Decolonising the Design Curriculum

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I declare my position of white privilege and profound consciousness of what Tuck and Yang identified as a "settler harm reduction" (2012: 21) approach executed from the position of white privilege. I also acknowledge the duality in decolonial theories that are implemented as decolonial strategies that make curriculum development "tricky" (Morreira et al., 2020: 7).

1. AIM

Research interest in decolonised design education at universities has grown exponentially since 2017. Through a literature review of decolonised design education and my reflections on 25 years of experience in design education, the concept of Coloniality of Power (CoP) within decoloniality was identified as especially problematic for design education. This project aims to, through Design-Based Research:

- Explore principles that design educators could implement in the design curriculum that will prepare students to navigate the challenges posed by the coloniality of power intrinsic to the design industry.
- Develop a community of practice in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Design (SOTLD).

2. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

CoP responds to the concepts of modernity and the Colonial Matrix of Power (CMP). CoP is problematic because the design industries are intertwined with the 'magic' of modernity and have tainted connections to the CMP through the advancement of neoliberalism and consumerism. CoP is also relevant to design educators due to the pressures placed on educators by neoliberal, performative-based universities within this era of massification. Quijano describes a violent "global matrix of power" (2007: 168) that regulates wealth to benefit an elite ruling class situated mainly in North America and western Europe. Quijano defines this global matrix of power as a violent system because it continually exploits races without resources located predominantly in the Global South (2007: 168). Ndlovu-Gatsheni identified four fundamental facets of the colonial matrix of power, namely, economic control

by the west, eradication of powerful African kingdoms, the perpetuation of narrow conceptions of gender, family and education; and indoctrination of the deception that 'western thought' is superior (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013: 7).

The colonial matrix of power can be associated with the concept of globalisation. With globalisation, the world should be a smaller place with connections that allow for complex relationships and interactions. This is, however, only possible in so far as the physical and technological infrastructure that is available facilitates this process. The possibility of connections that allow for complex relationships and interactions that could counter the CMP is threatened by growing nationalism evident from events such as Brexit, the Trump administration and an increase in conservative politics.

In connecting design education with globalisation, Steers (2009) defines the aim of visual literacy or visual culture as tools with which one can critically investigate the visual langue of the world. Design educators must be well versed in visual literacy or visual culture and should therefore be able to contribute to the global visual literacy debate positively. Steers, however, expressed concern that some design educators see it as their mission to advance cultural globalisation without considering the situation's complexity. Steers advocates for an approach where artists should focus on local cultural practice before dabbling in global waters (2009). The importance of a vibrant local creative industry cannot be overemphasised. Indigenous knowledge systems have a vital role in the local creative industries. Indigenous knowledge can be defined as "a multidimensional body of understandings that have been viewed by European culture as inferior, superstitious, and primitive but for indigenous people from North America, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and parts of Europe, indigenous knowledge is a lived world, a bridge between human beings and their environments" (Akena, 2012: 601). Briggs identified the concern that often indigenous knowledge could lose its value when removed from its context; and proposed that the value of indigenous knowledge be separated into process, meaning and content (Briggs, 2013).

Increasingly neoliberal, performative-based South African universities also pose a problem for design educators. Ndlovu-Gatsheni gives new insight into the concept of the University of Technology (UoT) in Africa when he describes the UoT model as a "Neo-liberal-Bureaucratic-Corporate- Managerial Model" (2020: 891). The dichotomy of the UoT corporate managerial model is foregrounded through processes intended to 'do good' such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE) accreditation processes (Shahjahan, 2011) that struggle to navigate the ambiguity of design education and state NSFAS funding that could negatively impact academic freedom at South African Universities. Neoliberal, performative-based South African

universities cannot be described as decolonised African universities that are relevant, activist, accessible, multilingual, pluriversal, polyphonic, responsible, and culturally anchored institutions that desire the indigenous (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020: 891).

Fry acknowledged that modernity is a concept in decoloniality that require attention (Fry, 2011). Mignolo responds to the failures of modernity when he states there is a "desire to find ways of life beyond capitalism and its magic of modernity and development that keep consumers caught in the promises of dreamworlds" (2011: xiv). There must be a critical understanding by design educators that the 'magic' of design could work against plurality as a desired outcome of decolonisation due to the hegemonic methods and tools of the design industry.

3. ACHIEVEMENT AND CHALLENGES

A Design-Based Research (DBR) approach was implemented to develop principles to address the quandary that CoP poses for design education. DBR, due to its location in the design discipline, is exceptionally well suited for implementing change in design curriculums. Through this DBR approach, Slow Pedagogy was identified as especially relevant to addressing the identified problem. On Slow science, Shahjahan states that – "Slowing down, or decolonising time, is about reconnecting to our embodied selves and nurturing 'depth' in our work for equity and social justice in the academy, and about improving our quality of life and work" (2015: 499). Design educators need to embody different notions of time to access alternative sources of knowledge, including embodied ways of knowing. Muir stated that "in the context of contemporary, fast-paced and often disingenuous qualities of commercial graphic design in South Africa, Slow Design provides a moral antithesis" (2017: 181).

Current design principles identified.
- Allow for dynamic maturation of design solutions over time. This impacts the time management of projects as 'downtime' must be factored in to develop ideas.
- Object to the loss of nearness focus on 'glocal'.
- Include dialogue and exchange that are vested in real community needs.
- Bring sentient lived experience more deeply into the discourse of design
- Develop distinctive images and invented forms that can replace the false authority of colonialism.

The principles developed through the DBR approach were presented at a seminar for design educators at the Faculty of Arts and Design at the Tshwane University of Technology. These principles were explored and will be piloted as a longitudinal research project. After the institutional presentation, five design lecturers indicated that they wished to join the project.

The TAU group project was also incorporated into my institutional project. The Website we developed for the TAU group project (www.designbasedresearch.co.za) will be further developed and used as a platform to establish a community of practice in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Design (SOTLD) as it facilitates the development of DBR in a collaborative space.

The impact of this project will only be visible in two years when the entire DBR process is complete. The project will advance the social justice objectives from a decolonial perspective. The Research Ethics Committee applications for lecturers doing research that involves students at TUT are demanding and will take much time and effort. It is hoped that by making a 'group' application, the lecturers involved could share the burden of the application, making it more feasible.

4. REFERENCES

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