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# Higher education decolonisation: #Whose voices and their geographical locations?

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# Higher Education decolonisation: #Whose Voices and their geographical locations?

Arinola Adefila <sup>a</sup>, Rafael Vieira Teixeira <sup>b</sup>, Luca Morini <sup>c</sup>, Maria Lúcia Teixeira Garcia <sup>b</sup>, Tania Mara Zanotti Guerra Frizzera Delboni <sup>d</sup>, Gary Spolander <sup>e</sup> and Mouzayian Khalil-Babatunde <sup>f</sup>

A - Centre for Global Learning: Education and Attainment, Whitefriars Building, Coventry University, Coventry, UK

B - Department of Social Work, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES), Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil;

C - Centre for Global Learning: Education and Attainment, Coventry University, Coventry, UK;

D - Departamento de Teorias do Ensino e Práticas Educacionais (DTEPE/UFES), Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil (UFES);

E - Social Work, Faculty of Medicine, University of Keele, Keele, UK;

F - Warwick Interdisciplinary Research Centre for International Development (WICID), University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

*“To centre otherness is to accept that no single voice speaks for us all”  
Carol Azumah Dennis 2018*

## Abstract

Calls continue for the decolonisation of higher education (HE). Based on internationalisation debates, a research team from Africa, Europe and Latin America, reviewed published decolonisation voices. Using bibliometric analysis and a conceptual review of abstracts, the authors examined the drivers framing decolonisation in HE and identified the voices in those debates which involved the historically oppressed and those wishing to elicit change in these debates. The paper recognises the importance for decolonisation in education as the tensions explored by the authors often intersect through HE into other domains of the political, social, economic and culturally important areas for replication and change in society.

## Keywords

Decolonisation; Coloniality; Higher Education; Publishing; Language;

## Introduction

The debate around decolonisation in Higher Education (HE) is topical and sometimes controversial (wa Thiong'o, 1994; Smith, 2013) engaging authors of different disciplines and driving a multi-layered discourse involving many stakeholders around the world. Furthermore, the concept of decolonisation has different meanings to different people in differing contexts, with dimensions that encapsulate political, economic, cultural, material and epistemic dimensions

(Maldonado-Torres, 2011). Others, such as Ibañez & Sandoval (2015:103), view colonisation, particularly in education as “having multiple characterisations”. The political, philosophical and cultural dimensions of the term mean that it is enacted in many disciplines and teaching-learning spaces and most significantly belies a moral responsibility which the authors argue educators and learners are not always aware of.

The rationale for this article is rooted in a discussion about internationalisation between European, Latin American and African researchers around different understandings of decolonisation that took place in January 2020. This debate involved 2 different groups - one historically oppressed segment and the other that does not experience coloniality but want to engage with the challenges. There are many other stakeholders in this discourse too – institutions, students, employers, etc. The Education field is undoubtedly the major arena for the debate on decolonisation, because the tension expressed here intersect through HE into other domains of the political, social, economic and cultural. The concerns about the role of curriculum, and the strategic place that the decolonisation debate has in HE is important for both theoretical and practical reasons.

Motivated by this conversation, the researchers have sought to explore contemporary discourse of decolonisation and its implications for understanding, teaching, internationalising and researching HE. We decided to write a series of papers articulating this conversation, with the present one focusing on identifying the demographics and geographic distribution of the authors in the area and how these criteria shape the debate, exploring the geographic provenance, representative focus and chronology of published articles.

This paper is an invitation to examine radical perspectives on how the discourse of decolonisation centres and how authors navigate the space.

## **Positioning**

Firstly, we need to define our field of research. As a polysemic term,

*“Decolonisation can be broadly understood as an umbrella term for diverse efforts to resist the distinct but intertwined processes of colonisation and racialisation, to enact transformation and redress in reference to the historical and ongoing effects of these processes, and to create and keep alive modes of knowing, being, and relating that these processes seek to eradicate”* (Stein & Andreotti, 2016, 978-981).

Secondly, we have to engage with the obvious political, cultural and social enactments of decolonisation (Mbembe, 2016; Carr & Thésée, 2017) as well as the epistemic dimensions and practices that influence us all (Ferguson, 2012; Zwane, 2019; Andreotti et al, 2015). There is now widespread acknowledgement that colonisation and coloniality have significant impact on HE practice and systems (Smith 2013; wa Thiong'o, 1994; Mignolo, 2012). Tensions remain around what to do about this as well as contending with the “guilt” and politics (Johnson, 2012; Fataar, 2018), notions of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) and powerlessness. These deeply embedded HE assemblages lead some to think that the best perhaps easiest option is to ‘move on and carry on’, because the complexities of addressing the damage of coloniality may upend the roots framings of knowledge production in unhelpful ways. Many others believe resisting epistemic violence associated with colonisation, and more so coloniality, have a social justice element which cannot simply be ignored (Le Grange, 2016; Ahmed, 2000). The former is advocated by scholars from both former colonies and former colonisers (de Beer & Petersen, 2016; Santos, 2017), who argue that structural damage is so profound and colonised practices and norms such as common language, laws and monetary systems so entrenched, that countries which experienced

colonisation find it less contentious adapting to the colonised mechanisms and circumstances (Heleta, 2016; Richardson, 2018; Vandeyar, 2019). Some even argue that colonisation had its merits (sic) and recipients should be “grateful”, as did Gilley’s controversial “Case for Colonialism paper (we refuse here to dignify it with a citation – please see Taylor, 2018 and Oleksy, 2018), for some context on the case of this paper and critical responses. This shows how overtly colonial arguments are still legitimated in academia and more widely to the point of achieving the dignity of publication and policy discourse, and consequently this area needs ongoing scrutiny and critical self-examination.

This paper favours the social justice framing with respect to decolonisation, which requires ethical action to address ongoing and persistent forms of coloniality in order to probe the construction of cognitive injustice across education systems, theories and processes (Santos, 2014). This stance is typically recognised by the majority in HE (Fataar, 2018) as the discourse integrated a strong emphasis around the cognitive dissonance of knowledge seeking and production which stifles delegitimised epistemologies from the formerly colonised internationalisation (Heleta, 2016; de Wit, 2018). However, a number of critics (Pashby & Andreotti, 2016; Clifford & Montgomery, 2017; de Wit, 2018) demonstrate how internationalisation rather than supporting decolonisation actually perpetuates coloniality. A more transformative agenda (Zwane, 2019) is called for, which authentically decentres (Angu, 2018; Dennis, 2018, Mwangi et al, 2018) the hegemony of western, Eurocentric epistemologies and creates a more robust multiplicity of knowledges.

Furthermore, there are more radical voices (Walton, 2018) calling for the dismantling of subtle forms of coloniality, which do not transform practice, content or pedagogies; knowledge exchange which reinforces coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) and research support which privileges those with power within former colonising countries (Vandeyar, 2019).

### **Concerns and caveats**

We acknowledge the difficulty of language both from a disciplinary perspective, which silos and restricts our understanding and also as a cultural challenge that distorts meaning and sense making (Authors et al 2016). The challenge of understanding, sense making, contextualisation and critiquing are complicated by our shorthand use of common words such as “colonisation”, “decolonisation”, “internationalisation”, “capitalist” and so forth. Such words have taken on multilayered meaning with profound symbolic gestures which need to be explained and reexamined.

For example, Knight and de Wit (2018) discuss the contested nature of the word internationalisation:

*“Who could have forecasted that internationalisation would transform from what has been traditionally considered a process based on values of cooperation, partnership, exchange, mutual benefits and capacity building to one that is increasingly characterised by competition, commercialisation, self-interest and status building?”*

In the complex mechanisms of political and economic influence on HE, leading to commercialisation and massification of the academy, such transformations have shifted the meaning of concepts.

Our location here reveals our relationships with the term and assemblages of colonisation in itself an act of decolonisation (Denis, 2018). Consideration must therefore be given to the arguments of critics such as Santos (2014) that we consider epistemologies of the colonised, which have often been delegitimised through what he has called ‘*epistemicide*’. Moving away from the safety of an unmarked stance (Denis, 2018), we use the epistemological dialogue of indigeneity to engage our political and cultural relationships with the terms we are using. We also appropriate decolonial discursive practices by acknowledging the multiplicity of ideas we have come across in our learning journeys’ (Madden, 2014) and how these have framed our understanding of the terms. As such we recognise that decolonisation is often situated by many

authors (Andreotti, 2011; Mignolo, 2012) at the nexus of neoliberalism, social justice, power, coloniality, inequality and the need for change.

## **Methodology**

The study uses publications to interrogate the thematic discourse around decolonisation in Higher Education. The period of consideration was 1985-2020, covering the most recent generation since European colonial era began to wane in the 1960s. The articles are a useful and reliable means of examining how the publications have significantly expanded over the last 5 years and the themes that frame the development of the discourse in academic circles. Considering the pluralistic nature of decolonial writing, we acknowledge that a lot of rich data is available in non-academic publications, which our current study doesn't capture. The research has focused on academic discourse which links to the co-production, validation and legitimisation of knowledge in Higher Education, as well as teaching and learning principles and associated pedagogy. Bibliometric analysis (Waltman & van Eck, 2012) is used to examine the drivers behind the framing of decolonisation in HE. The metrics and terminology in this study have broad meaning and varied interpretation, accordingly, this paper focuses on the voices of the authors. This analysis leaves out the citation and supposed reach or impact of the articles. The bibliometric data informed a conceptual review of abstracts (Huberman & Miles 2002; Kennedy 2007). There are various bibliometric approaches (Bornmann & Marx 2013) that allow for the rich analysis of published material. Our bibliometric approach focused on author, institution publisher and abstract analysis, as well as keyword co-occurrence analysis.

Furthermore, the study uses a conceptual review to critically organise articles aligned to concepts or themes (Kennedy 2007), providing a narrative of the current understanding and examining how different perspectives may be justified. Conceptual reviews provide a critical snapshot of a topic or phenomena without interrogating detail as in meta analysis or systematic reviews. In this article we examine the discourse of decolonisation in HE from the assemblage of authors involved; the vignette explores the characterisations

evident in the debate and patterns and embodiments displayed by the kinds of writers engaging in the topic.

Research question for this study:

Whose voices shape the discourse of decolonisation? Where are they geographically located and why does this matter?

The study was carried out in five distinct steps:

Step 1: Framing questions for the review

Step 2: Identifying relevant work

Step 3: Assessing the quality of studies

Step 4: Bibliometric analysis of authors, keywords, journal publishers, etc.

Step 5: Analysing the themes

Framing questions for the review: This is essential to delineating the scope and boundaries of a study. There are many discourses around decolonisation, including political, economic, sociocultural and epistemological. This review focuses on a specific, clear, unambiguous and structured question (Huberman & Miles 2002) around decolonisation discourse in HE. When the investigation began, it became apparent that the term decolonisation was widely used in the HE sector, thus slight modifications were made to the protocol, in order to precisely define the conceptualisation of decolonisation in HE. The boolean string was a combination of decolonisation and Higher Education.

The study focuses on the research question above. Further study has been undertaken using discourse analysis to provide a systematic review of the data. The study does not include terminology related to the decolonisation discourse such as indigenisation, although we recognise the overlap of these discourses along with the importance in their differences and pluralism. Likewise the shared economic and material basis of coloniality. The study focuses on English language publications only.

Identifying relevant work: The search for studies relating to the topic was extensive. Multiple resources were used to ensure a broad cross section of

relevant work were integrated. The selection criteria was strictly aligned with the review questions a priori. Explicit reasons for inclusion and exclusion were noted and justified. SCOPUS was used to capture all relevant work; this was triangulated with searches from EBSCO in England. Other databases returned too many irrelevant data because “decolonisation” in medicine referred to populations receiving treatment for infections caused by bacterial colonies.

Assessing the quality of studies - the papers were carefully assessed for quality in line with the following criteria

- a) Robust methodology
- b) Original study
- c) Peer reviewed publication

The bibliometric analysis used statistical methods to categorise authors, institutions, publishers and key themes. First, a bibliometric tabulation of the themes was undertaken for overall characteristics and quality; this included thematic categories, similarities, contexts, and prominent differences. Simple statistical methods were used to provide the categorisations.

Interpreting the findings - The researchers examined the themes emerging from the data. Six researchers participated in the process. Analysis of content utilised central tendency measures (Bardin, 1977) to demonstrate the key words used in the abstracts. The process captured 166 references. Ten of them were discarded, as irrelevant to the research question. The remaining 156 were triangulated with searches from EBSCO; however, this database did not present any relevant papers about our theme. The final list included 134 papers and 22 book chapters. The 22 book chapters were excluded, as inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed journal papers, these represented 80.7% of our Scopus list Those 134 papers have been published in 96 different journals. The abstracts were read and relevant papers about decolonisation were selected.

The variables chosen that provided a reasonable and accessible profile of the authors were gender, geographical location of author, journal, and year of publication.

### **Results and Discussion:**

The bibliometric analysis showed the publications with respect to continent and country (where institution is located) of author, publisher and geographical headquarters of journal.

Figure 1

The analysis also revealed the area of education the articles focused on and key words in the abstract and titles.

Figure 2

The findings were grouped into six (6) major themes which are discussed below.

### **Grassroots movements**

#FeesMustFall appeared as Africa/African issues in this field. The students movement in South Africa, started in the years 2015-16, regarding the perceived slow pace of transformation within institutions of higher learning (Luescher, Loader & Mugume 2017; Heleta, 2016). According to Jansen (2019, p. 1), “the student protests starting in 2015 added a new term to the lexicon of South African universities: decolonisation”. It is clear, adds the author, the term decolonisation has historically referred to anti-colonial struggles since the 1950s to signal continued efforts to find liberation from the legacy of colonialism. As Jansen argues, this is not a simple, negative process of “undoing”, as 1) historical processes can’t simply be “undone” and 2) a simple subtractive approach might disrupt opportunities to appropriate and adapt elements of that legacy (e.g. existing infrastructure) towards liberatory processes.

Still, “[...] literally overnight, the word decolonisation rolled off the lips of activities, bannered everyday protests and initiated across mainly the formerly white campuses seminars, conferences and committees to determine meanings and methods for changing universities - their complexions, cultures and curricula”. This student’s movement in South Africa was important to raise several publications starting in 2016, as shown in Graphic 1.

See Graphic 1: Decolonisation plus High Education: publication by year

### **Majority of voices located in former colonies**

There is a predominance of authors who publish from countries that were colonised. 52% of the authors come from institutions located on the African continent. These, in addition to authors from Asia and Oceania institutions, represent 65% of the total (Graphic 2). Although it cannot be said that the origin of the authors proves a critical perspective on colonisation, there is considerable volume of this debate in the colonised continents.

Of 134 papers analysed, the authors are predominantly from South Africa (47, 35%), followed by the United States (12, 9%) and thirdly the United Kingdom (8, 6%). But, in our field of inquiry linked to journals, the first paper from South Africa was published only in 2009, with the debate intensifying after 2015 (when the #feesmustfall movement started) (Fourie-Malherbe & Muller, 2020).

See Graphic 2. Decolonisation authors per continent

See Graphic 3. Authors Institutions

### **Gender**

When we consider all author’s gender, 51% are women. If we look per each country, we see 54% of women authors in SA. Idahosa (2019) suggests the necessity for a decolonised gender studies. We would like to highlight two

issues: the gender oppression and the field that the authors are researching characterised per social reproduction in capitalist dynamic. It is therefore relevant that many of the publications touch on themes of intersectionality, particularly in a discipline such as education, which, while still perceived as strongly gendered, suffers from the same disproportions in its professoriate and international career pathways – say something about demographics (Kwiek & Roszka, 2020). Also, as Manion & Sahal (2019) highlight, that “the very theme of decolonising research and practice in feminist education research locates this issues within a nexus of debates concerning how knowledge is produced, by who, on what topics, and for what purposes(s)”.

Of the 96 journals that published articles on decolonisation, 41 focus on the education area (30.6%). Of these, six focus on the Higher Education debate; three incorporate the ethnic-racial issue and gender issue. In addition to these areas, journals are linked to areas such as Engineering (Technology), Health, Law, Arts, Linguistics, Theology, Information Sciences, Communication, etc.

### **Publishing journals**

Among the journals that published the most papers on the theme Decolonisation, we have eight that published four articles each (Teaching in Higher Education, South African Journal of Psychology, South African Journal of Education, Perspectives in Education, International Journal of African Renaissance Studies, HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies, Education as Change, Higher Education Research and Development). Of these, five are strictly Education publications. The other three journals with four articles published on the topic are in the areas of Theology, Psychology and Studies on Africa Renaissance. The next tranche, publishing three articles apiece, are also Education editorials with one exception in the field of Geography. There are a total of five in this category.

Of the 13 journals that published the most on the topic (with four or three articles published) nine are major Education editorials, contributing 44 articles out of a total of 134 published in the Scopus database.

Although our research on SCOPUS has been based on the key words – Decolonisation and Higher Education – the theme Decolonisation has been widely connected with educational discussions. According to Stein and Andreotti (2016, 978-981), decolonisation and education, especially Higher Education are a subject of significant interest in both social movements and scholarly critique across the globe due to “the central role of universities in social reproduction, and in the creation and legitimation of knowledge”.

However, our analysis reveals that the chief editors and significant number of the editorial team are largely based in former colonising countries. As such, the debate around the theme of colonisation expresses a reality that is not harmonious. Of the 96 journals, 45 are British and 21 are North American. The inclusion of six Dutch and six Swiss, make a total of 78, equivalent to 81.25% of the total of journals. The editorial staff of the journals also follows the same trend: of the 96, 59 have North American and British editors (61.45%). When we consider the Scopus list of active journals (2019), 48% of 25,185 journals are based in UK and US. In Scimago database, the results is 55% of the journals are UK and the USA. It means, the prevalence of journals in this index databases publish in mainstream science, and the peripheral science were less visible for an international audience (Velho, 1985; Almeida & Gracio, 2018).

From an international perspective, the tension between different understandings and approaches to decolonisation and decoloniality are linked to the different perspectives and dimensions through which the phenomenon is experienced. This is not only the result of the colonisation process, but also the structure and mechanisms that react to and oppose the different ways coloniality expresses itself, depending on the specific context and histories. Moreover, decolonisation as a term is open to varying types of analysis, because at times it implies a theme that cannot be ignored in countries with a colonising past, this allows its meaning to become polysemic. Higher education as a system is seeking to shape the debate around decolonisation, thus other stakeholders and actors such as the state and groups in society are obliged to contend with the power of governments and their relationships with its agents.

## Content

The locus of debate here centred on transformative learning experiences, mirroring the 7 elements in Carr & Thésée (2017): pedagogy, lived experiences, curriculum, leadership, educational policy, epistemology and institutional culture.

The importance of this debate regarding decolonisation and curricula, can be confirmed by 26 articles which discuss this area of knowledge and field of studies (corresponding to 19.4% of all articles). From these total, 20 present “curriculum” as one of the keywords, and the other six present this field of studies in the title, but not in the keywords. The form and content of the curricula are at the heart of the dispute and it is very interesting to note the growth, in the second decade of this century, of this debate in South Africa. The curriculum is a strategic vehicle to affirm the actuality of this oppression process, or, on the other hand, to appease and reduce it to a mere schematism and the absence of alternative pedagogies.

The concept of curriculum discussed by the papers is related to: curriculum reform based on the notion of Ubuntu-Currere (Hlatshwayo; Shawa, 2020); the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges as an essential movement for the decolonisation of higher education institutions (Harvey & Russel-Mundine, 2019); the deconstruction rather than the decolonisation of the neocolonial curriculum (McGregor & Park 2018). It argues for an inclusive curriculum, examination of genres of power and double consciousness to decolonise higher education (Janks, 2019); and an *imbizo* approach (where questions are answered; concerns are heard and advice is taken) for the integration of African traditional health knowledge and practices into existing nursing curricula (Moeta et al., 2019). In addition, there is an emphasis on the implications of decolonisation for the Economics Teaching and Business Studies Teaching (EBST) curriculum (disciplinary/content knowledge) with the inclusion of African perspectives and the integration of economic and business history in the curriculum (America & Le Grange, 2019). This includes students’ perspectives about decolonising the curriculum, but not advocating for the eradication of

Western knowledge in the curriculum, but rather for decentring it (Meda, 2019). Other ideas include, reconceptualisation of the undergraduate and postgraduate international law curricula (Nienaber 2019) and Africanising of curricula (Ally & August, 2018).

The papers also discuss curriculum related to: the impact of neoliberal agendas on curriculum through a postcolonial and decolonising lens (Gyamera & Burke, 2018); issues of decolonisation and transformation of geography curricula at different universities in South Africa (Knight, 2018); exploration of curriculum linked to decolonisation, social justice and agency (Angu, 2018). Examination of the global education market demonstrates how HE builds new hierarchies of knowledge production that reverse prior decolonisation achievement, re-westernise higher education, and stifle the criticality essential for political and social reform (Hall, 2018). Decolonising educationalist education is embedded in a critical approach that aims to create counter hegemonic intellectual spaces which could support a change of praxis (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Furthermore, authors such as Fomunyam & Teferra (2017) support the notion that specific curriculum encounters offer a vital opportunity for the analysis of effectiveness and curriculum responsiveness in the decolonisation process. Others including Chaka, Lephalala & Ngesi (2017) propose that deparochialism and null curriculum concepts should be examined during decolonisation to ensure that it eparochialises the English studies discipline. The decolonised education system are also seen a key process in denouncing repressive tendencies through curriculum decolonisation movements (Mutekwe, 2017). This has enabled constructs of decolonisation and re-inhabitation to promote collective empowerment of the rural communities amongst the youth (Huffling, Carlone; Benavides, 2017), ensuring the prominence of efforts to improve the decolonisation of university structures and cultures (Vorster & Quinn, 2017). Luckett (2016) argues that this provides a contestation of curriculum control, focusing particularly on decolonisation of Humanities and Social Sciences to include an African epistemic in the HE curricula (Higgs, 2016). In South Africa, in particular, examination of how to validate indigenous African knowledge systems with equal legitimisation with respect to ways of knowing among the array of knowledge systems in the world is thoroughly articulated. Furthermore,

the significance of archives in the decolonisation process of HE curricula in South Africa (Saurombe, 2018), along with the conceptualisation of the Writing Lab's participation in new forms of knowledge building contribute to the creation of decolonised spaces and shifts in institutional culture (Muna et al, 2019).

The decolonisation as applied to university curriculum is a dispute about a "knowledge project" (Jansen, 2019). Reflecting about the curriculum as a field of dispute takes us to Apple (2016), a critical theorist, for whom the curriculum is not a neutral and disinterested field of knowledge, but rather a mechanism of power: a mechanism of power with regards to which critical questions need to be asked. Why are some important and not others? Whose knowledge are they? What are the power relationships involved in the selection process that resulted in this curriculum? The authors in our study address these in many ways, focusing on the political and social entanglements of colonisation, coloniality and decolonisation. This also centres on knowledge production and power. As Jansen (2019, p. 2) argues: "Who produces knowledge? What knowledge is produced and what knowledge is "left out" are central questions of inquiry within the politics of knowledge".

Most of the articles address how the transformation and decolonisation of higher education involves the issue of curriculum reform presenting proposals relating to a new concept of curriculum, for instance, as Ubuntu-Currere, to respond to context, democratic difference and cosmopolitan perspectives (Hlatshwayo; Shawa, 2020). The prioritisation of theory and practice sensitive to the context is also essential to disrupt Western epistemic domination (Harvey; Russel-Mundine, 2019) and some papers discuss curriculum decolonisation linked to social justice and agency in order to explore matrices of power, culture and knowledge (Angu, 2018). Some papers present the curriculum renewal process happening in the university to disrupt various forms of oppression that are manifest in the composition of a colonised higher education in South Africa. The idea of plurality of voices is essential to provoke the creation of disciplinary and interdisciplinary spaces for curriculum engagement and sustainable education experience (Fomunyam; Teferra, 2017). However, the discussion towards curriculum decolonisation in higher

education is related only to some disciplinary field or only as a module thematic or topical component in a discipline, for instance, restricted to African literature or Africa writings (Chaka; Lephhalala; Ngesi, 2017).

The Western research training has made much progress in recent decades (Datta, 2018). Stein and Andreotti (2016) state the increasingly debate of decolonisation in HE is associated with the central role of universities in social reproduction, and in the creation and legitimation of knowledge.

### **Language/use of context**

Analysing the key words, we identified that the highlighted: (Education - 87; Decolonizing/decolonization/decolonisation – 76; Higher – 45; South – 21; African – 20; indigenous – 19; Curriculum – 20). In the key words we identified the word decolonisation was written using z and s, expressing the difference between American English (**Decolonization**) or British English (**Decolonisation**). Indigenous words (like Ubuntu, imbizo, uMakhulu) and native/indigenous issues appeared in the title, inviting us to use words that meanings put us facing questions as: Ubuntu (a quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity).

Scopus prioritises the English language we identified authors from countries where English is not an official language i.e. Brazil (Portuguese), 4 from Italy, 5 from China and 1 from France.

### **Final Thoughts and Conclusion**

Our explorations of the literature showed that the centre of debate is in the colonised continents, where the countries at the periphery of global capitalism are located. As an actual and relevant theme, the issue has been drawing attention of academics due to the challenges of 21st Century capitalism, particularly the deep crisis of inequality and power perpetuated by cycles of coloniality which are exacerbated at the periphery.

Exploring the literature, it became rapidly evident that any discussion around “decolonisation” inevitably includes a conversation about its opposite - “colonisation”; - and both express a complex process imbricated within society as a whole, and in a vast plurality of forms (Dennis 2018). In addition to this dialectic - decolonisation and colonisation – the literature highlighted the relevance of the term coloniality, coined by Quijano (1997) –defined as something that transcends the particularities of historical colonialism and that does not disappear with independence or decolonisation. Coloniality, being “the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations, produced by colonial cultures and structures in the modern/ colonial capitalist/ patriarchal world-system” (Grosfoguel, 2007: 219). Other broadly cited authors in the examined papers, for instance, Maldonado-Torres (2007), view coloniality as a system which shapes how epistemic, material and aesthetic resources reproduce modernity’s colonial project through its organisation and dissemination of materials. As a result, discussions around decoloniality involves the ongoing efforts to challenge coloniality, whilst the discourse of decolonisation has its roots in efforts during the colonial era that challenged imperialism by colonising countries (Mignolo, 2011; Zembylas, 2018).

Analysing the literature, it also became rapidly apparent that the majority of the authors and institutions are located in the African continent. In particular, the most recent wave of publications (2015 onwards) reflects an historical process emerging from key social movements like #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall. These social movements started contesting the equality of access to HE together with the rising cost of fees in higher education, both having a major social justice component.

Moving beyond the centrality in the current literature of the above-mentioned South African political initiatives, it’s important to also highlight the plurality of various movements and struggles against coloniality; these are often not coherent or unanimous in scope, breadth or rational. The range of diverse views and voices are reasonably linked with the multiplicity populations, experiences and languages involved. Accordingly, the specific terminologies of

decolonisation are pluralistic (and, it is important to highlight, sidestep what is often perceived to be a subtractive nature of decolonial discourse – leaving open a question as to what would occupy the void – see Jansen, 2017).

These movements and demands adopted instead contextualised affirmative expressions of the struggle against coloniality, using plural labels that are reflective of local conditions and specific demands, such as indigeneity (Paradies, 2006), indigenous rights and land rights (Xanthaki, 2007), anti-imperialism (Gobat, 2013), race and equality (Hutcheson et al., 2011), negritude (Wilder, 2015).

While there is a definite overlap between many of these discourses, it's also exceedingly important to highlight their differences and their pluralism, so as to not simplistically lump them together. Furthermore, it's also necessary to understand the shared economic and material basis of coloniality, shaped by extractivism (Maldonado-Torres, 2016), another recurring shared theme of the examined literature.

For this reason, it's important to acknowledge how colonisation has an economic foundation that is maintained through the re-composition of this dependent relationship successively as a form of capitalism development, that is, uneven and combined (Lenin, 2009; Leher & Vittoriano, 2015). Education, and more generally knowledge production (including research), play a pivotal role in this replication, highlighting the importance of this debate. With the discourse of decolonisation coming to the fore in this area, we have chosen to research this particular terminology, while acknowledging that it doesn't provide full coverage of the above mentioned struggles.

The formal research in Social and Human Science that is following this renewed wave of activism is still struggling to understand and question the realities of coloniality by asking why and what is “the best way to know”. Moving from and linking activism into academic discourse, the literature we explore points at a refutation of the idea that the only legitimate way of knowing is Euro-centric

science, as expressed in one language and one geo-political perspective – the natively English-speaking core of the capitalism.

Following this insight, future studies will be oriented at more fully examining the plural trends and directions of the existing literature, and identifying gaps for both research and activism.

### **Limitations**

The restrictions inherent in the database used present a number of limitations. Scopus is a database that concentrates on English journals. The results should be explore other database in Spanish and Portuguese (for example). The search was performed in the United Kingdom, search engines can vary depending on where you are in the world. English is the predimant language of many journals, but African schools might also prefer to publish in indigenous languages for impact and to resist coloniality?

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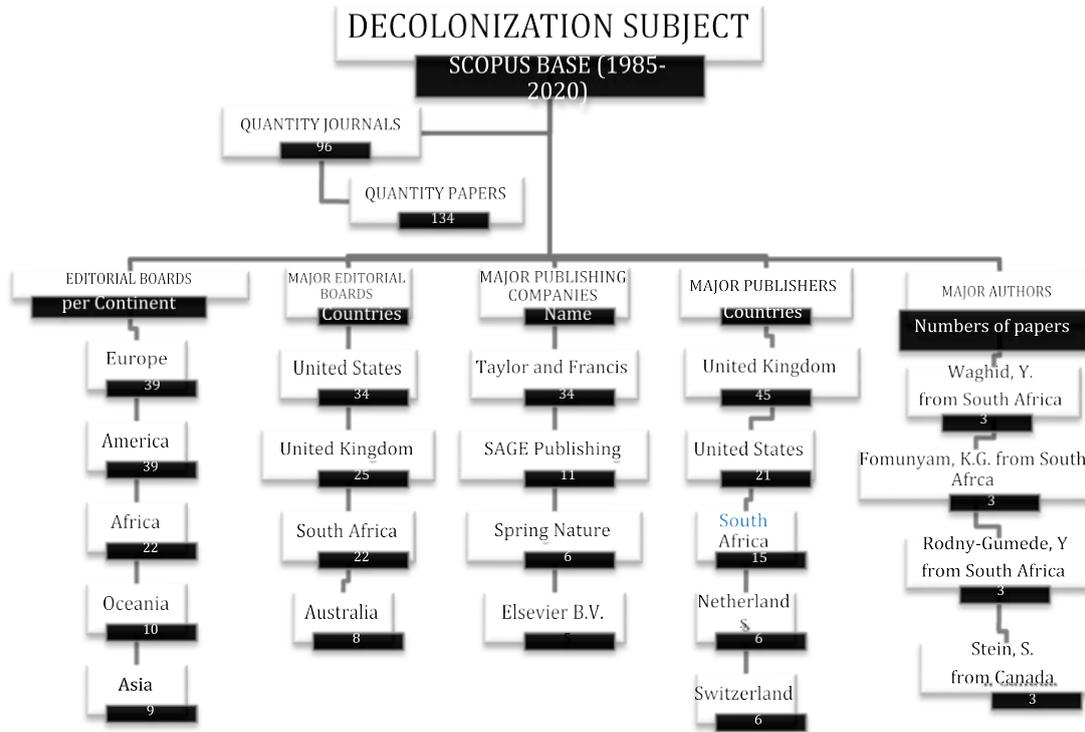


Figure 1. Bibliometric analysis – Countries, publishers and authors.

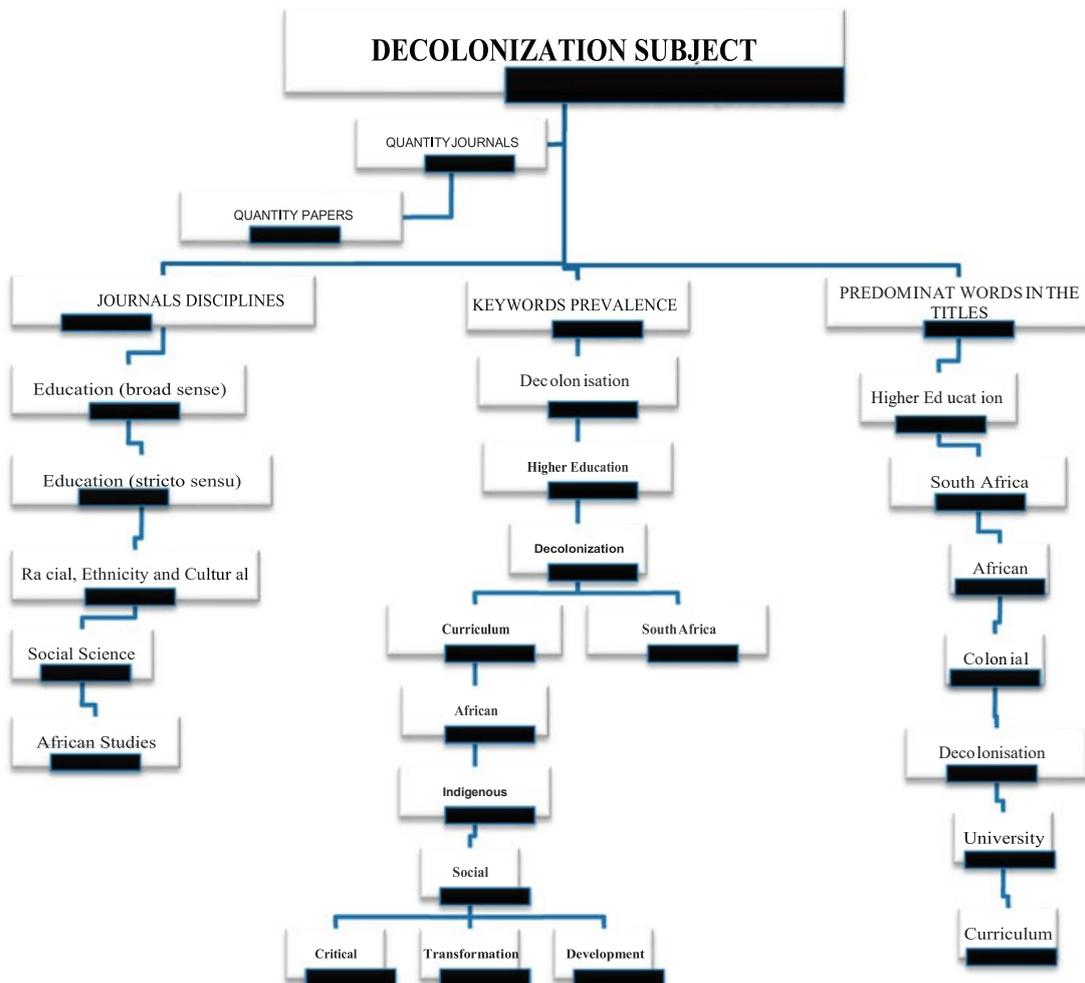


Figure 2. Bibliometric analysis - key words.