Epistemic injustice and the need for Indigenizing Higher Education: A Philosophical Discourse

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to reflect critically on the prevailed epistemic injustice and the importance of indigenization among African higher education. Epistemic injustice is an injustice embedded in knowledge. Exclusion and silencing; methodical distortion or caricature of one's meanings or contributions; and belittling of one's status are some of its manifestations. Universities are supposed to be institutions where knowledge is produced and disseminated. With remaining epistemologically subservient to the Western hegemony, African universities however, participated in perpetuating the existing epistemic injustice. Their history of establishment, as an institute that produces the necessary manpower for the smooth functioning of the colonial enterprise, have still kept defining their essence in another form, i.e., alienation. For their intrinsically alienated underpinning, the type of university that many African countries inherited and developed anew have only used them for being a periphery at the global stage of knowledge generation and extending the deep rooted epistemic injustice. Overcoming such a challenge, this piece, with the help of analyzing intensive literature and deployment of a discursive reasoning approach, invokes on the need for indigenizing curriculum and attaining decolonization. Indigenizing involves renovating curriculum and teaching practices to embrace indigenous knowledge. The incorporation of indigenous knowledge facilitates epistemological decolonization of the continent via its institutions of higher learning. To this effect, Philosophy, and perhaps African philosophy specifically, despite an endless debate of proving its existence, have assumed an indispensable role in empowering Africans through articulating a philosophical locus taking in to account the context and cultural idiosyncrasies of the African.

Key words: African Universities; Alienation; African Philosophy; Indigenous knowledge; Epistemic injustice.

INTRODUCTION

University, in the contemporary world is an intricate and multi-dimensional institution which assumed unprecedented importance due to its role in educating people for the new global economy.Though, its models differ from country to country but the goal of any education model, which university may not be an exception is to "bring a sustained benefits that accrue not only to society as a whole but also to the individuals in that society" (Kariwo et, al, 2014).

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More importantly, however, any level of education claimed to be a "university" is supposed to advance inquisitive and open minds in the search for truth. In the African context, a university in its modern sense is a result of colonialism founded with the purpose of creating personnel needed for the smooth operation of its enterprise.

Since the early years of Africa's independence, there has been engrossment with the question of how to develop higher education within Africa. Accordingly, many African countries, though inadequate, have undergone a rethink and indigenizing of their philosophy of university. *Ubuntu* or the African "worldview" of higher education, for instance is one among the perspectives in South Africa. There is still a continuous demand to call upon indigenous knowledge in defining African higher education in other parts of Africa. This enunciates an effort to depart from the Eurocentric conception of higher education that subdued the continent even in the demise of colonialism. The existing unfair representation of knowledge systems in the African university is perpetual. The sustained supremacy of Eurocentric epistemology at the expense of African indigenous knowledge systems in African universities is unjust.

Africa is neither poor nor powerless. The inability to use knowledge that is available locally and internationally in an appropriate manner, however, remained a problem that hinders Africa from using its wealth. The absence of subjectivity as it was pronounced by the Hegelian and neo-Marxist traditions of Habermas and critical theory in general is crucial in addressing the Africa's predicament (Bekele, 2015). Put otherwise, the issue of an agency that can be entrusted with captivating responsibility for Africa's future and that has to do with subjectivity. This subjectivity may not be realized without indiginising the very curriculum.

The lack of will and determination in terms of appropriating indigenization, however, are the factors that could explain the Africa's enigma if it's neither poor nor powerless. The African university can play an essential role in contributing to tackling these problems if it is allowed to become 'university', in its fullest sense of the term. Both in terms of nurturing the spirit and knowledge required for the development of subjectivity and practical knowledge necessary for development, the African university needs to play an important role.

Epistemic injustice

Epistemic injustice represents a notion where one may unduly discriminated against its ability as an epistemic subject due to inherent prejudices based on strata such as race, ethnicity, gender, etc. It treats the intrinsic injustice within knowledge systems among the subalterns. Currently, it has fostered a large body of academic engagements seeking to clarify the concept and apply it to practical cases. The philosophical ideal of epistemic justice, with its moral orientation, aims at enhancing "epistemic virtue" in the "global systems of inquiry" (Elizabeth, 2012:171).

Fricker (2007) explores the two forms of epistemic injustice i.e. testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. The injustices thereof are *sine qua non* to African universities for they indicate the implications of relegating of indigenous knowledge systems. While the former makes speakers as "variously, thwarted in their claims to acknowledgment as subjects of knowledge, and thereby harmed in their self-development" (Fricker, 2007); The latter focuses on legitimacy and on how structural power impacts some understandings as legitimate and others illegitimate in terms of generation of social meanings. Both shows the way in which epistemic oppression is practiced through domination and marginalization has been prevalent, suggesting how epistemic injustice can be inculcated. By disregarding the reality that knowledge conceptions differ from one society to another, the dominant epistemologies eventually end up silencing the less powerful ones. Such epistemic injustice affects African universities blocking their capacity to understand, and hence to interpret the lived experiences of their constituencies.

Others understand epistemic injustice as "a form of cultural injustice that occurs when concepts and categories by which people understand themselves and their world is replaced or adversely affected by the concepts and categories of the colonisers" (Bhargava, 2013:413). The African university relies on concepts and categories of Eurocentric epistemology. "Cultural injustice" shows the injustice occurring when a certain culture uses its epistemic resources to dominate over the other. African universities made indigenous knowledge systems which were embraced in various fronts to be categorically dismissed as non-knowledge by the westerners via the colonial enterprise. They have been displaced and replaced by foreign ones whereby arising loss of epistemic confidence.

The cultural forms epistemic injustice entails oppression such as imperialism that breeds discrepancies bringing an unfair power-relation among societies. The postcolonial power-

structure dynamics brought the African knowledge to find itself in a subaltern situation owing to the silencing power of global culture. For the intrinsic essence of knowledge to be "based on acknowledgement," the failure to recognize African epistemologies in mainstream scholarship is tantamount to an injustice (Wittgenstein, 1969:387). African *Weltanschauung* deemed backward has been replaced by Eurocentric notions thereby nullifying the contribution of Africa leading to confusion and ignorance. This epistemic injustice has a resultant effect of alienation i.e. understanding oneself in foreign and at times alien worldviews.

Knowledge as considered an *"intrinsic epistemic good"* (Coady, 2010:105) ought to be governed by the principle of fairness just as is the case with other essential goods. This however has largely been neglected in the global arena, where a certain segment of humanity assumed universality and the sole determinant of "what can be taken as knowledge and who is recognized as a trustworthy knower. Consequently, indigenous African knowledge has significantly been sidelined within the global discourse. This is indeed nothing else than epistemic injustice at its climax.

Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge refers to the philosophies, understandings, and abilities that societies established with elongated histories of contact with their natural surroundings. It is the methodical body of knowledge that local people developed through the accretion of experiences, informal experimentations and bosom comprehension of the environment in a given culture (Warren & Rajasekaran 1993)**.** It mostly arises out of context-specific circumstances, positioned distinctively within a given setting. Dei (2002) outlined some of its salient features as:

> "*they are personal/personalized, (i.e., there are no claims to universality); trust in knowledge is tied instead to integrity and the perceptiveness of the 'speaker'. Such knowledges are also orally transmitted, and their sharing is directly related to considerations of the responsibility in the use of received knowledge. Indigenous knowledges are experientially based and depend on subjective experiences and the inner workings of the self to generate social interpretations, meanings and explanations. Indigenous knowledges are also holistic and relationa*l" (p.5)

Indigenous knowledge is anchored in the oral tradition of a people. Its context-specific characteristics imply that it obtains no pretensions to universality that marked its fundamental

departure differs from Western knowledge, which essentially aspires universality. The holistic and relational attribute of indigenous knowledge on the other hand is apparent in the significance of material cultures among societies which profess such knowledge. Despite its potentiality for contributing to global knowledge, it failed to gain its fair share and attention in contemporary scholarship. This failure can reasonably be associated with the African universities that sidelined subjectivity and its mere advocacy of mimicry of the universities in the metropole.

African Universities

Higher education in Africa is among the oldest in the world. While it claims an oldest academic tradition, the fact on the ground is that traditional centers of higher education in Africa have all but "disappeared or were destroyed by colonialism" (Damtew & Altbach, 2004:23). As is the case of the developing nations elsewhere, African higher education in its modern sense is an artifact of colonial policies and represents the Western model of academic organization. Most of them were established just before the end of colonialism. Training personnel that could be supportive in running the colonial machinery possibly explains their establishment. Their history can, therefore, explain their essence today. The failure to disentangle themselves from their historical trajectory appears the major challenge that African universities are facing. The fact that universities in Africa were not independent institutions that made them to tackle real problems of the African people is a concern that is still following them like a shadow averting their independence and self-assertiveness.

This is not, however, nullifying the achievements they attained. Africanization of their staff, educating persons that would be leaders and functionaries in the local bureaucracy; and others of such a sort were marked among the modest achievements. In terms of producing new knowledge and relevance or with regard to becoming the public voice that the African masses require, their performance is "lamentably dismal" (Bekele, 2015:32). Similarly, as universities were taken a key force for modernization and development, they faced failures in fulfilling the demands of their constituencies. Since their inception, Africa has remained basically a consumer rather than a producer of knowledge. Universities in Africa have rarely been a head of any reforms in the knowledge production process, as much of the changes offered to them have "trailed behind those in Europe and North America" (Obasi & Olutayo, 2009:160).

Such a reality has to do with historical emergence of African universities and continuous pegging to the West, which brought them into existence. Modern education in general and university education in particular came into existence in one way or another by the agency of the West, particularly at a time when many African countries were colonized. Even Ethiopia which vaunts to be the only non-colonized country, established its first college in 1950 just when colonialism was over in other African countries too. But even then they were Canadian Jesuit missionaries that were entrusted with the task of establishing and molding an Ethiopian institution of higher learning (Balsvik, 2006; Messay, 2008)

Viewed from knowledge production perspective, African universities are among the bottom bests which can be attributed to several factors. Chief amongst which is the characteristic dominance of a Eurocentric orientation whereby the type of higher education that many African countries developed only enabled them to be marginalized in knowledge production. This obtained a resultant effect of the education system not to inspire independent thinking and theory building. Moreover, research and teaching in African countries are thought of in such a way that they would emulate those of the West which hinders them from addressing the problems. Overcoming such a challenge requires redefining the goal of education in the African context with a program that could encourage change and perhaps indigenization can also be duly considered. This can be realized by conspicuous balance between exogenous and indigenous forms of knowledge through revolting against epistemic injustice and embracing indigenization. This is of course would become such quite a task in an academic setting predominantly embedded in alienation.

Alienation[1]

Taking a look at the material taught in the newly established African universities, one clearly sees its alienated nature. The curricula were designed or directly copied from those of the universities of the metropole based on which countries the instructors were from. The youth of the African countries, thus, are expected to be educated on material largely alien to them. It

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[1]The theoretical basis of alienation has been widely popular in the Marxist reading to illustrate the proletariat invariably loses the capacity to determine life and destiny when deprived of the right to think of themselves as the manager of their own actions; to define relationships with other people; and to own those items of value from goods and services, produced by their own labor. It demonstrates the act of causing someone to become indifferent or hostile: the state of being withdrawn or isolated from the objective world, as through indifference or disaffection (Dictionary.Com). It is used in the African university context as a way manifesting their extraverted nature.

was from the outset designed in a way that can make sure alienating the youth from their culture and identity. It turned out that much of the subject matter that they would obtain both in the theoretical and practical fields were of little or no significance to the objective realities of the country in concern. Hountondji (2009) in this regard considers African academia as:

> *Too often do we tend to investigate subjects which are of interest first and foremost to a Western audience ... In this sense, our scientific activity is extraverted, i.e. externally oriented, intended to meet the theoretical needs of our Western counterparts and answer the questions they pose. The exclusive use of European languages as a means of scientific expression reinforces this alienation* (p. 8).

Apart from being practically and socially irrelevant, the content of the education was Eurocentric, prejudiced against nearly all the heritage that each one of these countries cherished. The Eurocentric philosophy of education is based on a hierarchy of cultures, in which the home grown values and culture are considered backward altogether. One of its fundamental tasks is the realization of detachment - with local values, knowledge and cultures for they are considered to be "backward, particular and even barbarous and invoked a replacement with the progressive and "universal" forms of knowledge and culture" (Bekele 2007:110). Hence, the mission of such education becomes unambiguous. Predominantly, it aims at mugging the African youth of its identity, pride and confidence when it affirms that your value or identity or culture or history is rather anomalous not the universal. Such alienation brought what Messay (2008) calls "Cultural Dislocation" among the 'educated' youth with reference to Ethiopia. Similarly, strengthening the alienated form of education Balsvik (2005) summed up the nature of Ethiopian education as follows:

> *Modern education in Ethiopia was imported from Great Britain and the United States, was influenced by various other Western countries, and was not attuned to the country's needs. Patterns of education, curricula, and texts intended to further the interests of most highly industrialized countries were transplanted into one of the least developed rural countries in the world. There was little relevance to the basic and immediate needs of Ethiopian society* (p. 9).

Though Ethiopia protected its independence unlike the rest of African countries it could not, however, escape the tragic consequences of colonialism - mental colonization. This form of colonialism is a one anchored on the education system. By avoiding indigenous knowledge from the curricula, it alienated the youth from the existing realities. In the

same vein, disclosing the alienated nature of the education system in Ghana, Adjei (2007) wrote:

> *…Western control over what constitutes valid knowledge became increasingly and worryingly noticeable as schools were structured and restructured to validate only Western Knowledge. This knowledge became the cultural capital by which individuals could access employment in both state and private organizations in Ghana".* (1047-48)

For an understandable colonial factor, the education system in Ghana is highly alienated. It only validates knowledge system that reflects the Western experience. It is a phenomenon that has a strong colonial legacy & the curriculum was impervious to local, national or regional specificities.

With reference to Zimbabwe, Shizha (2006) has the following to say in manifesting the alienated from of Post-colonial education:

> *in postcolonial states, like Zimbabwe, the reification of Eurocentric knowledge, which promotes the "superiority" of Western knowledge, is still perpetuated by the education system and schooling practices that negate ideals on cross-cultural education and the role of indigenous knowledge in students' school experiences* (p.20).

It is the overall purpose of such an education that ought to be examined. Listening to fascinating statements by political leaders about education is not uncommon in Africa. Political leaders often declare the indispensable role of education in development. They unanimously pronounce the fundamentals of education in nation building. Apparently, however, nobody thought deep on the kind of education that is suitable for rendering African development possible. The type of education that is imported only allows the "young generations to unlearn what they have learned from their cultures and at worst to develop self-hatred that lead to self-denial" (Bekele, 2007:111). It facilitates in the words of Fanon (1967) "epidermalization of inferiority" where colonized peoples participate in their own subjection through internalizing inferiority.

One of the fundamental reasons for alienation lie on the fact that African universities are inclined in perceiving truths, the prejudices and abuses of others against Africans, as absolute truths. Following Kant and Hegel, Africans convinced themselves that they were outside of

history and humanity. African universities teach that the noble path to achieving history and humanity lay in denouncing the historical heritage and embracing the philosophy of true humanity as the European. The uncritical acceptance led the destruction of many of our essential attributes. How is it possible then to expect something valuable in a condition where Africa lost its self-respect and the respect for its values and its essential attributes? This indeed possibly explains, notwithstanding the other factors, such as economy and other structural issues, the type of alienation in many fields.

There is another dimension of alienation that has always been overlooked naively. Africans have copied and incorporated into their education all the prejudices that the erstwhile colonial powers had against their former colonies. There were theories based on the hierarchy of cultures, "races," and ways of life. How many of the intellectuals doubted the veracity of the racially motivated negative statements that gave a lower status to the Africans? One only needs to recall among many such thoughts and expressions, Leopold S. Senghor's widely quoted statement that declared that "Reason was Hellenic as emotion was African". These in one way or another inculcated among the Africans about the prevalence of a single genuinely universal humanity worthy of mimicry - the Western one. It followed that other philosophies, religions, cultures etc. were particulars or simply "others" that eventually ought to catch to the universal. The colonialists' claim to universalism in all respects is the assault by which they actually denigrate and dehumanize those who have a different identity.

Decolonization through Indigenization

Decolonization and indigenization are complementary for both are means to challenge the dominance of Eurocentric thought and conveying indigenous knowledge to the forefront. One can approach decolonization from its political nature where Africans achieved from their colonizers. But, this may not show the full picture as the colonial enterprise is perpetually affecting the way in which people learnt to think about themselves and others, and that this way of thinking is not necessarily changed through political change alone. In its broader sense, decolonization is an umbrella term for diverse endeavors to resist the distinct but intertwined processes of colonization, to endorse transformation and redress in reference to the historical and ongoing effects of these processes, and to generate and keep alive, modes of "knowing, being, and relating that these processes seek to eradicate" (Stein & Andreotti, 2016:2). Colonization undeniably resulted in both material and epistemic dimensions, which together shape social relations and preserve categories that are then used to justify occupation of the

colonized; expropriation and expendability of African life; claims about the universality of modern Western reason; objectification and exploitation of "nature"; capitalist property relations and modes of production; militarism; possessive individualism; and the very concept of race.

Decolonization includes the disruptive effort of ending colonialism in its all frontiers; liberation and de-caging of the colonized is its pillar. It also involves discourses that envisages acknowledging Africa as one of the regional centers of knowledge generation, having its own developmental intricacies, and as such worthy of being viewed as an equal global partner in epistemic arena. The attainment of this would require "dismantling of the colonial mentality and its entire social fabric, upon which control and exploitation are based" (Nyoni 2019:2). For it to have a profound effect, the process of destroying the colonial pathogens that have kept the African mind chained must be instituted.

Decolonization of African universities is an expression of the changing geopolitics of knowledge where the modern epistemological foundation for knowing and understanding the world may no longer be interpreted as universal. Thus, the African critical thought on decolonizing universities need strive in addressing questions of genuine transformation, such as how radical education curriculum reform at the academic, cultural and psychological levels. The challenge for the African academia is to learn how to teach or facilitate beyond the distorted cultural and/or historical imaginary and impoverished subjectivity of the modern horizon of thought where everything is hierarchically ranked according to Eurocentric concepts, standards and epistemological frameworks. Decolonization assures the way in which Africa should be taken as one of the "multiples of global centers of epistemological origins and underpinnings of social reconstruction of reality and dissemination" (ibid).

As explained earlier, the West has, for centuries, developed a body of knowledge that the rest of the universities must copy in compliance with the standards thereof. This in turn resulted in the post-colonial curricula of African universities to largely reflect Eurocentric conceptualization. It continued to reinforce western dominance and privilege whereby it has been laced with stereotypes, prejudices and patronizing views about Africa and its people. Thus, a thorough rethink, deconstruction, reframing, reconstructing the Eurocentric and colonial curricula as well as teaching methods at universities, for Africa may not be taken a matter of choice rather is an imperative.

Western institutions in practice are deeply involved in the colonial cataloguing of non-western knowledges and the generation of knowledge in support of scientific racism and other racialized and colonial classifications used to justify forcible assimilation, military occupation, and even annihilation of non-western populations.

As a consequence, some have suggested that the emergence and eventual dominance of the modern, western, secularized, and supposedly universal episteme was only made possible in the context of Europe's projects of conquest and enslavement. Western epistemological dominance in the non-West is highly reflective, where Western institutions are often viewed as the model for the ideal university. This has led many to emphasize the importance of "decolonizing the mind" (Ngugi, 1986) and the pursuit of cognitive justice in higher education research and curricula.

History became the sole product of the West in its actions upon others. It simultaneously displaced those actions "promoting and imposing the idea that modernity was endogenous to the West, and therefore removed the very notion of the 'other' in history" (Nyoni 2019:4). By so doing, it also naturalized and justified the West's material domination of the 'other'. In fact, mental colonization has its ardent prophets and proponents among the Africans themselves. It is an outcome of one-sided education based on the "superiority" of the West. Africans stayed too innocent with receiving all that the Eurocentric education wanted to tell them, as scientific truths, while in reality what was portrayed as depicted only meant to keep us inferior to the Europeans. The assertion of Western superiority might have not obtained a base unless one wants to argue that their current superiority in science and technology attests to this. A metaphysical superiority of the West as it was portrayed by giant philosophers as Kant, Hegel, and Hume is only but a self-serving myth. How can, then Africans accept this and keep on denigrating themselves? It is in this area that decolonization of the academia, specifically universities, is needed most.

Decolonization of African universities is 'about justice that addresses the epistemic injustices of colonial knowledge and colonial thought. It is also a project that many have rightly interpreted as an act of defiance against all Eurocentrism. Derrida (1982) states that, 'this act of "defiance" is deconstruction itself'. It therefore matters little "if one is labeled academically dissonant and dissident, if Africa is locating or claiming its own indigenous or native centre for knowledge production and dissemination" (Nyoni, 2019:2).

African epistemology and underlying philosophies need to underpin African centered developmental efforts as the focus as well as project Africa as one of the centers of knowledge production. As Africans and their higher institutions continue to experience polygonal sociopolitical and economic shifts of being as influenced by a variety of global ideologies, their voices stayed in consistently regurgitating western epistemologies and impactful decolonization efforts remain negligible and mentally captured. Concerted decolonial efforts, therefore, is crucial in managing shifts in these matrices of material-social constructs such that contamination and decapitation of true African education curricula, identities, cultures, values, ethos and principles are prevented. African voices should be allowed to correct the toxic, Western inspired nuances and narratives underpinning Western induced education curricula.

A constitutive paradox of the colonial construction of knowledge, therefore, haunts any effort to decolonize existing institutions: claims about the universality of western knowledge can only be sustained in contrast to the particularity and partiality of non-western knowledges. Today higher education institutions continue to reproduce an epistemological hierarchy wherein western knowledges are presumed to be universally relevant and valuable, while non-western knowledges are either patronizingly celebrated as "local culture," commodified or appropriated for Western gain, or else not recognized as knowledge at all. Curricula remain dominated by Western epistemologies, especially Western sciences and technologies, and research in these areas also tends to be the most "heavily rewarded through grants and other forms of institutional support and validation" (Stein and Andreotti, 2016:3).

The history of colonialism that dismantled indigenous knowledge systems triggered the need for indigenous knowledge systems. In showing the entrenched colonial mentality, Mazuri (1978:13) argues that "very few educated Africans are even aware that they are also in cultural bondage. All educated Africans … are still cultural captives of the West". The mental colonization among the intelligentsia consists in being educated within an alien epistemological paradigm that promotes Western culture and values. 'Indigenization' can be taken as a process of adaptation. But beyond this narrow and limited view of the 'indigenization' of practice and education lies the broader realm of a truly culturally relevant practice and scholarship.

The literature on 'indigenization' questions the relevance of Western scholarship as a sole model with universal application. It is part of the continuing struggle with diversity,

specifically its incapability to work well with people from non-western cultures. The need for 'indigenization' has been originated – and continues to arise – as a result of the mounting realization of the limitations of Western models of education, research and practice. It has initiated 'a deepening sensitivity to the rich potential that exists in local customs and behaviors peculiarly driven by indigenous traditions' (Adair, 1999:405). Currently, 'indigenization' holds that knowledge generation in higher education should arise from within the culture, reflect local behaviors and practices, be interpreted within a local frame of reference and thus be locally relevant, that is, it should address culturally relevant and context-specific problems. It triggers indigenous research that stems from, sufficiently represents and reflects back upon the cultural setting in which problems arise. Thus the development of indigenous knowledge is reflexive and requires that researchers integrate their reflections on local cultures, society and history into their work.

African Philosophy, Decolonization, and Indigenization Nexus

For, "race" is still essential in our "place", as a result of the symbolic hierarchy evident in our societies, inferiority and superiority complexes could therefore still be evident, and philosophy, can do much to heal these pathologies in our societies. As Tabensky (2008) captures;

> *The discipline of African philosophy originates in tragedy, out of pain, confusion and rage stemming from colonial destruction; destruction that is responsible for what Fanon calls the 'negro neurosis' caused by what Biko would describe as the unbearable fusion of colonized and coloniser… [T]he birth of African philosophy as an academic discipline is largely responsible for its character and, crucially, for its distinctive creative possibilities* (p.285).

African philosophy, thus, has a distinctive aim, namely the quest for reclaiming humanity which Tabensky sees as intimately related to the quest for disentanglement from the colonial past. African philosophy, as a consequence, results in empowering Africans through enunciating philosophical positions which considers the context and cultural specificities of the African into account. This empowerment in return can "lead to reclamation of the intellectual space denied to Africa during the racist project of colonialism" (Oelofsen, 2015**:**136).

Projects in African philosophy has an aim of restoring African normalcy lost by the colonial heritage of violent oppression and exploitation, through exploring truths articulated within the

African context. Philosophy ought to cast new light on old issues rife on this continent, problems which arise and are the effects of the continent having had a rupture with its past when the colonial project so violently, yet indifferently, carved the continent up into pieces of the pie meant for European consumption. In addition, viewed from the decolonization discourse, African philosophy also has another central and related feature. As Janz (2004) succinctly put:

> *…the core of philosophy, [is] its ability to bring…life to the surface and reflect on it, creating new territory, extending the range of life by creating new concepts. Concepts do not so much point to the past (or, not only to the past), but also to the future, as they open the possibility of new forms of expression and new self-understandings. And, they also point to the present, to the place on which we stand and the life that matters* (p. 111)

African philosophy, thus, draws and creates concepts from the place of "Africa". Consequently, it can be instrumental in the decolonization of the African mind. This is possible through providing an alternative framework for knowledge, which "de-centers" the assumed centers of knowledge. Concepts need to be created through an engagement with the African past and present.

However, arguing that African philosophy ought to focus on African concepts is not advocating a return to a romanticized pre-colonial past and a [re-]"discovering" of old concepts. These pre-colonial concepts may not in a wholesale be relevant unchanged in the world today as a result of the drastic rupture between the pre- and post-colonial states of being. Rather, in engaging with concepts rooted in Africa, we ought to take them as a starting point for reflection. This would mean that concepts such as *Ubuntu* should be engaged; "not as a static concept from Africa's past but rather as a dynamic concept with its roots in the past" (Stein & Andreotti, 2016:137). Concepts should be developed and acknowledged as having meaning which is fluid and changing in order to take into account present and future situations and contexts.

Philosophy has a noble mission towards pushing the frontiers of truth and broadens the horizons of one's understanding. African philosophy however is not only tasked in pursuing truth alone it rather obtains the task of realizing mental decolonization. Since decolonization involves the undoing of colonial foundations indigenization then consists of the redoing of indigenous elements. Indigenization moves beyond sham gestures of recognition or inclusion

to profoundly revolutionise practices and structures. Power, dominance and control are rebalanced and accentuated and indigenous ways of knowing and doing are perceived, presented, and practiced in par with Western ways of knowing and doing. Indigenization is about a concerted process towards naturalizing indigenous intent, interactions, and processes and making them evident to reverse alienation. In the context of universities, this implicates the inclusion of indigenous perspectives and approaches. It seeks not only relevant programs and support services but also a fundamental shift in the ways that institutions could embrace indigenous perspectives in policies and daily practices; position indigenous ways of knowing at the heart of the institution, which then informs all the work that the institutions do; include cultural protocols and practices in the operations of our institutions.

CONCLUSION

Universities in Africa remain a crucial part of the overall social, economic, and cultural constitution of societies and nations despite the many challenges emanated from epistemic injustice. It further contributes to the formation and deployment of human capital, the cultural and social construction of values and meaning, and the capacity for individual and collective emancipation from ignorance and domination. It provides people with the tools and capacities for their collective and individual self-definition and empowerment, and for interpreting their relationships to themselves, to others, and to nature and their material and other environments. It provides the platform for the advanced study, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge and its products for the benefit of society and its constituents.

In spite a continued rhetoric towards struggling the entrenched epistemic violence, African universities today consists of institutions, systems, and practices that lack authentic values and goals, or a mission and vision attaching them to the major challenges of their local and global contexts.

What is necessary in African universities is decolonization and indigenization which may encompass practical and epistemological ruptures with the old ways of doing things and a reconstruction of structures, relations, cultures, and institutions. Decolonization restores the indigenous worldviews and replaces western interpretations of knowing with indigenous perspectives. Indigenization in its own side recognizes validity of indigenous worldviews, knowledge and perspectives. Both decolonization and indigenization are supposed to be

reinforced by African philosophy for it assumed an indispensable role towards reclaiming African humanity.

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