

Chapter 30

A Decolonial Curriculum Is Everything: An Afrocentric Approach

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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to map how indigenous people and their indigenous knowledge systems are the most researched and written about in the world, yet they are the least understood. The curriculum of the empire and its scientific explanation justified how indigenous knowledge systems should be approached and viewed as well as who has the authority to justify; hence, indigenous knowledge systems were justified as inferior and not worthy of the standard of European knowledge system. In this chapter, Frantz Fanon's thought will be deployed to illustrate how this division of knowledge justifies the perpetuating dehumanisation of indigenous people under the mask of modernisation and globalisation. By deploying decoloniality, Afrocentricity, and Fanonian thought, this chapter seeks to challenge this curriculum that is based on the history of the conquest of Africa that positioned Africa only as a cradle of slaves and the black bodied as created by God only for the benefit of the Europeans.

INTRODUCTION

Since I was born in the Antilles, my observations and my conclusions are valid only for the Antilles—at least concerning the black man at home. Another book could be dedicated to explaining the differences that separate the Negro of the Antilles from the Negro of Africa. Perhaps one day I shall write it. Perhaps too it will no longer be necessary—a fact for which we could only congratulate ourselves (Fanon [1952] 2008, p.1).

Frantz Fanon's perspective is instrumental to the understanding of the curriculum as a tool that divides the coloniser from the colonised in the colonial/Eurocentric/anti-black world. Fanon's lived experience is testament to this division that influenced his life and thoughts about the existence of the indigenous

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people that he refers to as the colonised or natives in his writings. Indigenous people and their indigenous knowledge systems are the most researched and written about in the world, yet they are still the most misrepresented. This is why Afrocentricity is a suitable paradigm to decolonize the curriculum in relation Fanon's thought. Afrocentricity is a paradigm that positions the African subject as the center of hers or his world, it allows the agency and ability to think from an African-centered perspective (Asante 2007; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013). In this regard, Fanon's thought is relevant to the understanding of this epistemic division as something that materialized deliberately for the structure of the "empire" (Hardt & Negri 2000) that was intended to restructure the world to the image of the European logic. The knowledge systems and way of living for colonised people was the fundamental base of creating what transpired to be the curriculum of the empire, with research approaches that are being deployed in academia today. Most research approaches that are being used in the curriculum are based on research and methodologies that were developed and used towards the contribution of positioning black people as objects intended to be owned, used and studied. Under these research approaches, the colonised people's existence and their way of life was studied and used to create disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography, sociology and research methodologies that were used to justify indigenous people as inferior. While other academic disciplines such as science, art and archaeology as well as biology and history were used as a weapon to justify dehumanisation of indigenous people, and the classification of their knowledge systems as primitive and barbaric.

This epistemic division created and justified the existence of what is commonly known as the Global South in which Africa as the victim of colonisation is located under, as the primitive side of knowledge. Fanon understood the language of the centre and periphery that demonstrated these divisions that made the periphery a no man's land, as the "zone of nonbeing" (Fanon [1952] 2008, p.2). The zone of none being is a place without knowledge, a place without history, without spirituality and most importantly a place without humans. As history tells us about what resulted to Africa being named a dark continent, a name that embodies a perception of many fathers of European knowledge such as Hegel. This perception is based on the history of the conquest of Africa that positioned Africa only as a cradle of slaves and black bodies as created by God only for the benefit of European pleasures and development. Narratives of history and of the conquest depicts to us how colonial research and methodologies were supported by the European fathers of knowledge. Fanon takes a different position from the European fathers of knowledge to say that the colonised life is life in the zone of nonbeing, there are beings and there is a different humanity. This chapter takes Fanon's position of thinking beyond the curriculum of the empire by adopting an Afrocentric approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education and its curriculum in most colonised countries is Western, or put differently, after colonisation quality education was only for white people specifically during the apartheid era in South Africa. However, the politics of the apartheid system in South Africa did not exist in a vacuum, their genealogy is connected to all the struggles against colonisation of indigenous societies who were colonised or westernised. Hence, Aimé Césaire posed a very important question that proves to be relevant to the understanding of how the curriculum as the source of knowledge, was appropriated by the colonial master as a tool that builds the empire. However, before this question is posed and answered in this chapter, it will be of great assistance to understand two things, the empire and the curriculum of the empire. As

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