

The exploration of academic staff's perceptions of the concept of curriculum decolonization in the selected Eastern Cape TVET college

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Citation: Ngcobo, P., & Khoza, S. D. (2024). The exploration of academic staff's perceptions of the concept of curriculum decolonization in the selected Eastern Cape TVET college. *Pedagogical Research*, 9(3), em0214. <https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/14700>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 10 Jan. 2024

Accepted: 24 May 2024

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of academic staff on the concept of curriculum decolonization in a selected technical and vocational education and training (TVET) college in Eastern Cape Province. South Africa has been confronted with calls for curriculum decolonization and at some point, students all over the country decided to embark on a nationwide protest asking for the decolonization of the curriculum in the institutions of higher learning between 2015 and 2016 through the #feesmustfall movement. The study focused on one Eastern Cape TVET college as an institution of higher learning as a case study. A qualitative approach was adopted, and an interpretive paradigm was employed. There are about eight TVET colleges in Eastern Cape Province offering different courses. The researcher purposively selected two lecturers from each of the five campuses, one assistant director academic and one deputy principal academic to get to a sample size of 12. Critical theory guided this investigation. Data was analysed thematically. The study revealed that some academics do not know what decolonization all is about. There is no formal involvement of lecturers, when it comes to the process of curriculum decolonization at the said TVET college, however, there are engagements on general perspectives about transformation in TVET college sector. The study recommends that TVET colleges should develop a policy on curriculum decolonization. TVET colleges should form a committee that will look at matters of curriculum transformation, which should be inclusive of lecturers, students, managers, and relevant external experts of curriculum transformation.

Keywords: curriculum decolonization, TVET colleges, perceptions, curriculum development, transformation

INTRODUCTION

The concept of curriculum decolonization has been at the centre of debates since 1994 in South Africa. However, between the years 2015 and 2016, it has drawn a lot of attention in the academic sphere. Ndamane (2018) argues that the interest of this debate is triggered by the impact of the current educational system on students and the model of education this system holds for South African higher education (HE). The ongoing conversations about curriculum change also require significant involvement of academic staff such as lecturers, heads of divisions, and college management as the people who are implementers of the curriculum. It is within this premise that the current study aimed at exploring academic staff's perceptions of the concept of curriculum decolonization in a selected technical and vocational education and training (TVET) college in South Africa. TVET colleges in South Africa are gradually gaining recognition for skills development and the sector is known for its stagnant curriculum that needs to be revisited to keep up with the changing technological advancements, the silence from the academic staff in this regard leaves much to be desired.

We saw in 2015 during #feesmustfall protests in South Africa that curriculum decolonization was at the centre of the students' demands. The protests affected both universities and TVET colleges, but with the students and not the academic staff, behind the revolt. In support of the above, Heleta (2018) suggests that HE system requires a fundamental overhaul of the whole epistemological model underlying the current educational system, and the academic staff are the most appropriate to provide such responses. There is a need to link the calls for transformation and decolonization in the South African academy to broader struggles and discuss how South African HE is responding to these challenges, tensions, and opportunities (Hlatshwayo, 2020).

Voster (2016) suggests that the academics who have been educated and have worked under the traditions of Western educational institutions would not produce the indigenous African perspectives. The problem of non-decolonised education as indicated above has been a national issue and most of the time nobody wants to take responsibility often academics are not heard debating about this as a national issue that impacts directly teaching and learning, with academics being the core drivers of learning and teaching. Dladla (2011) argues that the consequences of a curriculum not yet decolonised have serious psychological,

educational, and societal ramifications that can transcend beyond the academic environment. Furthermore, a lack of representative teaching has been shown to link feelings of isolation and disconnect amongst staff and student bodies.

In explaining how decolonization of curriculum looks like, in practice, Voster (2016) asserts that how we select, and value knowledge is related to our past experiences and other factors that we were not fully aware of and encompasses approaches to learning and teaching that are influenced by the practice of Western European, frequently at the expense of other pedagogical practices from around the world. Voster (2016) further argues that at the Kingdom University, this was addressed through an inclusive curriculum framework that has three core principles:

1. Create an accessible curriculum.
2. Enable students to see themselves and their backgrounds reflected in the curriculum.
3. Equip students with the skills to positively work in a global and diverse world.

The above bullets as brought by Voster (2016), give a picture of some of the key areas that need to be attended to when addressing the question of curriculum decolonization. Curriculum decolonization also recognises that the issues of coloniality need to be considered throughout the curriculum from the conception, through content, learning and teaching, assessment, to feedback and review. In the same vein, Dladla (2011) suggests that HE can and does take many different forms, from inquiries into educational accessibility as done by David Lammy in his 2017 Oxbridge access data campaign to ensuring a multifaceted representation of certain narratives in teachings.

Interestingly, Anthonie (2019) argues that TVET sector is a missing middle in that it is missing from the debates about decolonising HE curriculum in South Africa. Ngcaweni (2017) argues that there is a lack of rigorous debate about decolonising curriculum in TVET colleges though they are also characterised as HE institutions. Ngcaweni (2017) further goes on to criticize the narrative that TVET colleges are 'alternative' institutions because that contributes to the crisis facing HE and undermines the ability of TVET colleges to expand the economy and lift South Africans out of poverty. The debate over decolonising education curriculum should be on the centrality of vocational to industrialisation and development (Gumede, 2017).

In the same vein, Anthonie (2019) argues that vocational education should lead to industrialization, which in turn will lead to decolonization. In an article titled 'Decolonising schooling and education in Ghana', Fanon (2007) affirms that decolonization is a process of calling into question all colonial situations and their aftermath. In line with Fanon (2007), decolonization represents efforts to remove all colonial residues in the colony. Fanon (2007) further suggests that it should create multiple knowledge or multiple centres of education.

Colonization has affected African countries for decades and that has directly affected the education system to an extreme level now the post-democratic governments are confronted with projects of curriculum decolonization, which in this case includes preparing academic staff members for a change of curriculum in the institutions, where they are serving. The tertiary curriculum constitutes a fruitful site, but not the only one (Pillay, 2018), for challenging entrenched colonial structures. Heleta (2016) argues that calls for decolonization highlight the dominance of Eurocentric curricula, which reinforce white and Western dominance and privilege while at the same time being full of stereotypes, prejudices, and patronising views about Africa and its people. In this setting, the higher learning curriculum represents a necessary opportunity to deliver change in HE and beyond, as a microcosm of and impetus for broader societal transformation (Le Grange, 2016a, 2016b).

In the same vein, Hubble and Bolton (2018) assert that in the UK, calls for an inclusive curriculum were initially driven by the growing internationalisation of the university body and the widening participation agenda. Initiatives seeking to increase the numbers of the UK-domiciled students from underrepresented groups have been expansive and have had some, albeit uneven, success (Equality Challenge Unit, 2017). Heleta (2016) further affirms that a diverse curriculum has also been aligned with attempts to address the attainment gap between Black, Asian, and minority ethnic students and their white peers. The curriculum is what defines who and how the student will be in the future, meaning that if the problem is with the curriculum, the whole set of learning and teaching will be troubled, and the production will not suit the desired needs. A deliberate collective effort to change the curriculum to respond to the existing socio-economic demands can shape not only the students but also the country's economic instabilities. Decolonization of curriculum does not mean lowering the standards of education but rather bringing about the kind of education that will be responsive to the needs of South African students.

Critical theory guided this study as a fundamental framework. According to Bohman (2005), critical theory seeks human emancipation from slavery, acts as a liberating tool, influences, and works to create a world that satisfies the needs and powers of human beings. The normative orientation of critical theory, at least in its form of critical social inquiry, is therefore towards the transformation of capitalism into a "real democracy" in which such control could be exercised. Bohman (2005) further asserts that critical theory debates globalisation in which the potential transformation of both democratic ideals and institutions is at stake. This theory shaped this study by giving a deeper epistemological understanding of TVET college lecturers on the historic injustices in their sector.

How (2017) suggests that critical theory by contrast is concerned with how things come to be the way they are, what they might be in the future, and concerned with the wider truth or validity of what is currently the case. This theory informs the nature of questions to be asked when collecting data. This theory served as a fundamental base to answer the interview question and has helped the researcher to reconcile views that required deeper understanding. It gave meaning and context to some key concepts such as justice, decolonization, history, and transformation in general.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A case study was used in this project. Heale and Twycross (2018) define a case study as an intensive study about a person, a group of people, or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units. The type of case study that was used was an intrinsic case study because intrinsic case studies are based on the individual. The aim of such studies is not only to understand the subject better but also their history and how they interact with their environment. This method of research allows the researcher to take a complex and broad topic, or phenomenon, and narrow it down into a manageable research question (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Gerring (2004) states that a case study is defined as an intensive study of a single unit to generalise across a larger set of units. In this case, one TVET college was used to generalise over five Eastern Cape TVET colleges.

Research Paradigm

According to Tenny et al. (2017), research paradigms are the assumptions, norms, and standards that underpin different research approaches. Essentially, research paradigms are the 'worldviews' that inform research (Tenny et al., 2017). Tenny et al. (2017) further argue that it is valuable for researchers to understand the paradigm they are working within because understanding the theoretical basis of research paradigms allows researchers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the approach being used and adjust accordingly. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) assert that the paradigm is explained by Raddon (n. d.) and Scotland (2012) as being inclusive of components such as ontology and epistemology. The study used an interpretive paradigm. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), interpretivism deals with in-depth variables and factors related to context. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) further add that interpretivism considers differences such as cultures, circumstances, as well as times leading to the development of different social realities. This study sought to explore the in-depth understanding and perceptions of college academic staff on the concept of curriculum decolonization, therefore, the interpretive paradigm was more relevant in guiding the study to the desired aim.

Research Approach

In this study, a qualitative research approach was used. According to Teherani et al. (2015), qualitative research is the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. Teherani et al. (2015) further indicate that these phenomena can include, but are not limited to, how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and/or groups behave, how organizations function, and how interactions shape relationships. Qualitative research starts from a fundamentally different set of beliefs—or paradigms—than those that underpin quantitative research and on the other hand quantitative research is based on positivist beliefs that there is a singular reality that can be discovered with the appropriate experimental methods (Teherani et al., 2015). This study sought to explore the perceptions and understanding of academic staff members about the concept of decolonization of curriculum and the qualitative approach was best suitable as it provides an in-depth understanding of one's personal experiences.

POPULATION & SAMPLING

Population

According to Best and Kahn (2006), a population is defined as a group of individuals, with at least one common characteristic, which distinguishes that group from other individuals. In the same vein, Klopper (2008) states that population refers to all the elements (individuals, objects, or substances) that meet certain criteria for inclusion in each universe. There are about eight TVET colleges in Eastern Cape Province, each with various campuses situated in different geographical areas around Eastern Cape Province offering different courses.

Sampling

Gentles et al. (2015) assert that sampling is a selection of specific data sources from which data is collected to address the research objectives. According to Gentles et al. (2015), sampling is an act, process, or technique of selecting a representative part of a population to determine parameters or characteristics of the whole population. This study sought to explore the understanding and perceptions of TVET college academic staff members on the notion of curriculum decolonization. Purposive sampling was used in this project. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposive sampling is the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the rigour of the study and the trustworthiness of the data and results. Purposive sampling data gathering is crucial in research, as the data is meant to contribute to a better understanding of a theoretical framework (Etikan et al., 2016). The researcher purposively selected two lecturers from each of five campuses, one assistant director academic and one deputy principal academic. The reason that we went for purposive sampling is that the selected TVET college was the center-stage for the #feesmustfall movement, which is situated in a politically driven landscape that is the birthplace of the former statesmen, the late President Nelson Mandela and his predecessor, President Thabo Mbeki. This TVET college is also situated in a culturally setup village, where a chief still has a say in how the college is run. The total number of participants was 12. In this study for identification, participants were categorised as participant 1, participant 2, etc.

Data Collection Techniques & Trustworthiness

Semi-structured interviews were the data collection techniques used in this study. Flyan (2005) explains semi-structured interviews as simply conversations in which you know what you want to find out about and have a set of questions to ask and a good idea of what topics to cover but the conversation is free to vary and is likely to change substantially between participants. Semi-structured interviews are great for finding out why rather than how many and how much (Flyan, 2005). This study sought to get the underpinning understanding and perceptions on a particular phenomenon and therefore the semi-structured interview was the suitable data collection technique. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to interview lecturers, academic managers, and deputy principal academics during working hours in their workstations.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research and is concerned with the aspect of truth value. The study presents an accurate description of human experiences by describing the data collected through interviews with lecturers. The researcher was present at the scene when the participants answered the questions put to them in the interviews. Transferability refers to how the results can be transferred to another context (Bryman, 2016). In this case study, one TVET college with five campuses was selected purposefully and the findings from the said TVET college are thus transferable to other colleges within Eastern Cape Province, which is the stronghold of South Africa's politics. Dependability on the other hand refers to reserving the quality of the research by storing safely all collected data throughout the research process for auditing purposes if a need arises (Bryman, 2016). In this study, all records, like the interview transcripts, were retained in an easily accessible manner by the researcher. To add to that, conformability refers to how the objectivity of the researcher towards the study should be. When the researchers presented the findings, their values and feelings did not overshadow the findings of the study (Bryman, 2016).

Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2012) explain thematic analysis as an accessible, flexible, and increasingly popular method of qualitative data analysis. Learning to do it provides the qualitative researcher with a foundation in the basic skills needed to engage with other approaches to qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Clarke et al. (2015) assert that thematic analysis' status as a method means that its hallmark is flexibility, one can do it in a wide range of ways guided by different theoretical frameworks. There are various forms of thematic analysis, the researcher used semantic thematic analysis. Semantic thematic analysis focuses on the surface meaning of the data and things that are explicitly stated (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) further state that one way of thinking about the notion of semantic meanings is as explicit, meaning participants communicate to the researcher. The researcher seeks to remain close to the participants' meanings while maintaining an awareness that these are always viewed through their interpretative lens (Smith et al., 2009). The study sought to explore the perceptions and understanding of the academic staff members on the notion of curriculum decolonization and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

FINDINGS

In terms of the response rate, data was gathered from eight participants as the other two failed to find time to provide that data. The data is organised according to themes and sub-themes.

Theme 1: Understanding Curriculum Decolonization

When asked what their understanding of curriculum decolonization was, the participants (both the academic managers and lecturers) provided responses that produced one theme and several sub-themes. The several sub-themes that emerged regarding participants' understanding and views on curriculum decolonization are discussed below.

Sub-theme 1: Modifying curriculum to meet needs of society

Participant 1 said,

"It is based on the changes of the curriculum; curriculum decolonization is supposed to be a standing object that is where it can be reviewed and modified based on the needs of a particular society, not something taken from another country."

On the other hand, participant 6 indicated that,

"From my view, it is about changing the education system to suit the needs of African people."

Participant 7 also agreed when said,

"The current curriculum is designed to ... especially the one for basic education not to produce people who can develop themselves but people who are dependent on employment."

The researcher also checked with the academic manager what might have been the influence of colonialism on HE curriculum. Academic manager's response was,

"In my view, there are certain modules or programs that black people were not allowed to do, as a result, most could not do engineering before 1994. This has affected black people because now they are not involved in the mainstream economy [as] they depend on those who exposed [them] to a different curriculum."

Sub-theme 2: Transformation to rectify past injustices

Participant 2 said that,

“I think it entails or talks about transformation in the sense of rectifying the injustices of our past in our education.”

Participant 4 raised,

“It’s whereby South Africa needs to develop a policy that will speak to the standards of South African education. The policies are aligned to that.”

Participant 8 also agreed, saying,

“I think curriculum decolonization ... even though I will not give you an exact definition I think it got to do with making the curriculum more suitable and favourable previously disadvantaged South Africans as you know that curriculum was designed in a way that it favours a certain group.”

Theme 2: Significance of Understanding Curriculum Decolonization as an Academic Staff

TVET college lecturers and their managers provided some different responses about why it was important to understand curriculum decolonization as a lecturer. Such responses included questions about which the following sub-themes were generated.

Sub-theme 1: To ensure that needs of society are maintained

Participant 1 said,

“It must speak directly to the needs of the society; it is therefore very significant to revisit and review ... We need to understand our conditions of living so that we can determine the future, so its significance lies in that.”

Participant 4 agreed by saying,

“It is important because lecturers are the ones who are dealing with teaching and learning and who are delivering curriculum, so it is important to know the system that South Africa uses in our curriculum or policies that also involve our learners.”

Without giving a reason, participant 5 responded,

“I think it’s important for lecturers to understand the curriculum transformation.”

Sub-theme 2: Curriculum decolonization understanding is irrelevant

Some participants expressed that it was irrelevant to understand issues of curriculum decolonization in TVET colleges. For example, participant 2 said,

“I do not see any significance in understanding curriculum decolonization because it is not designed by us.”

Related to that response, participant 3 expressed that had no idea what the researcher was on about by saying,

“Like I said I have never been exposed to this topic.”

Theme 3: Advocacy for Curriculum Decolonization as an Ideological Agenda for Transformation

When asked about their thoughts on whether those who are advocating for curriculum decolonization are holding a meaningful ideological agenda for transformation, the participants responded differently, and one sub-theme emerged as discussed below.

Sub-theme 1: Advocacy for curriculum decolonization as an ideological agenda for transformation

Participants held various views on this issue. Participant 1 had a concern when he said,

“Yes, because in South Africa we learn the Western practices, they (the West) just give us something that they reject and we are supposed to adopt it, especially in TVET sector.”

In almost the same way, participant 2 also said,

“There’s is no one answer to this because some are using it for their agenda, where we will be sold some curriculum that does not assist us for labour and economic growth.”

Participant 3 chose to say nothing by saying,

“Please pass [the question], and he chuckled.”

Participant 6 also agreed when said,

“I think it’s just politicians who force the curriculum to be part of their political manifesto”,

while participant 8 said,

“Definitely I do.”

In the same way, participant 7 argues that,

“It depends on their backgrounds, it depends on their intentions on what they want to achieve because they might seem to just be hijacked the popular concept to advance their interests.”

Academic manager proceeded to say,

“In our strategic plan however we do talk about a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of the community.”

Also,

“The concept of curriculum decolonization is very broad and to some extent is a political term.”

This is consistent with the view that furthermore it is a particular kind of critical intellectual theory as well as a political project, which seeks to disentangle ex-colonized parts of the world from coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

Theme 4: Involvement of College Lecturers in Curriculum Development Processes

Participants were asked to indicate how much college lecturers were involved in curriculum development processes. Their responses were varied and produced four sub-themes.

Sub-theme 1: Relevance of involvement of academics in curriculum decolonization

There were several views regarding the need for the involvement of academics in curriculum decolonization, as presented in the section below. All the participants were affirmative that all TVET college academics should be involved in the relevance of curriculum decolonization. Participant 1 said,

“We all need to ensure that our curriculum is relevant.”

This was echoed by the academic manager who added,

“Everyone has to ensure that our curriculum responds to the needs of society and economic development, we must work as a unit in this regard.”

This was added by participant 4 who said,

“It is our responsibility as a collective to work as a unit to ensure that the curriculum is decolonized and speaks to the masses.”

Sub-theme 2: Academics should teach what they understand

Participants expressed that curriculum decolonization needed to be relevant to academics in the sense that academics were the bridge between the government and society. For instance, participant 1 said,

“The relevance is based on curriculum designing and construction, it must link with academics because academics always equip the society and build the economy.”

Participant 7 agreed by saying that,

“With TVET sector yes it affects them, and it involves them, in fact with the new transformation of NQF the sub-framework of the occupational qualifications, where they are moving all qualification curriculum to that sub-framework, then it means the lecturer is at the centre and must know exactly what is happening.”

Similarly, participant 8 also agreed when said,

“Academic staff is usually people who deal with academic issues sometimes with students, so it is important that they understand the concept because decolonization is very big in terms of our South African education because remember we are from that colonised background, so you if have academics that understand the concept it means you woke kind of students, and it means you are stepping forward towards curriculum transformation.”

Theme 5: Role of Lecturers in Curriculum Decolonization & Ways to Address Curriculum Decolonization

When asked about the role that lecturers can play in curriculum decolonization and what model can they employ to address curriculum decolonization, two sub-themes emerged as discussed below.

Sub-theme 1: Lecturers are important as part of change

In terms of the possible roles that the lecturers can play in decolonising the curriculum, participant 1 responded by saying,

“I think in the role whenever they meet in workshops, or they organise a summit to address the question of curriculum decolonization, changes and possible ways for improvement. [Also], close the gap to meet global standards and make sure that decisions taken are implemented.”

Participant 1 went further to say that,

“Lecturers are custodians of curriculum implementation.”

Participant 4 also agreed when said,

“The lecturers can assist to develop because they are only people who can sit in relevant platforms in our country and are the ones who know in delivering curriculum.”

Participant 5 said,

“The role for lecturers will only take place when there is consultation because it’s them who are in the ground who know in the first place what is it that needs to be changed so consultation and involvement is very important, in that you will support something that you know that you were part of in the first place.”

It was also agreed by participant 7 that,

“If lecturers have got enough information, they can do a great advocacy for curriculum decolonization.”

Sub-theme 2: Lecturers have no significant role to play

Some participants found it difficult to respond to the above question. However, others expressed themselves as participant 2 said,

“I do not think there is any [role] because we are not involved in curriculum planning.”

Participant 3 said,

“I have no answer to that because I just teach.”

Participant 6 said,

“I do not know my role in all of these hey.”

However, participant 8 tried to respond when said,

“That one is difficult [but] In terms of model lecturers are better positioned in implementing the developed curriculum.”

Theme 6: College Academics’ Engagement in Research & Debates About Decolonization of Curriculum

When asked to what extent college academics engage in research and debates about decolonization of curriculum, two sub-themes, as shown below.

Sub-theme 1: No involvement is evident in this respects

Participants expressed the sad view that there was no notable engagement in the academic space on issues relating to decolonization of the curriculum. For example, participant 1 said,

“No, we are not part of curriculum decolonization, the only thing we do is to implement the given curriculum.”

Participant 2 also confirmed saying,

“There’s no engagement whatsoever.”

Participant 3 had no idea when said,

“Sorry to disappoint you but I do not know.”

Participant 5 also confirmed when said,

“No to the knowledge of any involvement.”

Sub-theme 2: Little engagement is coming up

Some participants held the view that there were small pockets that were emerging for engagement in TVET sector about the decolonization of the curriculum. For instance, participant 4 expressed,

“The right platforms are academic board meetings. [However] No research yet, we are only talking about this in our meetings even in our union meetings.”

Participant 6 held the view that,

“Some engage in their private spaces otherwise there is no formal program.”

It was further confirmed by participant 7 who said,

“On research not much but on the debates about restructuring the curriculum then TVET lecturers are involved in most of the DHET structures that debate the new occupational qualifications that affect the reform on the sub framework.”

Participant 8 also responded saying,

“I’m not really sure about colleges, you know, as colleges our curriculum is most of the time fixed and we cannot change that.”

The participant went on to say,

“Our lecturers, even though it is not college-organised, setup individually they do develop themselves, we do have researchers who will sometimes be engaged in an exercise like the one we are doing right now then you find that on their capacity will register at universities to advance themselves so that they are better positioned in terms of such issues of course we have seen colleges responding very well questions of curriculum decolonization during student unrests especially in 2015 #feesmustfall, it means colleges have started to respond to the question of curriculum decolonization.”

DISCUSSION

This investigation revealed that some academics have no knowledge of what decolonization is all about, this is evident when some lecturers had nothing to say when they were asked about their understanding of curriculum decolonization, This is evident that there are lecturers who do not know decolonization and one of them had the following as a response to a question on what their understanding of curriculum decolonization is,

“Please skip this one.”

This is against Vandeyar (2020) argument that academics should become agents of meaningful educational change and social cohesion. However, some have attempted to address the question as they had the following to say,

“I think it entails or talks about transformation in the sense of rectifying the injustices of our past in our education.”

This participant is supported by Subedi (2013) who argues that decolonization is the process of humanizing the dehumanized. So, this reveals that there are two categories of academics within the same institution. So, this reveals that even though there are academics who understand what decolonization is are still some who have no clue at all what decolonization is all about. The study also revealed that there is no formal involvement per se on the side of lecturers when it comes to the process of curriculum decolonization however there are just engagements on general perspective about transformation in TVET, this is confirmed by participant 4 who expressed that,

“The right platforms are academic board meetings. [However], no research yet, we are only talking about this in our meetings even in our union meetings.”

In the same vein participant 6 held the view that,

“Some engage in their private spaces otherwise there is no formal program.”

This was further confirmed by participant 7 who said,

“On research not much but on the debates about restructuring the curriculum TVET lecturers are involved in most of the DHET structures that debate the new occupational qualifications that affect the reform on the sub-framework.”

This is validated by Ngcaweni (2017) who argues that there is a lack of rigorous debate about decolonising curriculum in TVET colleges though they are also characterized as HE institutions. Voster (2016) brings in some important arguments by suggesting

that the academics who have been educated and have worked under the traditions of Western educational institutions would not produce the indigenous African perspectives. This means that lacking or not involving academics in the process of decolonization will not yield the desired results. In a nutshell, this study revealed that there is still a great need to involve academics, most particularly lecturers in the process of curriculum decolonization.

To add to that, academics hold a strong perception that for successful curriculum decolonization, they should be involved, a process of proper consultation should take place and there should be workshops, this is confirmed by participant 1 who says,

“I think in the role whenever they meet in workshops, or they organize a summit to address the question of curriculum decolonization, changes, and possible ways for improvement. [Also], close the gap to meet global standards and make sure that decisions taken are implemented.”

This is supported by Vandeyar (2020) when arguing that academics should become agents of meaningful educational change and social cohesion, by implementing a pedagogy of compassion. However, academics only looked at this from their perspective even though literature reveals many ways to be utilized as Vandeyar (2020) further argues that the education triad comprises the teacher, the learner, and the content (curriculum), which unfolds within historical, political, social, and educational contexts. Furthermore, changing one aspect of this triad, meaning the ‘curriculum’ without due consideration to the others, will not affect the desired change (Vandeyar, 2020). In the same vein, Fanon (2007) suggests that curriculum decolonization should be about creating multiple knowledge or multiple centres of education. Fanon (2007) further argues that there should be a pedagogic, instructional, and communicative approach to synthesizing different knowledge systems in the classroom by allowing indigenous people to produce and control knowledge about themselves, their communities, and their societies. Through the support of the provided literature, it is evident that academics still have a deep understanding of various ways to be utilized to achieve curriculum decolonization.

The question of the relevant model to be employed in the process of decolonization has deeply been engaged by the academic manager who holds a strong perception that there should be a benchmarking of a particular kind looking at how other countries are dealing with the matter of curriculum decolonization. In support of the academic manager Hlatshwayo (2020) claims that there is a need to link the calls for transformation and decolonization in South African academies to broader struggles and discuss how South African institutions are responding to these challenges, tensions, and opportunities. So, the perception of the academic manager on the nature of how decolonization of the curriculum should be structured is not far from what the researchers are bringing forward. The academic manager raises another important point when arguing that the model should be responsive to the needs of the students and that of the country at large by saying the following. Here academic manager is supported by Heleta (2018) who suggests that HE system requires a fundamental overhaul of the whole epistemological model underlying the current educational system. This generally means that there is consensus between what is entailed in the literature and what is perceived to be the decolonization of the curriculum by academic manager.

CONCLUSIONS

This investigation notes that there is still a great need for academics to find consensus around the question of curriculum decolonization. The question of curriculum decolonization appears not to be a new thing in the ears of academics however the issues are on how it can best be implemented, what role can the academics play, its feasibility to have it put into practice, and most importantly the conceptualization of the term ‘curriculum decolonization’ itself. The following are some of the recommendations to cover the identified challenges:

- TVET colleges should have collaborative research programs with universities to unpack issues of curriculum decolonization.
- TVET colleges should develop a policy on curriculum decolonization to ensure that the sectors’ curriculum is no longer stagnant like it is currently.
- TVET colleges should form a committee that will look at matters of curriculum transformation, which should be inclusive of lecturers, students, managers and relevant external experts of curriculum transformation.
- TVET college lecturers should be capacitated in the field of research and constructive debates about current trends of its curriculum.

Author contributions: Both authors have sufficiently contributed to the study and agreed with the results and conclusions.

Funding: No funding source is reported for this study.

Ethical statement: The authors stated that the study was part of one of the author’s master’s theses. The study was approved by the institutional ethics committee of Tshwane University of Technology on 27 March 2023 (Approval code: FRCE/TVE/STD/2023/05). All ethical procedures were followed and cleared.

Declaration of interest: No conflict of interest is declared by the authors.

Data sharing statement: Data supporting the findings and conclusions are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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