Why decolonising the South African university curriculum will fail

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Abstract

This paper sets out to explore how academics can become agents of meaningful educational change and social cohesion, by implementing a Pedagogy of Compassion. The education triad comprises the teacher, the learner and the content (curriculum), which unfolds within historical, political, social and educational contexts. Changing one aspect of this triad – the curriculum without due consideration to the others, will not effect the desired change. In the context of the university, the demographics of the learner has radically changed and a massive drive to decolonise the curriculum has been initiated, but little if any attention has been given to academics who deliver the curriculum. I argue that the Achilles’ heel in the decolonisation of the curriculum project of South African universities is the academic.

Keywords: Academic; curriculum; decolonisation; educational change; Pedagogy of Compassion; teacher beliefs