

DECOLONIZING THE CURRICULUM AND THE ARTS OF KNOWING: RECOVERING THE PLURALITY

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INTRODUCTION: KNOWLEDGE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER

World modernity, conceived in the Western liberal rationality, has structurally favored Eurocentric epistemological regimes over the marginalization or erasure of non-Western epistemologies. This epistemic hierarchy, the reconstitution of colonial relations of power, has accustomed the global academia, policy, and imagination. The demand to decolonize curriculum and knowledge is thus not just an intellectual but an ethical and political necessity to realize the aim of epistemic justice. The article traces the colonial history of the contemporary curriculum, blames it for putting itself center-stage among the postcolonial world, and identifies paths for moving beyond plural, locally situated, and dialogical constructions of knowledge beyond Western liberal thought.



Colonialism never ended with the withdrawal of imperial power; it persisted in the ideology, knowledge, and cultural blueprint. In the theory that Aníbal Quijano (2000) developed with the colonality of power, epistemic dominance of the West over the rest became the driving force of modern domination. The university as both a knowledge-producing institution and as an institution that legitimates has been an extremely effective tool of this domination for decades.

The colonial enterprise extended not only spatially to territorial expansion but also into the realm of knowing — the marking of what was truly knowing, the marking of what constituted true knowledge, good science, or right reason. This epistemic violence generated what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) called epistemicide — subaltern and native forms of knowing being annihilated or suppressed. In postcolonial context, such epistemicide continues in the unexamined imposition of Eurocentric curricula and Western epistemic traditions onto the Global South. To proceed towards decoloniality, therefore, is to disrupt Western modernity at an epistemological level and to reclaim knowledge as a terrain of liberation, not domination.

EUROCENTRIC ORIGINS OF CURRENT BODY OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE MYTH OF UNIVERSALITY



Enlightenment, or the age of reason, also witnessed the repetition of an epistemic hierarchy asserting the European knowledge as universal and the rest as particular or primitive. The "universal" political, economic, and social theories were built upon the previous colonial experiences and race hierarchies as the building blocks.

For example, political science and international relations — the hallmark of modern social sciences — were developed out of the European state-building and colonial expansion period. Theories of sovereignty, developmentalism, and liberal democracy evolved under the Western model initially and then branched out with the cloak of being applied universally. Economic models based on capitalist industrialization were also used in the guise of the natural process of development, terming indigenous economic activities as "backward."

This universalism, then, was an epistemic imperialism. It replaced the numerous forms of knowledge — the Indigenous environmental knowledge, the Asian and African philosophies of spirit, the communal modes of being through Latin America, each with different description of human life than the Western one.

Decolonization of knowledge starts, therefore, with the rejection of the universality myth and the acknowledgement that all knowledge is culturally situated, embedded, and politically constructed.

CURRICULUM AS AN EPISTEMIC SITE FOR COLONIZATION

The postcolonial nation's schools continue to maintain the colonial hierarchies. The curriculum, which was initially created to promote the empire's agendas, continues to be the same in form and nature. The books pay tribute to the celebrated European minds and theorists and leave native intellect to footnotes. The vehicle remains still the elite English, the native languages being too unsuitable for deep thinking.



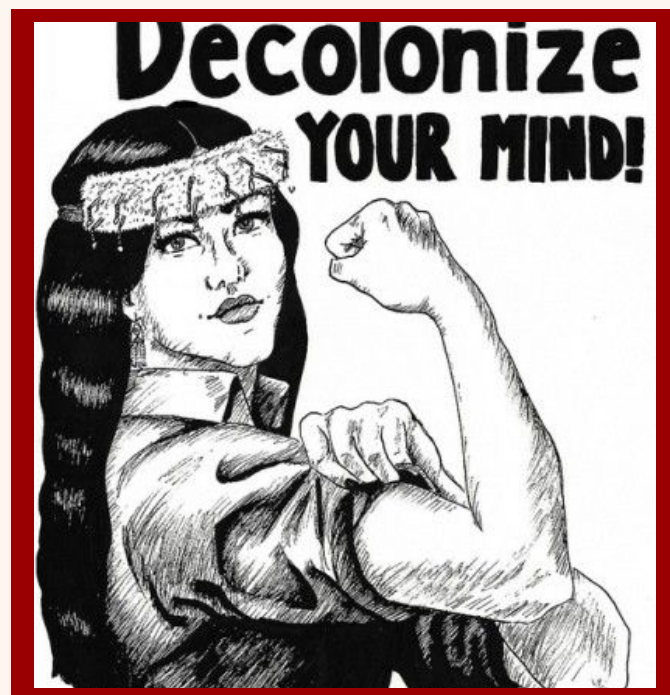
In India, to give a specific example, British education under Macaulay's 1835 Minute was intended to produce "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect." One hundred years later, traces of that endeavor are visible. Even after decades of independence, the Indian university curriculum remains unevenly Eurocentric — granting privileged status to Western models of government, development, and reason at the cost of indigenous or non-Western models.

This coloniality of curricula is not a coincidence; it reproduces knowledge hierarchies in the world. Language and curriculum, argues Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) in *Decolonising the Mind*, are tools of domination in culture. They construct consciousness, regulate desire, and ultimately regulate whose knowledge counts.

THE DECOLONIAL IMPERATIVE: TOWARD PLURAL AND DIALOGIC EPISTEM

Decolonial turn requires an epistemic shift — not from a hierarchically organized system of knowledge but towards a plural, dialogical, and participatory system. It requires not only incorporating non-West material into hegemonic curricula but also the change of the logic of knowledge production.

Walter Mignolo (2011) calls this a movement from the era of modernity/coloniality to the era of decoloniality: freedom from the Western modern epistemic matrix equating rationality with European historicity.



Decolonizing the curriculum, therefore, means challenging assumptions behind what is taught — not just texts, but forms of thought reading them.

A decolonial curriculum should:

1. Acknowledge epistemic diversity, accepting indigenous, local, and subaltern systems of knowledge as equally worthwhile as a source of theory.
2. Promote dialogic learning, so students think critically with multiple worldviews, rather than mimetic learning/canonical truth.
3. Acknowledge linguistic diversity, so researchers may learn, debate, and theorize in native languages.
4. Reclaim that history and memory, and do it through the scholarly research of the colonial encounter by the colonized, and not the colonizer.

This is not a denial of Western epistemology but a move to redress its overbalance — to place it in parallel with other knowledge and not the universal norm for all knowledge.

CHALLENGES TO DECOLONIZING THE MIND



Despite the ethical imperative of decolonial calls, realization is challenged by institutional, ideological, and structural barriers.

First, Western journals and universities are the global academic hierarchy's preferred option as the most suited places for legitimation. Global South researchers force the need to "publish in the West" to become creditworthy, substantiating epistemic dependency.

Second, linguistic domination is a basic disincentive. The prevailing languages of academia, English, French, and Spanish, preclude indigenous languages as inadequate to express complex theory.

Third, neoliberal globalization has also extended as far as commercializing education. The institutions are also becoming corporate with a focus on saleable skills and world rankings over contextual or critical studies. This discourages radical curriculum reform.

But Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999) here, in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, reminds us that decolonization is not easy; it requires institutional and personal deconstructing. It is a transformation of content and a transformation of conscience.

GLOBAL SOUTH PERSPECTIVES: RESISTANCE AND REIMAGINING

Around the globe, Global South scholars, activists, and educators are trying out decolonial pedagogies.

In Latin America, *Buen Vivir* philosophy criticizes Western progress by the emphasis on collective felicity and co-habitation with nature. In Africa, in the African Renaissance Project, there is an effort to bring indigenous modes of knowledge, or cosmologies, into center-stage education.



In India, the universities are returning to classical texts, namely *Arthashastra*, *Thirukkural*, and *Upanishads*, in political and ethical analysis, not as relics of culture but as living sources of theory.

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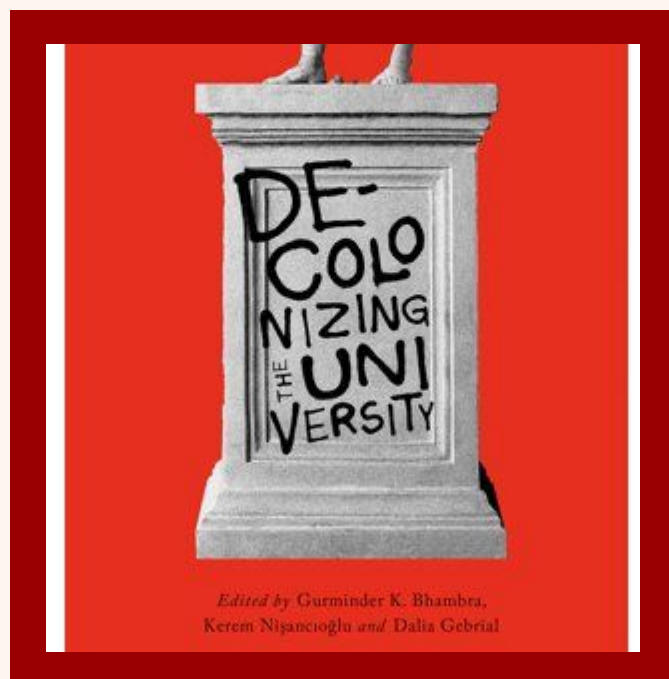
All these criticisms target one: to provincialize Europe (Chakrabarty, 2000) — in the acknowledgment that Western modernity is not the real center of the world but simply one of the many local modernities.

Decoloniality then unfolds the horizon of human knowledge. It finds a world where there is much knowledge in conversation and co-conceiving with one another — what Arturo Escobar (2018) calls "a world of many worlds."

TOWARDS A DECOLONIAL UNIVERSITY

A truly decolonial university is not limited by students' passports or the geography of the land, but by the multiplicity of imagination is. It must:

Imagine other fields besides the colonial frameworks — unifying the humanities and the science in ecological and moral interdependence. Replace co-operation with competition, reciprocity with hierarchy. Engage communities as co-producers and not targets of knowledge. Re-introduce assessment processes that prioritize imagination, context, and social good over citation counts.



It requires a certain type of courage — questioning inherited traditions, exercising intellectual humility, and forging alliances among cultures. Decolonizing knowledge is, in the end, bringing knowledge to the people.

CONCLUSION: THE ETHICS OF KNOWING OTHERWISE

Decolonizing the curriculum and the knowledge is not negation, but reclaiming — reclaiming the right to know, to name and tell one's own world. Decolonizing is the de-unraveling of the epistemic hierarchies which for centuries subjugated the Global South, and imagining a different future wherein not some, but all civilizations relinquish the monopoly on truth. The deconstruction of the Western liberal order is not its destruction but its transformation — from an era of hegemony to that of dialogue.

With the Global South making a conscious attempt to exercise its intellectual freedom through such efforts as BRICS, NAM 2.0, and South–South cooperation, it is also asserting its right to think for itself on its own terrain. To decolonize knowledge, therefore, is to confirm life — in its otherness, its creativity, and its boundless capacity to know otherwise.

