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Decolonising pedagogy in post-apartheid South Africa: the expanded understanding of Vygotsky's theory and new postulates

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Abstract

Context and relevance. The paper examines contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy and its underlying epistemologies that position teachers and their students as passively conforming to prescribed knowledge and concepts disconnected from practical realities, goals, and students' personal pursuit of meanings. **Objective and Hypothesis.** Such an approach, premised on values of adaptation to the status quo of preexisting models and procedures, fails to promote knowledge premised on values of contribution to collective social practices and self-identity development. **Theoretical basis.** That is, pedagogy so conceptualised in the logic of colonial orthodoxies and solipsistic epistemologies, inevitably denies students and their teachers their inherent capacities for agency and meaningful engagement with reality. **Results and discussion.** Therefore, in instantiating decolonising approach to pedagogy, a young student the teacher had deemed to be experiencing learning difficulties, enacts her embodied knowledge[1] and is thereby posited as debunking the logic of colonial epistemologies that underpin contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy. **Conclusions.** The student is therefore presented as enacting her culturally situated community practices and knowledge traditions which she embodies, despite the continued exclusion of such knowledge practices within contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy.

***Keywords*:** decolonising pedagogy, transformative agency, post-apartheid pedagogy, indigenous knowledge, Vygotsky's cultural-historical framework

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[1] Translator's notes: **Embodied knowledge** is a concept according to which knowledge is not only theories and mental ideas but also related to our personal experience, sensations, and how our body interacts with the surrounding world. This approach suggests that we learn through practical actions and personal experience, demonstrating how the body helps us understand and perceive reality. The concept of embodied knowledge challenges the outdated view that mind and body are separate entities and emphasizes that bodily perception is important for developing our knowledge and skills.

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Деколонизация педагогики в постапартеидской Южной Африке: расширенное понимание теории Л.С. Выготского и новые постулаты

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Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. В статье анализируется современная педагогика в постапартеидской Южной Африке и ее основные идеи, которые представляют учителей и учеников как пассивных участников, просто следящих за установленными знаниями и концепциями. Эти знания часто оторваны от реальных условий, целей обучения и личных поисков смыслов самих учеников. **Цель и гипотеза.** Такой подход, который основывается на необходимости приспосабливаться к существующим моделям и правилам, не способствует развитию знаний, связанных с участием в общественных практиках и формированием личной идентичности. Иными словами, педагогика, которая основана на колониальных взглядах и замкнутых в своих представлениях знаниях, лишает учеников и учителей их естественной способности быть активными участниками и по-настоящему взаимодействовать с окружающей реальностью. **Результаты.** Таким образом, при использовании деколонизирующего подхода к обучению, ученица, которую учитель считал испытывающей трудности в обучении, проявляет свои знания через действия и тело (телесные знания)[2]. **Выводы.** Это показывает, что ученица оспаривает идеи колониальных способов мышления, которые лежат в основе современной педагогики в постапартеидской Южной Африке. При этом она демонстрирует свои культурные практики и знания, связанные с ее сообществом, несмотря на то, что такие знания и практики часто игнорируются или исключаются в современной системе образования.

Ключевые слова: деколонизирующая педагогика, трансформирующая агентность, педагогика постапартеидской Южной Африки, традиционные знания, культурно-историческая теория Выготского

Introduction

Three decades after the post-1994 negotiated democratic transformation from apartheid schooling and society to a post-apartheid democratic dispensation, pedagogy and schooling in South Africa more generally have remained largely untransformed — beyond the usual surface-level veneer — changes that left deeper colonial structures and ideological foundations essentially unscathed. Instead, colonial and Western-centric epistemologies have progressively entrenched themselves deep into the structure of pedagogy and schooling, with the majority of students not performing at the level and with the quality expected of a transformative society that has just been emancipated from oppressive apartheid and colonial systems.

Post-apartheid pedagogy in South Africa, in its contemporary manifestations, is therefore deeply rooted in colonial ideals, espousing Western hegemonic epistemologies and a world rendered hierarchical in its

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[2] Прим. перев.: **Телесные знания** (embodied knowledge) понятие, согласно которому знания — это не только теории и умственные идеи, но и то, что связано с нашим личным опытом, ощущениями и тем, как наше тело взаимодействует с окружающим миром. Этот подход говорит о том, что мы учимся через практические действия и личный опыт, показывая, как тело помогает нам понимать и воспринимать окружающую реальность. Концепция телесных знаний оспаривает устаревшее представление о том, что разум и тело — это разные вещи, и подчеркивает, что восприятие телом важно для того, чтобы развивать наши знания и навыки.

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racialized implications. By espousing methodological individualism, students' needs, interests, and goals are disregarded, and students' creativity and personal sense are denied. Consequently, teachers resort to mechanically connecting knowledge to their students' subjective experiences.

Therefore, the norms of Eurocentric epistemologies and associated orthodoxies were rendered logical and indispensable for the socioeconomic success and survival of post-colonial societies. For example, in arguing for the organization of contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy, the review committee stated that: "What we need to provide is a clear statement of the 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2007) that offers better learning, life, and work opportunities for learners — especially for teachers who have been dispossessed in the past, who are insecure in the present, and uncertain of the future. Certainty and specificity about what to teach and how to teach it will help restore confidence and stability in the system and enhance the learning opportunities we provide for our students" (Department of Education, 2009, p. 62).

The idea of neutral, value-free, universal knowledge — 'powerful' in itself — is often presented as a ready solution to prevailing socioeconomic needs of societies. Contemporary interpretations of Vygotsky's framework have also adopted such assumptions rooted in the idea of a historical telos. As Jones (2021) has argued, despite the crucial emancipatory goals underpinning Vygotsky's theory — such as progress — the idea cannot escape scrutiny within the context of decolonization of knowledge and pedagogy. Jones (2021), however, admits that Vygotsky continuously revised his theory until his untimely death in 1934. Such revisions remain relevant today as a way to counter coercive models and interpretations that promote colonial domination and control — and thereby deny the validity and legitimacy of local indigenous knowledge and traditions.

Theoretical basis

In proposing a form of pedagogy for post-apartheid schooling, Miller (1984), for example, argues that pedagogy must engender, on the part of African children, Western culture and thought processes. Further, to this end, Miller (1984) argues — in contradistinction to Cole's (1996) position regarding the pedagogy of minority students in the American context — that models of schooling based on cultural relativism could, unfortunately, reproduce the same inequalities that apartheid schooling had produced. That is, Miller (1984) argues against a model of schooling that caters to cultural diversity vis- -vis African students, as this, in his view, would inevitably result in what he termed "cultural zoos." Such an approach, according to Miller (1984), would further lock African students into their cultural milieus and thereby restrict their conceptual capacity for successful learning and development — similar to what had been the case under the discredited apartheid schooling (Miller, 1984; Matusov, 2008).

In a similar vein, Van Vlaenderen (1999) reports that African students in her study demonstrated knowledge assumptions, concepts, and problem-solving approaches involving the perception of knowledge as 'situationally bound,' emphasizing 'reciprocal interdependence with others,' and foregrounding 'social harmony.' At the same time, these students assumed an inherent connectedness between 'cognitive and affective aspects' of knowledge (Van Vlaenderen, 1999, pp. 172 — 173). As a result, Van Vlaenderen (1999) concludes that these young people perceived the process of solving problems as predominantly interpersonal. That is, according to Van Vlaenderen (1999), the students perceived knowledge and truth as not absolute and not independent of those who defined them. Therefore, Van Vlaenderen (1999) suggests that these students need assistance in relinquishing their culturally constrained ways of thinking and problem-solving and should be provided with more effective cultural tools for competing on the global stage.

Similar calls for African students to abandon their culture and traditions of knowledge and language practices in favor of Western epistemologies and worldviews have continued from the early days of post-apartheid schooling and society in South Africa into the current decade of student decolonial movements such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall (see Hardman, 2024; Griffiths, 2019; Jansen, 2017; 2019). Strong reactions to calls for decolonizing pedagogy — which have spread into an international movement spanning South Africa, the United Kingdom, and many other countries — were unfortunately met with strong critiques and skepticism. For example, Jansen (2019) argues that calls for decolonization amount to 'retrogressive nativism' and a 'retreat to indigenization' (Jansen, 2017, p. 167; 2019, p. 62; Griffiths, 2019, p. 6). Griffiths (2019) also supports this view by arguing that such calls resemble "narrow," 'essentialist,' and 'isolatory practices,' instead of representing a "genuine decolonization" agenda. According to Griffiths (2019), in agreement with Mbebe (2016), genuine decolonization requires 'an active reckoning with the forces of globalization' that involves 'the acceptance of the Humboldtian University in the global South' (Griffiths, 2019, p. 6).

Nonetheless, in contradistinction to the sceptical posture of mainstream commentaries within South African scholarship, Hardman (2024) argues from a Vygotskian interpretive framework for a pedagogy that includes the voice of the previously marginalized in a pedagogical developmental space where a culturally more competent other (the teacher) guides the student towards the co-construction of meaning as a mechanism for decolonial pedagogy. However, Hardman proposes that such an approach fails because pedagogy is political and requires political will to shift the structures that have existed for centuries. Consequently, Hardman (2024) advocates a Kierkegaardian leap of faith involving critical engagement with the colonial canon and its pedagogical basis. Such engagement would, for example, involve re-evaluating how teachers teach, prioritizing the kind of knowledge that students need to navigate the 21st century (Hardman, 2024, p. 156).

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Indeed, there is an unmistakable need to shift the paradigm regarding the contemporary post-apartheid approach to pedagogy in South Africa. However, it remains unclear whether this shift should be merely a corrective action based on a simple review of prevailing methods and their associated knowledge assumptions. This is especially critical given the current approach to pedagogy, which tends to favor solipsistic and mentalist approaches that position both students and teachers as passive participants who have no will or agency to realize their history and create their desired future — enacting goals and interests — and thereby transforming society and themselves.

Therefore, it is essential to address the erosion of agency among students and teachers — including the development of students' self-identity — by challenging the myths of the Western canon and associated orthodoxies that render culturally situated knowledge and community practices irrelevant and personal sense insignificant. These myths require thorough debunking once and for all. At the same time, a decolonizing approach to pedagogy should be premised on the philosophical centrality of activism and on students' and teachers' agency as the foundation for a pedagogy based on learning-by-doing — or performative pedagogy — rather than merely epistemic approaches that promote solipsism and objectivist methodologies.

Loss of agency and conflict of motives

Van Oers (2015) reports a similar consequence of pedagogy regarding conflict of motives and loss of agency on the part of teachers and their students within Dutch primary schooling. Owing to the neo-liberal reform programme in the Netherlands, teachers and their students found themselves in the deep end of a fixed curriculum model, premised on the idea of "school as an economic production factor." Within the context of neoliberal schooling, teachers and students are rendered passive participants without agency, and students' ability to make sense of problem situations by relating knowledge to personal motives is compromised (van Oers, 2015, p. 20). The demands for teachers and students to follow strict procedures, prescribed methodologies, and pre-established routines — in line with the fixed curriculum model — inevitably lead to conflicts of interest on the part of teachers and students vis- -vis the enactment of personal sense and agency.

The fundamental problem with such neoliberal models of pedagogy, as van Oers (2015) contends, is that they inevitably undermine the goals of fostering agency, critical reflection, innovation, creativity, and social responsibility — especially by positing curriculum contents and structures as neutral instruments that can be implemented mechanically. As a consequence, concepts, skills, and values become commodified, taking on objectified meanings which, in turn, lead to alienation and loss of agency and identity development. For van Oers (2015), to overcome the negative effects of the commodification of knowledge and the associated objectification of meanings — vis- -vis teachers' conflict of motives and

their students' ability to relate knowledge to personal motives and make meaningful sense of problem situations — a play-based pedagogy for reinforcing agency was introduced.

This "playfully formatted activities," according to van Oers (2015), become the "auxiliary means" or mediating tools for overcoming the assumption that pedagogy can be implemented with teachers merely serving as mechanical links between subject matter knowledge and concepts and students' subjective experiences (van Oers, 2015, p. 20). Consequently, according to van Oers (2015), this model helped teachers act with agency and be creative and innovative in their teaching — meaningfully connecting pedagogy to the needs and interests of their students — while simultaneously fulfilling political demands for transmitting objectified meanings within the prescribed curriculum policy framework.

The logic of colonial legacies

For example, Enslin and Hedge (2023) have argued that with the expansion of the colonial system, education served as a de facto instrument of its legitimation and validation, with schooling and knowledge in general subjected to the evolving logic of colonial and neoliberal ideologies. Knowledge — and education in particular — served to justify and legitimize the logic of the colonial world order, within its inherent injustices. At the same time, the validity of indigenous cultures and the associated knowledge, practices, and traditions was systematically undermined. Therefore, knowledge was rendered in the logic of colonial structures and their practices of control and domination.

The unwarranted assumption about the inherent inferiority of culturally situated knowledge practices and the associated indigenous knowledge traditions vis- -vis Western epistemologies and worldview populations needs to be challenged, and myths about the infallibility of Western canons debunked. Stetsenko (2023), for example, citing Newton (2009), presents a view debunking the belief that the task of physics is to find out how nature operates independently of our questions and methodologies. This view is also supported by Popper's (1994) perspective that scientific knowledge is hypothetical or conjectural. This view, undoubtedly, debunks the common assumption — and the associated politically expedient belief — that by following a 'true' scientific method and adhering to Western canons of science, we are — in some way — able to arrive at objective, neutral, value-free data and facts, and an incontrovertible truth — once and for all (Stetsenko, 2023).

Contemporary, post-apartheid pedagogy, in its fundamental organization, therefore embodies the ethos of adaptation to the status quo of political quietism, including associated coercive epistemologies premised on assumptions of neutral, value-free, objective facts and incontrovertible truth. Consequently, as in the case of Young's (2007) post-industrial UK context, goals of post-apartheid schooling came to serve the economic goal of securing employment and participation in free-market economic activities. Therefore, post-apartheid

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schooling organized along neoliberal lines is envisioned in instrumental terms with standardized assessment as the regulatory mechanism for ensuring teacher accountability to authorities. With pedagogy defined in terms of products — specialized disciplinary content — as opposed to process and quality engagement — knowledge in contemporary post-apartheid schooling is organized as a commodified product regulated essentially by standardized assessment procedures.

This approach prioritizes political goals of transmitting culture and objectified meanings at the expense of meaningful activities geared towards social transformation and personal sense-making — including self-identity development. In this pedagogical approach, students and teachers are positioned as passive; meanwhile, teachers' roles are reduced to mechanically linking concepts to students' subjective experiences. Consequently, rather than encouraging teachers and students to relate knowledge to their personal circumstances, interests, and goals, contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy advances a canonical view based on pre-established procedures — orthodox ways of doing things — as well as Western canonical knowledge reified in concepts, methodologies, and procedures.

The point here is not to reject knowledge and science outright — in a proverbial manner of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Rather, it is to sift sound pedagogy from coercive Western orthodoxies which — as Cooper (2005) has argued — justify privileges through rhetoric that claims scientific authority "to sell the idea that historical inequities should be embraced as biological inevitability" (quoted in Stetsenko, 2023, p. 30)

Centrality of activism and agency

Therefore, in forging a pedagogy premised on moral and ethical commitment to a future-in-the-making (Stetsenko, 2007), a future not deferred but unfolding and enacted in the here-and-now of pedagogy that is realized in — and through — agentic practices of teachers and their students. Commitment to a future-oriented pedagogy undoubtedly implies recognition of the historical injustices of colonial and apartheid society and schooling, while simultaneously committing to social transformation, which is achieved through practices oriented towards future possibilities involving what 'ought to be' rather than 'what is' (Stetsenko, 2023; 2007).

Therefore, what is fundamental is that the organization of such a decolonizing approach to pedagogy is not based on the rational dimension of knowledge — questions of how knowledge is validated based on its truth value. This approach has unfortunately characterized hegemonic epistemologies, including contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy, resulting in conflicts of motive on the part of the majority of teachers whose activities of teaching remain confined to the prescript of the fixed curriculum structure. At the same time, this approach denies students their potential for making sense of the subject matter by relating knowledge to personal motives, interests, and goals.

On the contrary, post-apartheid pedagogy ought to be organized in such a way that teachers and their students are not only positioned for passive adaptation — fitting in and coping with established procedures, including following putatively unalterable Western norms and canons. Rather, post-apartheid pedagogy — premised on ethical and political grounding and geared towards emancipatory goals for society and schooling — should prioritize providing cultural tools that enable students and teachers to agentively take up and creatively employ them in their quest to overcome the ethos of adaptation, passivity, and neutrality — as well as the attendant solipsistic and contemplative epistemologies.

The cultural tools for achieving this profoundly anti-colonial and anti-hegemonic standpoint, premised on ubuntu ontology and proffering profound human interconnectedness, social harmony, solidarity, care, and togetherness, are embedded in culturally situated community practices embodied by students who carry these practices and enact them as part of their learning and development. This study therefore posits a pedagogy premised on knowledge traditions and culturally situated community practices, which have historically been excluded from mainstream pedagogy and continue to be marginalized in contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy. These practices, which range from indigenous knowledge traditions and approaches to teaching and socialization practices in traditional forms of schooling, as well as indigenous performance traditions such as storytelling performances, dance, and song — all make up a vast and intricate tapestry and a rich repository of didactic approaches and methodologies.

The anti-colonial methodologies and approaches herein proposed are therefore profoundly contradictory to the ethos of adaptation to the status quo, including the values of acquiescing to coercive epistemologies that promote hierarchical and racialized social structures and educational outcomes. That is, the political ideology of an isolated individual who develops in total isolation from others — in competition with — and in complete alienation from — society and culture is superseded by the ideology of agentic contribution to social transformation and self-development. The decolonizing approach to pedagogy emphasizes the ethos of agentive contribution as opposed to passivity and political quietism, as well as collective community practices geared towards social transformation, self-realization, and identity development.

Consequently, there is a convergence of ethical-political and ontological issues in the decolonizing approach to pedagogy postulated herein. The process can be understood as presupposing what Stetsenko (2020a&b) has named a forward-looking activism — an activism that is profoundly purposive, with future-oriented actions that are inherently ethical and geared towards changing the world given a sought-after future. That is, as Stetsenko (2020a&b) argues, it is impossible to imagine a possible future without locating ourselves in its present instantiations — and consequently, equally impossible to situate ourselves in the present and its history unless we can imagine its future and simultaneously commit to creating it, thereby bringing this future into being.

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Results

Muthivhi (2025, forthcoming) provides a detailed account of a non-epistemological, decolonizing approach to knowledge and pedagogy grounded in culturally situated community practices and knowledge traditions embodied by students and enacted in the course of their everyday activities. In this discussion, examples of culturally situated practices such as traditional performances, storytelling traditions, etc., are presented, and their implications for promoting the ethos of agentic contribution to collective social practices and self-identity development are explained. In this performance of culturally situated knowledge practices, students learn about communal values such as responsibility for each other, collaboration, accountability, and caring for each other and the environment — including a worldview-level assumption about personhood — the self and the other — as profound interconnectedness phenomena.

Bele's enactment of embodied knowledge practices

In this account, an instance of a ten-year-old girl, Bele (pseudonym used), is described. Bele, a sixth-grade learner in a primary school in Sibasa, northern South Africa, was observed showing a demonstrable lack of confidence in the written task the class was completing. Contrary to the openness with which many of her counterparts showed their work and confidently discussed it, Bele avoided what could potentially be an embarrassing situation for her by hiding her work from view and shying away from discussing it with the researcher. The teacher, explaining what seemed like an odd situation, told the researcher that Bele was a slow learner who had already been referred to authorities for a specialist intervention program.

However, to my surprise, after I had finished my observation and was about to leave the classroom at the stroke of the bell for midday break, Bele drew my attention, calling me 'teacher,' and indicating that she wanted to dance for me. Before I could acknowledge her, a chorus of voices from her peers joined her in complimenting her and urging me to observe her performance as well. I was amused by the offer and expressed how honoured I was. There was a sense of great anticipation among Bele's peers as she went to the front of the classroom and began her performance. Unlike her prior withdrawn self during the written task — marked by an unmistakable sense of insecurity — Bele now exuded confidence and self-assurance. With her peers applauding, Bele performed an intricate traditional dance of tshigombela, with elegant movements of legs and hands — occasionally jumping and stomping ground with both feet while hands were gracefully thrown up and down and front and back; sometimes one hand landed on her back while the other stretched out in front. After the performance, Bele elegantly performed the traditional u losha tribute, connecting seamlessly with her audience, who responded with cheers of joy and expressions of gratification. I was genuinely impressed and joined in acknowledging the masterful skill displayed in these elegant and graceful routines.

Immediately after this event, the teacher, who had just informed me a little earlier during the written task that Bele had a learning difficulty, which had already been reported to the authorities, approached me to explain that the girl was in fact the best performer in the whole school. He further explained that Bele came from a traditionally oriented family background and was therefore extremely talented in traditional performances. Bele was therefore also responsible for teaching other students and the teachers in the school, and their school was rated one of the best among the schools in traditional performances in the whole region. I was certainly most disconcerted by the revelation of this patently self-contradictory situation, vis- -vis Bele's learning and development within a schooling system that only prioritises fixed curriculum products, objectified meanings, and abstract, mentalist approaches. Such approaches, unfortunately, deny students their inherent abilities to relate knowledge to personal motives and make meaningful sense of problem situations.

Discussion

Performatory pedagogy: a process of knowing-through-doing

Therefore, knowledge, according to this approach, becomes possible within the framework of students and their teachers' commitments and identifications with possible futures. That is, the ethical dimension of knowledge — regarding what is good and what is bad, or what is right and what is wrong — including decisions about what to do next, framed within the imagined goals of a sought-after future — undoubtedly grounds all action possibilities. Consequently, projected future-oriented goals — as imagined endpoints — define the entire dynamic process of human development as an agentic contribution to collective social practices. As Stetsenko (2020a) has proposed, it is this inherent human subjectivity that arises as an activist process of committing to a sought-after future. As Stetsenko (2020a) has argued, this commitment to a sought-after future:

[...] position us to see what is through the prism of how the present situations and conditions came to be and, also, in light of the imagined and sought-after future, of what we believe ought to be. Thus, the historicity and situativity of knowledge are ascertained alongside the focus on its ineluctable fusion with an activist future-oriented stance. An endpoint defines the whole dynamics of human development and society, of knowing-being-doing; without and endpoint (albeit flexible and ever-changing, like a horizon that shifts with every step we make), it is impossible to move forward, to move at all (Stetsenko, 2020a, p. 9, emphasis in original).

Muthivhi (2021) describes a pedagogy enacted by a teacher at a primary school in the northern part of South Africa, deliberately envisaging a transformative future that is different from her and her students' prevailing conditions of resource scarcity, socioeconomic disadvantage, and the constraining neocolonial and neoliberal

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pedagogy that systematically excludes and marginalizes culturally situated community practices and indigenous knowledge traditions as inappropriate for the purposes of formal schooling. With a commitment to the goals of social transformation and identity development, this teacher employed culturally situated community practices and indigenous knowledge traditions — engaging her students in traditional performances, exploring their local conditions, analyzing the sociopolitical and historical factors that explain those conditions, and also positing pathways for their transformation.

The decolonizing approach herein proposed is grounded in the ethos of collective community practices, revealed in and through culturally situated knowledge traditions and community practices embodied by students who enact such knowledge practices and traditions as historically relevant, contextually meaningful, and personally significant activities of their learning and development. That is, students in the vast majority of South African classrooms who have, unfortunately, been denied the opportunity to enact their embodied culturally situated knowledge practices — and hence, self-identity development — come to realize the relevance of their socio-political and cultural-historical context and the associated knowledge practices to their learning and development. At the same time, teachers who have been equally compelled to mechanically link curriculum products — objectified meanings in the form of concepts, ideas, and facts — to their students' subjective experiences overcome the alienating effect of objectified meanings.

That is, teachers begin to perceive curriculum contents through the prism of their students' culturally situated knowledge practices, guiding them as they enact the meanings embedded in their embodied knowledge practices and thereby experiencing knowledge as it is revealed in and through culturally situated practices. Therefore, knowledge is revealed in the process of transformation from embodied practices into concepts manifested in — and through — the process of inquiry; it is not static, reified curriculum products or concepts frozen in time, immutable and fixed once and for all. Instead, students are guided through critical exploratory activities embedded in their culturally situated knowledge practices and enacted through performative activities geared towards critically exploring knowledge and concepts during their process of transformation.

This process, as Vianna and Stetsenko (2011) have argued, can be understood as an agentic process of collective contribution to communal practices and simultaneously as a process of active recreation of cultural tools vis- -vis their application as tools of meaningful quest and, therefore, identity development. The perspective, therefore, simultaneously links processes situated in communal practices to students' forward-looking and future-oriented activist practices of social transformation. In their connection to pedagogy, these future-oriented, forward-looking activist practices of identity development are therefore viewed not merely as an outcome of teaching and learning but as the very substance and fabric of pedagogy, and the vehicle through which a culturally situated, decolonizing approach to pedagogy can be realized.

According to this view, knowledge is transformed both by teachers and their students into tools for social transformation and self-realization — and, simultaneously, as a tool for the meaningful pursuit of self-identity development. Therefore, pedagogy grounded in an ethos of agentive contribution to social transformation and identity development demands that teachers and students take charge of the process of teaching and learning and thereby transform knowledge — and their pedagogy — through an active recreation of cultural tools as an enactment of their envisioned future and identity development.

In this approach, therefore, the notion of identity development is severed from the assumptions of difference, separation, and opposition — such as those entailed in the postulation of racial segregation and tribal-ethnic ideologies that historically underpinned colonial and apartheid regimes in South Africa. On the contrary, identity development in the transformative worldview — grounded in values of solidarity, care, and responsibility — emphasizes the positive ethos of care, solidarity, responsibility, and accountability. The values of the common good; ubuntu — postulating profound human interconnectedness; justice; and equity are privileged over the values of self-contained individualism, pernicious competition, and various forms of dichotomies and antagonisms — such as those manifested in tragic concepts and associated practices related to dogmas like racial segregation, slavery, ethnicity, gender, religion — and various other incarnations of neocolonial and neoliberal regimes that are at the core of many contemporary tragedies: apartheid doctrines, fascism, genocides — and many other calamities affecting our societies today.

Conclusion

Vygotsky's framework, including its contemporary post-Vygotskian extensions, offers important methodological and theoretical tools for interrogating contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy and its underlying epistemological foundations. That is, this framework — in its extensive — and still growing — expansions and elaborations — offers new insights into possible research trajectories geared toward uncovering neocolonial and neoliberal practices and approaches that promote forms of rationality and objectivity which continue to diminish and deny the legitimacy and validity of culturally situated knowledge practices and traditions under the guise of neutrality and objectivity.

Indeed, the epistemic postulation of knowledge based solely on its rationality and validity — at the expense of its ethical grounding within contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy in South Africa — raises critical questions about the fairness and impartiality of such an approach. An approach to pedagogy conceived in such unjust and inherently discriminatory ways — premised on quaint colonial assumptions and ingrained hegemonic preju-

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dices — only perpetuates centuries-old stereotypes and self-fulfilling prophesies of putatively inherent deficiencies of non-Western cultures and knowledge traditions. Consequently, this affects the learning and developmental trajectories of students from such cultures within Western-dominated systems of schooling, such as those in contemporary post-apartheid education.

Consequently, the present analysis of the realities of this form of schooling and pedagogy — including its underlying epistemologies — rather than seeking to propose another fixed and dogmatic approach to pedagogy, posits an approach that grounds knowledge not solely and exclusively on epistemic issues at the expense of the ethical dimensions of knowledge, and addresses questions about how knowledge — and pedagogy — could or ought to be organized in ways that are fair and just for communities and students from non-Western and especially African cultural and community backgrounds. This is not necessarily a call for 'retrogressive nativism' or 'narrowly conceived relativism,' as some critics of decolonizing approaches to pedagogy have charged, but rather a just call for fair implementation and enactment of pedagogy that dispenses with the persistent myths promoted by neocolonial and neoliberal epistemologies — premised on

principles and normativities of objectivity and neutrality (Muthivhi, forthcoming; Stetsenko, 2023).

Therefore, as opposed to a pedagogy premised on the discredited view that knowledge — and the associated practices of classroom teaching and learning — can be enacted as absolute, ahistorical, and devoid of human subjectivity, the decolonizing approach herein proposed grounds pedagogy in the ethos of agentic contribution to social transformation. Consequently, knowledge production — and the associated pedagogical practices — is only possible within its philosophical centrality as activism — a morally grounded and socially connected struggle by teachers and their students to realize a 'sought-after future,' a 'future-in-the-making' embodied in the potential of students, which they enact in the here-and-now of their schooling — despite the continued exclusion of such potential within contemporary post-apartheid pedagogy.

Limitations: More in-depth research on the dynamic nature of students' creative and innovative enactments of culturally situated embodied knowledge practices will be crucial for understanding complex, future possibilities for decolonising the coercive western and eurocentric epistemologies and their associated approaches to pedagogy in post-apartheid schooling and society.

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