the theme label. This has been described by Van den Heuvel and Wels (2004) as an assembly (a gathering) or dialogue or engagement that could bring back inspiration, meaning, morality and humanity. While it may be tempting to say: "Ah! Stakeholder engagement", this would be a mistake. Stakeholder engagement has emerged out of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1994) and seems to have become the flavour of the month in management discourse and indeed management practice. Despite a common sense which suggests otherwise, stakeholder engagement is an instrumental and essentially capitalist activity in which businesses engage with stakeholders to the extent that they are compelled to do so because a business case exists. This capitalist engagement is fundamentally insincere in the sense that its essential logic, securing profit, is not open to question, or on the table so to speak. Furthermore, its conduct is entirely contingent upon there being a business case for doing it. If there is no business case, then stakeholder engagement is unlikely to happen. This does not capture the spirit of open engagement suggested in the excerpts above.

Lekgotla, in contrast, which is not an individualistic concept, but rather one that is consultative, collaborative, and perhaps most importantly, open, does capture this spirit. Furthermore, as Smith (2012) has noted, lekgotla is an indigenous epistemic construct, underpinned by a methodology potentially rooted in decoloniality (Smith, 2012). Embedded in

lekgotla are echoes of the concepts of inclusive democracy[6] as celebrated by Giroux and associated with his concept of 'public time' (Giroux, 2003: 147). And indeed, lekgotla requires time: time to think, to reflect, to speak, to debate, time to be "inefficient", time away from consumption. In this regard, we were struck by the parallels between Giroux's concept of "public time" and notion of African time which has routinely shown blunt disrespect for "corporate time".

In the final analysis, it seemed to us that there was much to be derived from lekgotla when it comes to any decoloniality process in the context of management education, and indeed beyond.

Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy was emphasised by participants as a technique that is "lacking" in management education and that is likely to be necessary, or at least useful, for it to be decolonised.

> I think you shouldn't be dissuaded from the notion of critical pedagogy within management education. That is what is lacking. We teach technical skills and what we fail to teach is the leaders of the managers to be able to think in their reflective manner, to think critically, to be able to step back and take the time to consider their actions. (AC 7)

Other participants referred to critical pedagogy as a "pedagogy of possibility", a "pedagogy of recognition" and a "pedagogy that is participatory".

> You know, so I think it's about pedagogy of recognition and acknowledgement and ownership. And then it's about critical pedagogy. Brought in new subjects to try and instil critical pedagogy. I'm very much part of it because of my thinking but we've got new subjects and when people learn to teach these subjects, they learn to shift their own mindsets. Well, I hope, that's the hope … I can tell you that through the lectures we've got a lot of good feedback and the students are starting to say that they really enjoy being challenged and they're enjoying being asked to reflect on things and having time to process things. (AC 11)

Drawing on Freire's (1996) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Giroux (2011: 9) described the advantages of adopting critical pedagogy as follows: 'Only such a pedagogy can promote the modes of solidarity and collective action capable of defending the public good and the symbolic and institutional power relations necessary for a sustainable democracy'.

Reynolds (1999: 173) went further to characterise four key principles of critical pedagogy, which included:

[6] As opposed to cadaver of democracy made up of periodic bursts of orgies of campaigning and voting.

- 'Questioning the assumptions and taken-for-grantedness embodied in both theory and professional practice,
- Foregrounding the processes of power and ideology subsumed within the social fabric of institutional structures, procedures, and practices,
- Confronting spurious claims of rationality and objectivity and revealing the sectional interests which can be concealed by them, and
- Working towards an emancipatory ideal – the realisation of a more just society based on fairness and democracy.'

A plethora of studies have been undertaken on critical pedagogy in management education, based on the reported inadequacies in management education (Currie & Knights, 2003; Grey & Mitev, 1995; Perriton, 2014; Sliwa & Cairns, 2009). According to Grey (2007), critical pedagogy is a potential solution to address the impoverished state of management education generally. Ruggunan and Spiller (2014) considered critical pedagogy in management education to be relevant in the South African context, which is beset by challenges resulting from apartheid and colonisation. Thus far, the discussion around critical pedagogy in management education has mainly been theoretical (Reynolds, 1999), with few empirical studies on why and how this approach to teaching and learning can be put into practice.[7]

Towards a tentative conceptual proposal

Those then were the core themes that we extracted from our interviews. But where do these take us? In particular, how might we proceed beyond the gloomy implications of our findings, particularly in relation to "globalisation", "race", and "capitalisms"? In an attempt to proceed positively, we propose a tentative conceptual framework for how we might begin to engage with a project of decoloniality in the context of management education (Figure 1). Our proposal begins with our fundamental research question: "Decolonising management education?" As outlined in the introduction, this question arose as an acknowledgement of the "grassroots" screams to decolonise higher education that emerged during the 2015/2016 #RhodesMustFall movements. The mere act of asking this question, and keeping on asking the question, locates one as having the makings of being 'truly solidary with them [the oppressed]' (Freire, 1996: 27).

With this question as a permanent anchor to the project, our proposal comprises an iterative process inspired primarily by the four key elements of the 'meaning of decolonisation' that were articulated by participants in our group of outliers (Group 5), combined with Reynolds' (1999) principles of critical pedagogy in a supporting role. For want of a better point of entry, the first step in our process is that of 'unravelling history'. The aim here must be that it becomes.

[7] One practical example has been reported in Eccles (2015). In this, notions of anti-solutionism, infuriation, and Freirean problem-posing force the students to think critically and escape the parochial confines of management education, if only for a little while.

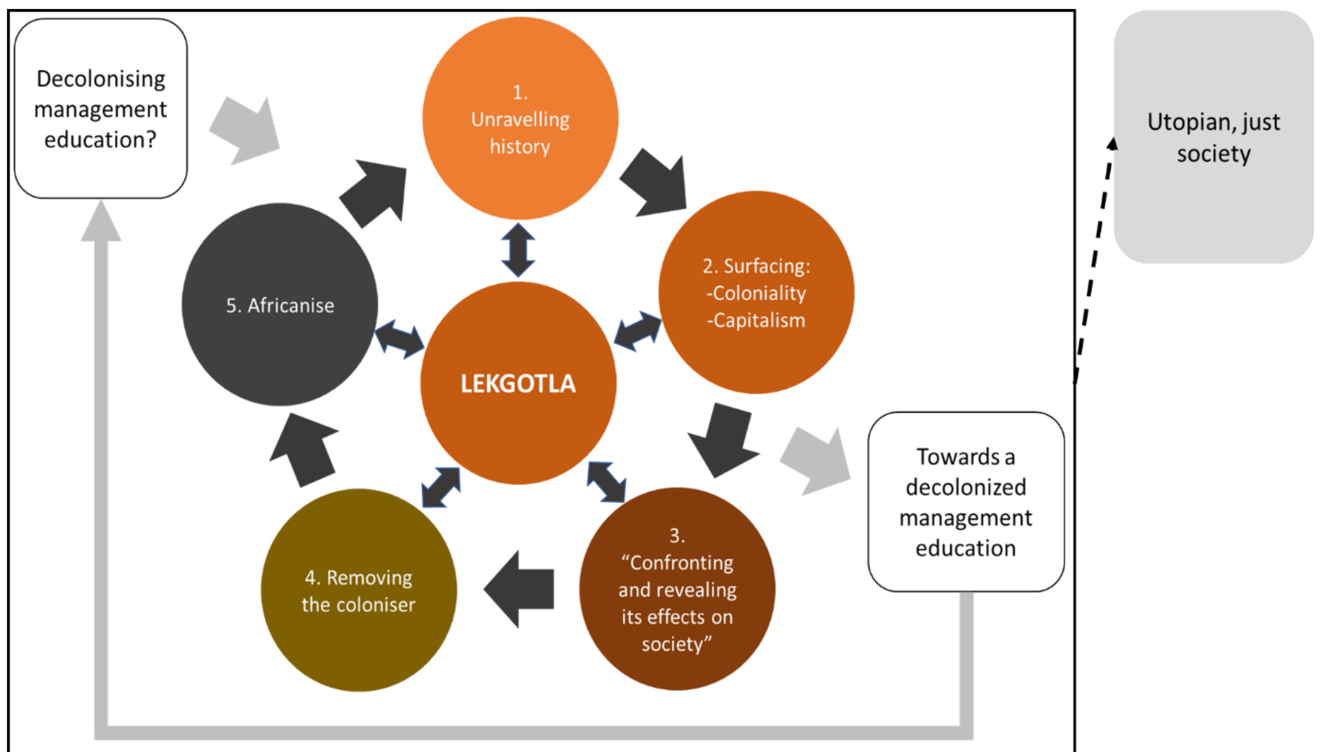


Figure 1: A tentative conceptual proposal on how we might begin a journey of decoloniality in the context of management education

impossible for us to say that we 'haven't read the history' (DS 2). But the term 'unravelling' implies more than just reading a history. It implies a much more deliberate critical reflection on assumptions embodied in the orthodox or common-sense history. At the very least, what we must have critically read is the history (singular) of colonisation, coloniality (and by implication race), and capitalism. It may even be necessary to write this history.

The unravelling of such a history will, in our minds, be instrumental in initiating the second "step" in our process of decoloniality which is the act of surfacing the issues, in this case coloniality and capitalism specifically. To some extent this maps onto Reynolds' (1999: 173) second principle of 'foregrounding the processes of power and ideology subsumed within the social fabric of institutional structures, procedures, and practices'. The word "surfacing", like "foregrounding", means to make something stand out from the '*matrix of power*' within which it is normally buried. In this step, the meanings and effects of coloniality and capitalism must be revealed, as opposed to their 'common senses', which might be reduced to: a) a project that was completed when the colonies gained independence; and b) the only possible political economic regime – 'the end of history' (Fukuyama, 1989) – respectively.

Our third step is drawn entirely from Reynolds's (1999: 173) third principle: 'confronting spurious claims of rationality and objectivity and revealing the sectional interests which can be concealed by them'. Having surfaced the common senses in management education associated with coloniality, capitalism, and their linkages, the emphasis in this step is to set up a confrontation by emphasising the related effects on society. The development of this

confrontational consciousness might perhaps be seen as one part of the essential violence required to overcome colonialisation and coloniality (Fanon, 1963; Modiba, 2018).

Speaking of violence, our fourth step, “Removing the coloniser”, may well spark some controversy in the sense that it could imply physically placing people of coloniser origin onto a ship and sailing it south until it hits an iceberg. This, however, is not the intention. This would be a manifestation of Freire’s (1996) scenario where the oppressed becomes the oppressor, and where no one is liberated. It would imply nothing short of the complete failure of the humanising project of decolonising management education. Rather, while still an act of violence, the violence imagined here is much more metaphorical, and in our view, quite personal. It speaks to the need, through the method of lekgotla, to progressively eject the coloniser from within ourselves, from our common senses.

Our fifth step is quite simply to “Africanise”. As was suggested by a number of our participants, many authors have suggested Africanisation of the curriculum in African universities as a step towards an emancipatory ideal in management education (Busia, 1964; Higgs, 2012; Masaka, 2017; Mazrui, 2003; Mekoa, et al., 2006). Africanisation has been proposed to combat the epistemicide that has beset African colonial history. Masaka (2017) presented Africanisation as a practice that could be implemented in universities, with the goal of transformation. This is because the curriculum in most African universities is still dominated by western epistemologies, which has been justified by some based on the lack of written text on African knowledge and philosophies (Lamola, 2015). Thus far, authors have been preoccupied with the theoretical discourse on Africanisation. Masaka (2017) argued that it is time to investigate practical perspectives. In line with praxis, he suggested changes in policy, promoting critical mass and documenting African knowledge and philosophies in the form of textbooks to provide educators in universities with alternative paradigms. This last step is open to a myriad of possibilities that can be generated by participants in management education to pursue decoloniality in the curriculum. While our own findings have proven more useful in generating this conceptual process than figuring out precisely what Africanisation might mean practically speaking, African communitarian axiologies did surface as a potential antidote to the individualism of capitalism.

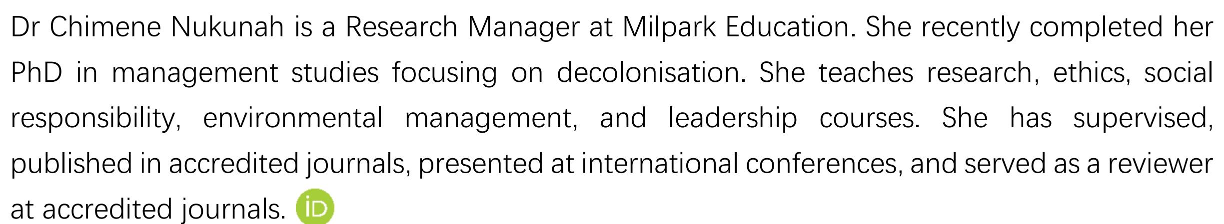
At the centre of these five steps, animating and giving coherence to the entire process, we place Lekgotla. In our conceptualisation, it is through this African epistemic construct, through the process of open communication and dialogue that it imagines, that participants in management education will unravel the history, surface coloniality, confront the effects of this, begin to remove the coloniser, and ultimately begin to Africanise management education.

Ultimately, the goal is for management education to contribute towards the attainment of an ideal or utopian state, which is a just society. This process is not a once-off event; it is one that is continuous and never complete. The word “utopian” alludes to the fact that this goal is uncertain and potentially unattainable but nonetheless worth trying to imagine and trying to attain. A just society is located within a broader pursuit for justice, not only in management education or in higher education, but rather which transcends disciplines and contributes towards social justice in society.

Conclusion

It is evident that previously colonised countries in Africa inherited the coloniser's education system (Musitha & Mafukata, 2018). Although, in theory, all African countries have obtained independence from their colonial masters[8], education systems have remained largely untransformed. The rising rage against this educational baggage from colonialism was demonstrated during the 2015/2016 #RhodesMustFall movements. This has led to the conviction among many scholars that decoloniality in education in Africa has become crucial. It is this conviction that led us to our empirical study on how such a project might be undertaken in the context of management education specifically. Our findings revealed a number of barriers associated with "globalisation", "race", and "capitalism" in particular which almost threatened being overwhelming. However, from within themes of the "meaning of decolonisation", "lekgotla", and "critical pedagogy", we were able to propose a five-step process grounded in the African epistemic process of lekgotla, that can be adopted to begin to construct a decolonised management education. The objective is to ignite a consciousness and, from this, a desire among participants in management education to actively contribute to the decoloniality project by visualising this just society as an end point.

Author Biographies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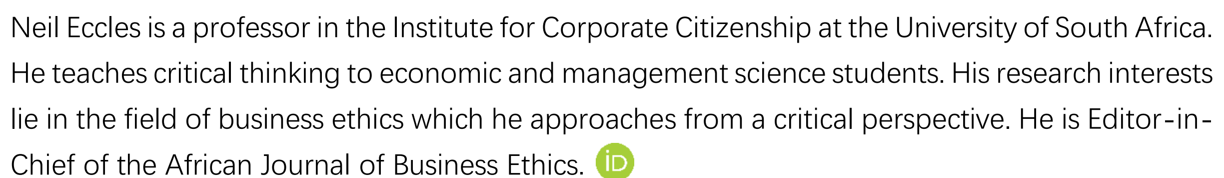
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[8] With the possible exception of Western Sahara.

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