**Reimagining Decoloniality and Extension**

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*ABSTRACT*

*The language of change in curricula is increasingly being examined through the lens of decoloniality and Africanisation. This underscores the need to consider Extension education and the practice of extension within the context of contemporary post-colonial debates. This article examined decoloniality and its relevance in the practice of Extension education. To achieve this, the article adopted an interpretative qualitative analysis of relevant literature, documents, and research findings. The findings suggest that successful decolonisation calls for Extension curricula to be attentive to content challenges, the origin and foundation of which may be deeply rooted in the ideologies and logic of the global north. Additionally, the article highlighted the necessity for academics, researchers, and practitioners to prioritise local knowledge and methodologies. This means using a variety of solutions, regardless of their origin (African or Western), and adopting the most effective approach. These measures are essential for fostering effective development within the specific context of Extension Education and developmental needs.*

**Keywords**: Extension, Decoloniality, Extension Education

## 1.    INTRODUCTION

The need for curriculum reform has been a global phenomenon driven by the expansion and massification of higher education. A compelling rationale for re-examining curricular content originates from Freire (1996), who proposed that universities, as agents of societal change, should actively contribute to economic and socio-political freedom through education. This notion resonated strongly within South Africa's education landscape when, in 2016, calls for curriculum change intersected with the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements (Habib, 2021; Hodes, 2017; Maringira & Gukurune, 2017). These events catalysed the discourse on decolonisation and the

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integration of decoloniality into all aspects of education and everyday existence. Considering these events and Freire's (1996) proposition, it is imperative for Extensionists to reflect on what decoloniality means in the field of extension, how it applies, and whether any changes are necessary.

This article's motivation is to evaluate Extension education's effectiveness critically. First, it aims to enhance rural communities' socio-economic conditions within the broader discourse. Second, it underscores the necessity to acknowledge that the discourse of decolonisation and decoloniality raises pivotal questions regarding the epistemology, or theory of knowledge, that underpins the discipline of Extension as both a field of study and a method of practice. This article adopted an interpretative qualitative analysis of relevant literature, documents, and research findings in the field. It is important to note that the literature on decolonisation is extensive, and this article does not aim to provide an exhaustive review of it. Instead, it seeks to pose critical questions for academics, practitioners, and researchers operating within the Extension domain. It is worth noting that the term 'Extension', written with the capital letter 'E', refers to Extension as a discipline of study, while the term 'extension' in the lower case refers to the overall practice of extension.

## 2.    METHODOLOGY

Research methodology frames the logic of inquiry based on ways of thinking or paradigms, shaping the specific methods adopted for an investigation and subsequent analytic processes that help shape conclusions (Rahman, 2017). This article adopted an interpretative qualitative analysis of relevant literature, documents, and research findings to uncover relevant definitions and meanings of Extension education. Data was analysed using content analysis, and critical reflection informed the conclusions.

## 3.    EXTENSION EDUCATION AND ITS ORIGINS

While the concept of extension can be traced back to Mesopotamia (1800 BC) and the Han Dynasty (25-220 A.D.), the earliest documented account relating to the origins of Extension education and curriculum at the tertiary level can be traced back to the late 1850s in the United Kingdom (Jones & Garforth, 1998; Jones, 1989). This period coincided with the peak of colonial expansion, where education was strategically designed to enhance further and solidify colonial rule.

Extension is defined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as systems that are designed to enable farmers, their organisations, and other market actors to access knowledge, information, and technologies. It aims to facilitate their interaction with partners in research, education, agribusiness,

and other pertinent institutions while assisting them in developing their own technical, organisational, and management skills and practices (FAO, 2022). Expanding on the FAO's definition, Bonye, Alfred and Jasaw (2012) asserted that extension services provide invaluable information on new agricultural technologies with the potential to enhance production in farming communities. Swanson (2008) adds that extension services transcend mere technology transfer, highlighting its broader role in community development. This includes the development of human and social capital, enhancing skills and knowledge for production and processing, facilitating access to markets and trade, organising farmers and producer groups, and collaborating with farmers to achieve sustainable natural resource management. Considering these complementary definitions, it can be concluded that Extension, in its broad scope, includes skills related to agriculture and those that are not, such as health, the home, and community development. Regardless of the specific focus, each form of extension shares the common aim of promoting development and inducing change. Often regarded as an informal transfer of knowledge, extension seeks to reshape the way rural communities perceive and respond to their challenges (FAO, 2022).

From an agricultural perspective, the term 'Agricultural Extension' is frequently used in the literature and is associated with advisory services aimed at boosting production, increasing food security, and improving rural livelihoods as part of pro-poor policy programmes. In this article, the terms 'Extension' and 'Agricultural Extension' are used interchangeably, referring to the support service for rural communities engaged in subsistence and commercial farming. The support provided encompasses the provision of skills, knowledge, and overall assistance to aid individuals in addressing farming and livelihood-related challenges.

It is, however, important to note that extension services are primarily driven by government priorities and influenced by various bureaucratic and governance-related machinery and agendas, even though many NGOs offer extension services. While the relationship between rural communities and extension workers may seem straightforward, the language of decolonisation and decoloniality raises questions about the origin of knowledge and its purpose in shaping communities. This then begs the question: What exactly is decolonisation and decoloniality, and does it imply abandoning everything associated with colonialism and all curricula?

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## 4. DECOLONISATION AND DECOLONIALITY

### 4.1. *A Movement Away from Colonisation*

In its simplest form, decolonisation implies a movement away from colonial rule. The post-World War II (WWII) era witnessed a global dismantling of colonial rule. This movement away from colonial rule primarily resulted in the political liberation of countries and the transfer of power to newly independent states. However, in *Waves of Decolonisation*, Luis-Brown (2008) reveals that decolonisation arose before this. He emphasises that between the 1880s and the 1930s, writer-activists in Cuba, Mexico, and the United States of America (USA) developed narratives and theories of decolonisation, advocating for freedom and equality and a breakaway from the 'empire'. Luis-Brown (2008) underscores that the Harlem Renaissance movement of the USA, the Mexican *indigenismo*, and the Cuban *negrismo* in the 1920s influenced each other regarding ideas for transition and the need to challenge imperialist notions.

Similarly, in the 1920s, Du Bois, a civil rights activist in the United States of America, called for local communities to challenge the ideas, logic, and systems introduced by the colonial rule. Thus, these discussions took place before the waves of decolonisation, which took place post-WWII, meaning that the body of literature on decolonisation is not new. This is highlighted in the work of other authors, including Maldonado-Torres (2007), Mbembe (2015), and Bhambra (2009), to name a few. This literature further shows that decolonisation is much more than a movement away from colonial rule through political liberation.

### 4.2. *Neo-colonialism and Development*

The term' development' essentially implies a change or a movement away from a previous condition. Truman used the term 'underdeveloped' in 1949 to suggest that Western conditions and strategies were more desirable, leading to interventions through various programmes in the 'underdeveloped' world. This logic created the impetus for particular socio-economic and political relationships in building the countries of the 'third world' through aid and other means.

The term 'neo-colonialism' gained prominence in the post-WWII era. The term was coined by the first President of independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, in 1965 to describe a situation where political independence coexists with continued influence from former colonisers through entities such as international monetary bodies, multinational corporations, and education and cultural institutions (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Triffin, 2003).

The Bandung Conference of 1955, which preceded the adoption of neo-colonialism as a term, brought together recently independent Afro-Asian non-aligned countries. The conference concluded that development entailed overcoming socio-economic and political welfare obstacles, marking a radical departure from Truman's post-World War II ideology. This new perspective called for an unshackling from colonial rule, implying that the movement away from colonisation was much more than a mere transfer of power.

### 4.3.    *Decoloniality and Power Over Ideas*

Decolonisation and decoloniality have different meanings in many texts, even though some authors, like Maldonado-Torres (2007), use the terms interchangeably. His position is that one should not consider the movement away from colonial rule in a vacuum but instead regard questions of decolonisation as questions about decoloniality. Theorists like Du Bois, Césaire, Fanon, and Cabral were involved in the twentieth-century project for African decolonisation and were engaged in extensive and diverse analyses. These included sociological perspectives (Du Bois), literature (Césaire), psychoanalysis (Fanon), and Agrarian political economy (Cabral). Frantz Fanon emphasised the 'coloniality of knowledge' and the 'coloniality of being' (Mignolo, 2007). His work, often misused during #FeesMustFall, highlighted the denial of African emancipation within European ideas supporting colonialism. This resulted in bodies of knowledge that sought to highlight life's narrative after colonisation and the need for local ideas, thinking, and problem-solving methods to take precedence.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) underscored the domination of the mind and imagination as a critical aspect of colonialism. Similar positions were expressed by Maldonado-Torres (2007) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), the latter noting the invisible control lingering beyond colonial rule, impacting minds, problem-solving logic, and prioritising Western ideas.

Maldonado-Torres (2007), in reflecting on the South African experience, avers that apartheid continued beyond 1994 and that the counter-revolution against the entrenched ways of thinking continues far beyond the change in political power. Fanon (1967), who writes from the perspective of African post-independence, pointed out that decolonisation and Africanisation are not synonymous terms. Instead, he states that decolonisation removes that invisible control introduced through colonisation; Africanisation includes African ideas and ways of thinking in problem-solving. His position was that the former needed to take place for the latter to be effective.

Cabral, the only Agronomist among the well-known decolonial theorists, had a similar view when he called for a "creative destruction" of colonial rule's social and economic effects. This article does not focus on Cabral's position regarding the counter-revolution, although it is valid to argue that his stance on decolonisation is intertwined with his counter-revolutionary position. Instead, this article emphasises Cabral's specific position on decoloniality and agriculture. He challenged the idea that colonialists brought development and introduced the concept of history into Africa (Pedreira, 1973). Instead, he felt that the significance of indigenous knowledge in responding to challenges by farmers needed to be restored and that the only way to do this was to engage in a "creative destruction" of Westernised solutions to local problems. This is echoed in the work of Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a), who argues that portraying the global south as inferior to the worldwide north has psychologically undermined how problems are solved in the global south. In other words, the logic and methodologies are biased, disregarding traditional knowledge systems.

These positions about colonialism and power are described by Quijano (2000) in what he called a "colonial matrix of power" with four interlocking domains. These are control of the economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labour, and control of natural resources), control of authority (institutions and the army), control of gender and sexuality (family and education), and control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education, and identity formation). Using these forms of power keeps people entrenched in a colonised mindset.

Thus, the proponents of decoloniality point to the fact that technology and scientific discoveries were used to justify colonialism. In addition, it was pervasive and invasive as it disregarded indigenous knowledge systems. The decolonisation project thus advances the perspective that there is an urgent need for change in curriculum to move away from Westernised interpretations of problems and their solutions. It is, therefore, essential to demystify how knowledge is constructed in the context of Extension and extension. It qualifies the idea that all people can generate and disseminate useful knowledge, especially in activities like crop cultivation, livestock production, the care and maintenance of the environment, and other rural agricultural practices they and their ancestors have been doing for generations.

### 4.4. *Decoloniality and Curricula*

Curriculum transformation, sometimes called curriculum reform and even curriculum renewal, includes changes made to teaching and learning content and a refocus on research objectives (Esakov, 2009; Clark, 2002; Shay, 2015). Within the context of Extension education, it is possible that twenty

years ago, Extensionists did not necessarily consider the idea of decolonisation and its effects on Extension, when these conversations were already taking place in the Humanities. However, these conversations occurred in Extension in a different language, the language of Indigenous knowledge systems. The language of decoloniality in education, and in particular in epistemology or the theory of knowledge, is more recent, as shown by literature published by Wynter (2003), Gilroy (1995), Spillers (1987), Hartman (1997; 2007), Walcott (2014), Moten (2013), Wilderson (2000), Maart (2014), Nimako (2011), McKittrick (2013), Martina (2014), Kilomba (2008), Vergès (2004), Painter (1995), Brand (2020), Sharpe (2010), Fanon (1976) and Césaire (2001), among others.

The idea of an African-driven epistemology, or theory of knowledge, is strongly supported by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a), who argued that curriculum change was necessary if genuine change was to be achieved. Mbembe (2015) cautions that learning institutions cannot continue providing curricula based upon knowledge premised on Western ideals. Msila and Gumbo (2016) concluded that including Indigenous African epistemologies in curricula can empower educators, researchers, and learners to solve problems more responsive to their environment. The logic is that education and curricula are political tools (Msila, 2007). Hence, if one accepts that within the South African situation, curricula were political and "authority-driven and elitist" (Jansen & Taylor, 2003), then curricula within the post-apartheid period needed to interrogate the nature of knowledge or epistemology propounded in all curricula. This article supports the position that decoloniality requires a shift in epistemology rather than merely including African perspectives.

## 5. DECOLONIALITY AND EXTENSION

Decoloniality requires a disentanglement from the basic ideas which shape learning, change, and development intervention. Maart (2020) notes that bigger questions need to be asked. These include; "What are we removing the colonial from? Ourselves? Our thinking? Our being? And what does such a process include? A series of acts that involve an untying from colonial practices?". In this regard, Maart's (2020:25) position is that "decolonisation is a series of acts aimed at undoing colonisation". It involves reimagining methodologies, recording embedded community knowledge, and incorporating it into curricula for effective development. In rural development, especially in agriculture, decoloniality demands the inclusion of local models based on Indigenous knowledge systems which challenge neo-colonialism (Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014; Zavala, 2013; Chilisa, 2012). Extension education requires removing knowledge that disempowers rural communities and introducing empowering knowledge for effective development.

Academics, researchers, and practitioners must consider their interventions' impact on the rural poor. This involves revisiting development definitions, advice, logic, and solutions, emphasising the nature of the knowledge selected and its appropriateness for the local context. Fanon (1967) stresses the need to understand the nature of knowledge and the impact of the colonial legacy, encouraging a careful consideration of introduced knowledge during colonial rule.

Understanding the environment, respecting indigenous knowledge systems, and questioning the methodology's appropriateness are crucial for true development and empowerment. Researchers and practitioners must assess whether methodologies align with dominant ideologies or uniquely address community problems, emphasising incorporating Indigenous knowledge into proposed solutions. This process enables questioning issues of power and knowledge and being in Extension education.

## 6.    CONCLUSION

Decolonisation extends beyond the dismantling of colonial rule. It prompts a critical examination of knowledge, challenging the assumptions that what the global north offers is superior and that knowledge from the global south is inferior. The decolonisation discourse questions the nature of curricula and the solutions embedded in curricular materials, often influenced by texts and ideologies from the global north. Engaging in this debate does not entail eradicating all forms of knowledge; instead, it provides an opportunity to question power dynamics and epistemic influences. This allows for demystifying the link between ideology and the nature of Extension education.

The primary goal of development interventions should be the liberation of individuals, not only in physical space but also in their thought processes, valuing local knowledge and shaping the design of solutions in rural communities. The language of decolonisation and decoloniality necessitates that Extension curricula offer insights into the role and relevance of indigenous knowledge and systems as potential solutions. Decolonising the Extension curriculum goes beyond including perspectives of African scholars; it requires embracing reflexive practice, altering the methodologies being taught, and thereby enhancing the skill set of Extension workers. This, in turn, enables more effective engagement with rural communities.

For researchers, it is imperative to actively record Indigenous knowledge solutions and systems. By documenting these practices, they can be incorporated into curricula, contributing to the ongoing process of decolonisation in Extension education. The next stage is to interrogate epistemological trends in Extension and to examine the extent to which a decolonised Extension curriculum has been

adopted. Key questions to be asked include: Who is the curriculum designed for? What principles guide the selection of knowledge to be included in the curriculum? To what extent do teaching practices recognise Indigenous methodologies for extension practice? Who records research findings, and what methodological approach is used to analyse findings?

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