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decolonization, spaces, decolonizing, students, south Africa, academics, university, uct, research, people, happening, knowledge, curriculum, question, terms, shift, recognise, zimbabwe, student protests, model

**SPEAKERS**

Luqman Muraina, R1

**Interviewee** 00:03

got it right, instead of having to do the whole transcription for yourself, same time.

**Luqman Muraina** 00:09

Exactly, exactly. I actually discovered this tool, like recently. I'm sure you will be seeing a bar that would be transcribing adult side now on the right hand side.

**Interviewee** 00:20

I can't actually see it that that's fine. It may be it just comes up on your side. It does. I've got I can see the thing saying that it has that recording and transcription have started.

**Luqman Muraina** 00:29

Oh, so nice. So I'm going to close my own transcription button, so we can concentrate on the research. Okay. Yeah. So thank you so much for coming around. I mean, Cape Town like you and I'm fine. I'm great. I really appreciate your consent to participate in this research. And I hope that we can, you know, have a beneficial knowledge conversation, this early morning. Thank you for responding to the, to the socio demographic data, I just received it some seconds ago. Okay, great. So I would be asking, the first question is, I understand that I read your proof that you're researching on decolonization I even read one of the one of your papers you you published with \*\*\*\*, and then there is this other person, I think, from Pretoria? Yes, \*\*\*\*? Exactly, it's really a very nice, nice article, and I you know, through that I also saw one of your articles on decolonization as well, which I have downloaded, but I've not been opportune, to, to actually go treat, but I will maybe as part of my data analysis, so I'm going to ask here what is motivating your research on decolonization?

**Interviewee** 02:00

I am, I'm actually an anthropologist by training, I did my PhD in the in the social anthropology department at UCT and graduated in \*\*\*\*. But my first academic appointment, my first sort of permanent job was in where I am now I'm in a space called the \*\*\*\* unit at UCT. And so the reason I'm giving all of this background is that being in that post, I, so my anthropological work has always been on knowledge. So my PhD was around local knowledge systems in Zimbabwe, and how they interacted with with human rights law. So basically thinking about how I suppose how the long arm of colonialism in Zimbabwe still reaches into the present, and how sort of local forms of justice work with these, yeah, international legal ideas. So I always had an interest in knowledge. And then I started working in education, and specifically in Education Development. So in South Africa, I have no idea how much you know about the history of Education Development Unit (EDU), but essentially, that things like EDU use that exists in most universities across South Africa, came about as a result of the opening up of historically white universities. So when those historically white universities began (noise) all right, sorry. So when those historically white universities opened up to all students, they put in place these units a lot of the time, and a lot of time, they were government funded units, called Education Development units. And the idea behind it was that if students were coming into the universities, with a slightly lower level of preparedness, so so there was very much a deficit discourse attached to it, this idea that that students were less well prepared, and that the EDU would do some of the work of preparing them and supporting them through their university journey. And that discourse has shifted a lot today, but not as much as it probably should have. So when I started working at at UCT, in \*\*\*\*, I was in the \*\*\*\* as I am now. And one of the biggest things that the EDU does at in humanities at UCT is it runs extended degree programme a four year degree undergraduate degree in social science and and and humanities. And part of uct's policy in terms of humanities admissions is that students on that programme get preference has sort of broadly speaking South Africa Category black students get preference on that programme. So it's intended, I suppose, as a redress programme as a social justice programme. But given everything we know about South Africa, given everything we know about the how, yeah, that the whiteness, I suppose of UCT. Often it was not experienced by students as positive discrimination, but sort of seen as a form of, of taking black students and putting them in a in a degree that takes a little bit longer. And that has a few more restrictions. And so so it wasn't experienced positively by students, particularly around sort of 2015 and Rhodes must fall. So that very long history is just to sort of explain to you how colleagues and I started working with these ideas of decolonizing education prior to RMF, at UCT. So I think \*\*\* was our first we got to two big NRF research grants, to look at the curriculum, and to look at ideas of knowledge, particularly within historically white universities, and to think about your ways of reframing it so that students weren't necessarily seen as the deficit. But that in fact, the ways the universities were organised, valued one way of knowledge over over another. So that was where my interest came from historically. And then obviously, circumstances overtook us. So while we were busy doing this work, and interviewing a lot of academics, on their knowledge practices, etc. The student protests started happening from 2015 onward, which gave a lot of impetus to the work, which was fantastic. So suddenly, there was a big Yeah, national interest in ideas of decolonizing, that that hadn't necessarily been there before, and a huge proliferation of work on it, etc. And, of course, scope to sort of work more closely with students than they had been before. So yeah, so that's the history of how it is that I, that I came to be interested in these ideas of decolonizing.

**Luqman Muraina** 07:16

So, I was having some little sound and my background. So I'll be muting my mic when I'm not speaking. Thank you so much. It's great to learn that, you know, you started working on indigenous knowledge development, you know, from your PhD in Zim, if I'm going to ask maybe in a very short sentence, what motivated your, you know, your research on that your PhD research on indigenous knowledge in Zimbabwe?

**Interviewee** 07:47

So I, I grew up in \*\*\*\*, so you'll have seen on my demographic that I put my nationality as \*\*\*\*\*. So I left Zimbabwe to come to university in South Africa. And then I've stayed here since. So partly it was to do with the very obvious differences, I suppose that I saw between South Africa as a as a sort of settler society and Zimbabwe as a as a settler society. So these very different I suppose, call them postcolonial spaces, but spaces that were had become politically independent, and yet looked so incredibly different in terms of their in terms of people's day to day behaviours, I suppose, but also particularly in terms of government policies around around, knowledge and identity and what is valued and those sorts of things. So for example, Zimbabwe was always a much more multilingual space in terms of official spaces, than South Africa was race relations are quite different in Zimbabwe, obviously, there are many of the same problems as they are in South Africa, but But still, sort of, of a different nature. And so I was interested in looking at yeah what it was in Zimbabwe that had gone right in terms of allowing for a much more valuing of indigenous knowledge systems that I wasn't seeing in South Africa, but also very interested in looking at what it was that had gone wrong, because, obviously, I'm sure you know that the political history of Zimbabwe is a very complicated one, particularly in the post colonial space. So yeah, so I was interested in looking at how international discourses and local discourses were being used by different political players in different ways. So that partly indigenous knowledge was valued, but also that kind of international Yeah, regulations and instruments could be brought in to to from either side for full sort of political players who were in conflict with one another to defend their positions, so I suppose that was Yeah, it was partly a partly a political thesis and partly a thesis about about knowledge and indigenous knowledge, but also knowledge politics.

**Luqman Muraina** 10:20

Also, which is great to learn that you started doing decolonization research before 2015? You know, national protest? Yeah, I think you have a longer history in that regard. And I'm sure these conversation would be great moving forward. So I'm going to ask, you now, you know, you as a person as a researcher of decolonization, what do you understand to be decolonization?

**Interviewee** 10:48

I'm sure you're getting completely different answers to this from everyone, which I think is one of the one of the strengths of the idea, but also one of the difficulties of the idea. So I think the first thing to say is that there's been such a massive proliferation of the term as it's been used, as more and more people are researching it, that in a way, it's got more nebulous, but for myself, really, what I understand decolonization to mean is just a valuing of multiple knowledge systems. So a recognition that there is a particular history, particularly within University spaces, that there is a particular history to how it is we know what we know, and what sorts of kinds of knowledge we give value to. And so recognising that the things that we value come from a particular perspective, a particular Eurocentric, a euro American perspective, and recognising so decolonization in the higher education sphere, just to recognise that there are other ways of being other ways of knowing, and that if we can hold those spaces open, and have a sort of plural, plural ways of knowing, as opposed to assuming that one is universal, then we're on the route to decolonization.

**Luqman Muraina** 12:07

Awesome, awesome. So when we decolonize, the curriculum, so what are we trying to do?

**Interviewee** 12:15

Oh, it's a big question. It's a big question, I think. So the student protests of 2015 asked us to do quite a few things with decolonizing the curriculum, the one thing that I think people are consistently trying to do is to foreground local experience. So here in South Africa to foreground a sort of Afrocentric perspective, as opposed to a Eurocentric perspective. So to think about, who are the authors that we ask our students to read, etc? What kind of examples are we using in in class? Are they examples that, that relate that people can relate to those sorts of things. But beyond that, beyond the idea of shifting our content, I think what we're also trying to do when we decolonize, the curriculum, is to have to think about our pedagogy as well to think about how we do the work, why we do the work, what the university is for, sort of what are we training our students to be? So a lot of ideas around around social justice and around the university kind of as a public good, rather than creating these individual researchers who all should be competing with one another. So broadly speaking, I think, yeah, on a number of levels, on the one hand, shifting the content, shifting the perspective so that we speak from the global south, but on the other hand, really using our space within the curriculum to think a little bit differently about Yeah, about power and privilege and what it is that that the curriculum is for, and what it is that we're trying to change.

**Luqman Muraina** 14:00

That's great. I'm going to note on that point, as we move forward, but I'm going to ask now that What do you understand as a higher education transformation in South Africa transformation of higher education,

**Interviewee** 14:16

transformation of higher education? Um, so I think there's a there's a public discourse of transformation of higher education that is quite particular, and linked a lot of the time to, to race politics, so so within a lot of higher education institutions, the idea of transformation, which had started out as a sort of similar one to decolonization, so that was a wider than just about race and numbers has shifted in a lot of higher education institutions now to being a kind of just an idea of Yeah, of making sure that there's equal representation in terms a lot of the time of racial categories. So that's the one hand, but I think that's also changing. Again, now. So you see a lot of transformation committees, for example, in higher education are trying to do a lot more than just that box ticking exercise, and really think carefully about the same sorts of things, as I just mentioned around how we decolonize So thinking about power relations within universities, what do we have to do to yeah, to shift spaces from ones that from one that centre whiteness to ones that sort of centre centre blackness or centre the African experience in a particular way? So that's what I would like to think transformation at universities is, although sometimes it's not as not as nuanced as that.

**Luqman Muraina** 15:51

So I'm going to ask you now, like, between transformation and decolonization Do you think one is more preferred? In, in higher education contest in South Africa? Which one? Is it? And then do you think it is more encompassing? And recognises the other, you know, in the politics, and then you know, in a classroom cause conversations and you know, lecturers management, interactions or communications?

**Interviewee** 16:22

Sure, I think that's such a good question. So, I'm, so my initial answer would be sort of preferred, by whom? Because I think there are different, as you say, and as he said, at the end of the question there, there are different actors who kind of prefer different models. So I think transformation is a term that most people in South Africa and most people in institutions like higher education are quite comfortable with, because it's been around for a long time. And it hasn't been particularly threatening, actually, to the status quo, so to the ways in which things are and so it turned, as I say, into this kind of box ticking exercise, rather than the fundamental rethinking of power and, and privilege. Whereas decolonization I think, so on the one hand, I think it's it worries a lot of people, particularly people who who have privilege, because there's this sort of fear that somehow decolonization is going to turn everything around. So I think that Yeah, in a lot of So just to give some personal examples, whenever I write an article, for example, in something like the conversation that uses the word decolonization you I get a lot of defensive emails from people saying, don't you think this is quite a radical position, etc, etc. And I kind of feel like if I substituted that with the term transformation, you wouldn't get that same response from from a particular sector of society. So I think that personally, for me, I think decolonization is a more useful term because it didn't, it has come to encompass more, it's doing the work that the term transformation probably set out to do a while ago, but it's doing it at a different at a different level. So it's thinking much more deeply about hierarchies of power, etc, and how we shift them. So I think from a student perspective, probably decolonization would be the term that's preferred. I imagine from a management perspective, it's now become a buzzword, but for a long time, it was a troubling, troubling idea. And certainly, from the perspective of myself, I think that decolonization is the more useful term because it lets us talk a bit more deeply about about shifts.

**Luqman Muraina** 18:42

Hmm, I think I can recognise the difference of, you know, priorities in spaces, between students, researchers, you know, university management, and then the political species of managing higher education. But what I'm going to ask now is, if actually institutions of higher learning, you know, and, you know, the political sector, that is the Department of Education and training have preferred, preferred a transformation model, do you think they have appropriately captured the element of decolonization? In addition, the fact that this decolonization, you know, as, you know, as actually stopped, you know, learning in some ways during the 2015 2016, you know, protest and then the fact that it is actually being demanded by students?

**Interviewee** 19:44

Yeah, I mean, I'm not sure about the level. I don't know what the answer would be at the level of something like like to head of Department of Higher Education and Training and the their policies, address a sort of social justice model. But not necessarily through the lens of decolonization. I think the whole of the power dynamics there in terms of budgets, etc, etc are such complex ones that yeah, that it's that it's quite difficult. But just as for example, to give a small example of DHET involvement, and how it plays through. So the programme that I work on the four year extended degree is entirely funded by by DHET. But it earmarks funding in particular ways. And a lot of the time it does hold with it that same deficit model, the idea that certain students come into the university and kind of need fixing in a particular way before they can carry on. So this idea that they're underprepared and that you have to give additional time to them or that you need to, that you need to have a slower degree. So that's one arm of DHET, which does a use a fairly outdated model. I think that's not particularly in line with with decolonizing work. But then on the other hand, you have other other parts of DHET. So for example, through the university Capacity Development Grant, which are really interested in Yeah, I'm thinking about the curriculum and thinking about bigger, bigger, more encompassing changes, which can be mobilised for for decolonial work. So yeah, so I don't really, I think that transformation is still the term that people prefer to use, because it's seen as less dangerous, but that there's scope within it to do particular kinds of work. I don't know if that answers the question.

**Luqman Muraina** 21:43

Definitely, definitely. So I'm going to ask, would you advocate that, you know, spaces, like Department of Education and Training, and then people that are privilege, You know, would you advocate that they change and, you know, recognise the importance of decolonization, of adopting a decolonization model over transformation?

**Interviewee** 22:06

Here, I don't even know what that model would look like. So so I would be hesitant to give an answer. But I think that a model that would support Yeah, that would support thinking a little bit differently about, about what gets valued, and how would would be good. But I mean, certainly my instinctual answer would be to say that even whatever happens, whether it gets called a transformational model, or gets called the decolonization model, I can't imagine that the actual practices would be would be that different from from a DHET level? Yeah.

**Luqman Muraina** 22:43

Mm hmm. So do you what do you think it won't be different?

**Interviewee** 22:53

I guess. So. I mean, so some fairly radical things have happened at a DHET level since 2015, particularly around around funding and NSFAS. But we've seen that sort of shrinking back now. And and, you know, there's this idea that the budget is not there, which is obviously true, South Africa is in a very difficult time at the moment. So really, I mean, I suppose the decolonizing perspective on higher education would be to say, free education for people who who can't afford it. And I don't see I just don't see the government doing that anytime soon. Because we're not in a in a space where that is happening. And so similar, for example, to I think it would make perfect sense right now for the government to adopt a universal basic income model. And to say, you know, increase taxes at at the wealthy end of the scale in order to have a universal basic income, particularly now in COVID times. But again, it's like you don't really I don't really see that that happening. So I would, yeah, sure. I would advocate for a free education model. I think that would be better. But I just don't imagine. I don't I don't see it happening anytime in the future unless the bigger models of, of government funding become much more radical. So things like for example, shifting, shifting wealth, tax, etc. And that just doesn't seem to be the direction that South Africa is going in.

**Luqman Muraina** 24:21

Based on this your answer, I'm going to skip a bit in my research instrument and ask this question that what is the reality of decolonizing under the recording current national socio economic climate, especially when we you know, look at the outward outwardness of the nation towards the west, neoliberalism, globalisation, as well?

**Interviewee** 24:47

Yeah, I think that's I mean, so I think the answer is is there in the question, right, so I was just reading this morning I was rereading Francis Nymanjo's Rhodes must fall where he talks. About, yeah, the ways in which post colonialism isn't really post colonialism. And we still retain systems of value from the past. So we in this globalised world, which, within which South Africa has taken a particular neoliberal trajectory, as you say. So the realities of decolonizing. I mean, I think on small local levels, it's entirely not entirely possible on small local levels, you can, you can make quite radical changes, but at the largest scale.... umm So to go back to that first example, I gave from my research in Zimbabwe, so Zimbabwe, for all. Yeah, for all that it has enormous socio economic difficulties, at the level of kind of valuing of different knowledge systems, I would say it is taken a very different stance than South Africa has. So just to give a small example, the public hospitals, public healthcare system, since the 1980s, has incorporated traditional healers within it. Whereas in South Africa, that's something that has taken a very long time to to come about. And you still can't just wander into a hospital and see a traditional healer in sort of the same way that you could access through through a particular system that Zimbabwe tried to put into place from the 1980s. So what I'm trying to say is that, yeah, that South Africa has taken a particular stance towards which kinds of knowledge add values which kinds of actions add values. And so I think we Yeah, and we still seem to be very entrenched in a postcolonial moment that is not particularly particularly post colonial. So a lot of the Yeah, a lot of the valuing of knowledge systems is quite firmly based in in the West, so

**Luqman Muraina** 27:18

Okay, in your response, in your very beautiful response, you you know that you differentiated the possibility of decolonizing. between local species and global, which you say, the global is actually very difficult due to the preference of policies and way South Africa is looking at their diplomatic friend and all of that, what do you mean by local species? Like you actually said that decolonization is possible in those local places?

**Interviewee** 27:46

Yeah, I'm not sure it's 100% possible, but you can take steps you can do things. So if we think of higher education, right, and our so where I do, most of my work is in curriculum, so at the level of the classroom. So if we take a classroom as a local space, that is bringing people together from all different parts of South Africa at the moment, although those classrooms are remote, but nonetheless, they, they, they still exist in that remote format. So at that level, I think there are a lot of quite tangible operationalized double things that you can do. So just a small example, to shift power dynamics to shift knowledge practices, allowing students to submit their assignments in their language of choice. And finding a way to to grade, that something like that, totally up in traditional power relations within the university, it means that multilingualism is seen as as a resource as something to be valued. And our students come to us with huge language resources. And up to now the English speaking universities have actually treated those resources almost as a disadvantage. And have said, you know, that students need to get their academic English up to scratch, etc, etc. Whereas they decolonial perspective on it, in my opinion, would say, these are massive language resources that students are bringing in with them, they carry huge amounts of local knowledge in that in that language. And if you allow that into the university space, then we begin to shift how those how those things are done. So that small local example means that students can then engage with their work in particular ways in their language of choice, etc. where it becomes tricky is then if you take that to the global level, right, where, even though we've had one or two PhDs in South Africa in the last couple of years be be written in, in African languages at the global level, often to publish you'd need to do it in English or in one of the sort of, yeah, in a European language or in Mandarin, etc. in the languages of power. So we can do it in smaller scale spaces just to use that language example. But it becomes a lot more complicated when you try and and and take it take it internationally.

**Luqman Muraina** 30:15

Hmm, can you mention any other local space aside from the classroom and then the elements of translanguaging (noise)

**Interviewee** 30:34

Yeah, sorry, just thinking I'm so I suppose the other here you can do it in. Again, I'm going to use examples from the university because that's where most of my work happens. The other space that I can think of that gives quite a nice example is through student health and student wellness. So I don't know if you recall, but one of the big issues that arose during student protests in 2015 2016 was was the idea of mental health. And the idea that students were having to produce evidence when they were in conversation with their with the coconveners, etc, about late work being submitted, for example. So the one thing there, that becomes a local example of how you can shift that is just by allowing people to use multiple medical systems, right, so that you can come with a letter from a traditional healer or a psychologist or whoever to speak to, to, to issues. The other example, just a small scale example that I can think of is the issue of DP. So the idea of a duly performed certificate. So the one thing I can, I've used this example a few times, so you might come across it somewhere else if you're doing some reading around my work, but the one I remember very clearly a student in my first year of teaching in so long back in 2013, who sort of just disappeared for a while for two or three weeks. And I had quite small classes at that stage. So I was able to keep tabs on students, and I was trying to get hold of him and I couldn't, and I was coming up to dp time. And I was just trying to make sure you know, what is what is happening with the student, because he was going to; by the terms of the of the course Handbook, he was in danger of losing his dp. And he finally materialised. And it turned out he had gone home to to the Eastern Cape for a for a funeral. But he hadn't felt that he could tell me that that was a thing that he was doing, because he didn't think I would consider it legitimate leave to be gone for that amount of time. So he was sort of, you know, saying that this was an essential thing that he needed to do, because it was part of essential social relationships, essentially, that if your personhood is in relation to others as it is, for most people in southern Africa, then something like going home to a funeral is completely essential. But that's something that the university doesn't necessarily see as legitimate. So if you don't get your work done during that time, for example, so him and I had this very interesting conversation, and at the end of that, it's kind of became clear to me that something like dp is actually produced from a particular cultural standpoint, right? That assumes that. Yeah, that assumes that you as an individual are able to give all your attention at any one time to the university space. So making changes to things like dp requirements, etc. All of those quite small scale examples can validate a particular particular ways of knowing. So those are the kinds of things I mean, when you can do it on on a local scale. I think you might be on mute. Are you still there?

**Luqman Muraina** 34:12

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. So the question I was trying to pose is the, you know, how do you think we can decolonize the curriculum, especially when we think about the physical and engineering sciences? Yes. Yeah.

**Interviewee** 34:31

So that's always the toughest question. And certainly most of my work has been in the, in the social sciences and in the humanities and arts where it is easier to do to do those sorts of things. But some of some of the things languages always the easiest example there, but that's mostly in terms of pedagogy, right? So So being able to to teach in multiple Languages gives one (noise) I think there are probably, but not being from engineering or there, I can't really think of examples for that. But the one thing that does come to mind, right is that in the, in the physical sciences, in all of the challenges we're facing at the moment, for example, to do with environmental sciences, or as well, climate change, etc, etc. A lot of a lot of what we're facing comes from a particular model of economics and a model of, of value in terms of capitalism, right? And recognising that I think can make can make a big shift to to how it is that those kinds of Yeah, those kinds of subjects get taught the work that's done, etc. Similarly, with, with economics, right, so economics at UCT, at least has a very, very quantitative model, but there are there are different ways of doing it. And I've recognising how South Africa's economic system has been historically created. And what that has done to, to people to climate to, to our relationships with land, etc, etc. So I think I can see ways of just from because of my own personal, I suppose research interests, I can see ways in terms of the environmental sciences, economics, etc. But I don't have a huge amount of experience around things. Things like engineering. Yeah. I think you're on mute again.

**Luqman Muraina** 36:55

I'm sorry. I think I need to just leave it now. A lot of noise, huh - INJ? Yeah, I think it's the engineers, they are trying to repair something in my residence.

**Interviewee** 37:11

Oh, you see, so there you go. Those engineers are not paying enough attention to your decolonizing interviews here; both laughs.

**Luqman Muraina** 37:19

I actually told them before I started and, you know, they try their best to do something, but it's not just enough, oooooh I'm sorry, it was your residents affected by the fire union. And, you know, they're just trying to fix some things, you know, they are renovating the whole building. Okay. All right, Shane, sorry. Okay, so so let me just ask, I think I picked that point that it is actually more difficult to decolonize in, in the physical sciences than the social sciences. So I think we can move on.

**Interviewee** 37:55

Yeah. Sorry, can I just add one thing there, which is to say I'm not sure that it is more difficult, but it takes it takes expert knowledge of those disciplines. And so the difficulty is that at the moment, the people who have kind of worked on decolonizing, or who have experience around decolonizing tend not to be in those disciplines. And so you kind of need to have expert knowledge of the discipline in order to figure out what needs to change. So maybe to say rather that I don't know a politics of decolonizing should also be trying to reach academics in those spaces, so that they can do the work. Yeah.

**Luqman Muraina** 38:32

Hmm. So you know, decolonisers are not researchers, that're doing research, but decolonizers are not really popular in those spaces.

**Interviewee** 38:44

Yeah. in STEM, I think in science and technology and those spaces, I think it's Yeah, the disciplines don't tend to speak to one another. Yeah.

**Luqman Muraina** 38:55

Okay, that is fine. So the next question here that. do you share the research idea that some Western knowledge and practices are still useful to the current, you know, clime?

**Interviewee** 39:09

I do I do. So I mean, I think we need to recognise the the histories that people that that particular ways of knowing bring with them, and we need to recognise the power politics. But I don't think we I think it would be an overcorrection to say that everything we know so far from a Western perspective must be disregarded. Right. So that's a bit of a stereotypical way of putting it, but just to take it to the extreme. We live in a very entangled world, right? Everybody has knowledges from different spaces. So for me, I think the aim would be to have all of those different knowledges recognised as legitimate and to recognise that Western knowledge is not universal, that it's just one amongst many, and that it comes with with problems. And so yeah, to that But so so not to throw it out entirely, but to recognise that as one among many, and one that carries a particular particularly dangerous history, I suppose.

**Luqman Muraina** 40:09

Okay, so how is it possible to recognise, you know, all these knowledges from different spaces, you know, in one single higher education community?

**Interviewee** 40:20

I don't think it's that hard, I think you can use a lot of languages, you can start thinking a bit differently about, yeah, about our relationship, what the university is for relations to the world, etc. So you have to remember also that the discipline I come from anthropology, that's its entire premise is that, that there are multiple ways of knowing and that they can be used and recorded and researched, etc. So but again, I think it will come down to, yeah, to, partly to management, allowing different ways of doing things, but also just to individual academics, having the having the will to to allow different ways of doing things, but things, particularly even in a very conservative place like UCT, you see small shifts happening. So for example, in committees, I sit on \*\*\*\* education committees from a few years ago, trying to get somebody to be able to use lots of languages in the classroom was hard, you had a battle on your hands, and people sort of said no, it was all disadvantaged students, etc, etc. That's no longer the case. Now, if something comes through saying I would like to use multiple languages in the classroom, it's an automatic Yes. So I think things are shifting and that it is fully possible to bring in multiple knowledge systems, we just have to get to a place where that is normalised.

**Luqman Muraina** 41:55

Awesome. Moving on, so what functions do you think the Department of Education and Training would perform when we do decolonization?

**Interviewee** 42:08

So I think that one of the biggest would be funding models, right? So. So if we think of decolonizing, in a big, broad social justice sense, then I think obviously, one of the strongest calls from students was towards free education, free decolonized education, but free being a central part of it. Which would, as I said earlier, entails a massive change on the part of how how the government does things, but that would be a very big role that could be played, but also a role in terms of Yeah, other kinds of policy mechanisms. So recognising. So yeah. So for example, if we were thinking about STEM subjects, if government puts policies into place that ask for people, within institutions to start to examine the history of the disciplines, etc, then it then will happen, particularly if there is funding of some sort attached to it. I mean, the obvious way in which it is happening at the moment, is through things like nGAP posts, which which DHET has put into place in universities, which are earmarked for black South Africans, for example, so that we then get a whole new cohort of young black academics into the space. And that then then shifts it in particular ways. But I think there's scope for more than just that transformation in terms of, yeah, of race in the space but to have DHET involved in policymaking, that allows also for an interrogation of what, yeah, what kind of knowledge we're using, and that would basically be through through policy briefs and funding instruments.

**Luqman Muraina** 43:59

Hmm. Okay. In recognition of your mention of policy, do you think decolonization is a policy issue?

**Interviewee** 44:11

I mean, I think it could be currently it is not. But I think that there are ways to to write policies that bring those sorts of changes, about through through what it is that that is pushed for in a particular way. And so for example, you know, the emphasis on now not sorry, so now going from the level of government policy through to the level of university policies. So just to give another example from from UCT in terms of university policies. So UCT obviously, is a research, research driven institution. It's one of the high research universities, but there have been recent policy changes, particularly as a result of student protests, that have said, we have to value teaching and learning more, more heavily. And doing that just that shift from this idea of individualised research, doing a particular kind of work to a space where teaching and learning is also valued and seen as part more important part of promotion criteria, etc. and a more important part of the UCT brand. So we're positioning ourselves not just as a top research institution, but also as a top teaching and learning institution, those kinds of policies make a difference to the ways in which people act. So the ways in which people value their teaching and learning think about their relationships with students, etc. So yes, I think decolonization can be a policy issue. And probably, we're seeing small steps in that direction. But But nothing, nothing large at this stage.

**Luqman Muraina** 45:56

Okay. Do you also agree that many higher education institutions, you know, due to the 2015 16 national situation, I've taken different steps regarding student demand for, you know decolonized education?

**Interviewee** 46:11

I think so I think it's slow, I think in the lifetime of a student is extremely hard to see the changes. But I think that across every institution, there has been an interest. And it's not necessarily a high level administrative interest always. But certainly, within all, all the institutions, there are academics who are picking up this particular idea and running with it. And and then, of course, there are also sort of yard just just the kinds of changes, like valuing teaching and learning bringing in more n-gap positions, thinking a bit differently about transformation. I think that definitely the student student protests caused across the board, a lot of a lot of small changes, and some of which are very slow. But, but there was, it was, it was recognised as a very important moment and recognise that things needed to shift.

**Luqman Muraina** 47:11

Okay. Okay, nice. So, if we recognise that, you know, universities have taken different steps, do you think that we need any coordination from the Department of Higher Education, so that we don't proliferate our understanding of decolonization? Yeah.

**Interviewee** 47:31

Sure, you know, I mean, I think in a way, what decolonization tries to do is to proliferate understandings, right. I think there's no one model that fits every every space. So I think there would be a danger in saying, Okay, DHET is going to come up with a definition of this as decolonization and sort of see how it can be rolled out in those different spaces. Because that sort of level of bureaucratization could could shut down the the plural ways of thinking. So there's a lot of underground stuff that is that is coming out of universities. And I think that bottom up stuff is probably more useful than a top down managerialism that says, This is what decolonization should look like. But that having been said, I think that it would still be useful to have in place a series of funding instruments, for instance, that that allow people to, yeah, to do a bit of experimentation around teaching and learning, for example, or around around curriculum or even around admissions that are in keeping with their version of what it looks like to decolonize a university.

**Luqman Muraina** 48:38

Thank you. So do you think that UCT, can you remember any step up to taking to decolonize? You know, education before the 2015 protests?

**Interviewee** 48:48

I mean, I don't think it would have been called decolonizing. Because that that term came out of that particular moment. But certainly, yeah, whether it was called transformation of the curriculum, etc. Yes, I mean, I don't think people were not doing that work prior to to the student protests. So just as some small scale examples, there's a there's an article I wrote that was published online in \*\*\*\*. But then it only came out in an actual volume of a journal in 2017. But it was based on research done from 2013 of the sorts of things academics were doing within their classrooms in line with decolonial ideas. So I think there are full steps with decolonizing the humanities, I think, in South Africa. So yes, I think that the curriculum is always shifting. That's one of the things about higher education, which is such a, such a valuable thing I think and also potentially a dangerous thing is the amount of autonomy that academics have, right? So the curriculum is constantly shifting year on year, academics are always changing the things that they that they teach. And so I think, yeah, what you would have been taught at UCT in the 1970s versus the 1980s, versus the 1990s, would have been different at every step along the way. And that there has been an increase in recognition over that time of Yeah, of the value of, of local knowledge, I suppose. Yeah.

**Luqman Muraina** 50:32

I think I need not to ask the steps University have taken after post fallism events, because that is very popular in the literature. So I'm going to ask that, how can you advise lecturers seeking to decolonize the curriculum?

**Interviewee** 50:53

Sure, um, so so I work on a big curriculum change project at the moment that that is, is looking at those sorts of things. And so maybe what would be useful is I could send you a set of questions that we've devised that that we ask academics to ask of their, of their course design as a way of thinking about decolonizing. So that might be useful, just a useful another piece of data for you. But I suppose the if if we were to advise academics, on your on how to think about decolonizing, probably the first step would be to begin with the students. So to think about the things that students are asking for, and to use that. So think of students as kind of yeah students as knowledge makers recognise that students come with a particular kind of knowledge that, yeah, that will give give you a different sense. But also, just to think about about across a number of levels. So do you think around content, right, so does the course include things that foreground our African location? Or does the course gives students opportunities to critically engage in their own experiences and use that to think with, but also stuff around, I don't know, positioning students as knowledge producers, rather than just seeing them as someone that you are giving the knowledge to? So kind of, can you develop your curriculum in a way that allows them to produce their own knowledge and become sort of members of academia in that way? And then I think also stuff around power dynamics in the classroom. Right. So thinking about how do you how do you deliver your materials? And is there there's very much case that you are there as the lecturer, you know, with all of the power in the room? Or you are you developing more spaces kind of for active learning where students are able to be to be part of their own learning and where you're not necessarily seen as such an authority? So those kinds of things? And then of course, multilingualism as well, I would say, it's always a good idea if it's possible to, to build that in.

**Luqman Muraina** 53:15

Okay, okay. Okay. So I'm going to ask this question now. Can you still hear me? Yes, I can. Okay, so I'm going to ask that, like, do you think research on decolonization has appropriately touched on how and the strategies of decolonizing teaching and learning

**Interviewee** 53:40

I think that there's beginning to be a shift in that direction. So for a long time, not long time, over the last five years, while this idea of decolonization has proliferated, so not a particularly long time, historically speaking, but in South Africa, at least, where this idea of, of decolonizing has rarely been part of the public discourse, often it's operated at the level of quite abstract ideas or high theory. So this idea of kind of broad scale, knowledges, and what is valued and what is not an all of the theory from that South American context that that was used. So for a long time, that was where most of the theory happened, the conversation happened, the research happened. And it's been a bit slow to get that into teaching and learning. But I think it is starting to happen to think about how do we operationalize this this high level theory and bring it into actual classroom spaces. So the piece that I wrote with \*\*\* and \*\*\* that you mentioned at the very beginning, was actually a, it was the introduction to a special issue that tried to look at exactly that. So we sent out an open call for papers and we said academics across the global south, what are you doing in practice to bring these decolonial ideas into the classroom? And so that that special issue has now got, I think, \*\*\*\* papers from Zimbabwe, Australia, South Africa, South America, I think a couple of other spaces, looking precisely at how do we operationalize these ideas in the classroom, and coming up with things, you know, from using local spaces, to using kind of students, family members, as experts, etc, etc. and thinking about getting it there. So I think the research is starting to happen in terms of teaching and learning, but still predominantly on the side of quite abstract theory, but it's it's getting there.

**Luqman Muraina** 55:52

Hmm. Nice. So I'm going to ask, have you ever been consulted by an organisation for advice on incorporating decolonization into a policy?

**Interviewee** 56:09

Not individually, but I do know that a paper that I wrote on actually, just a short article on the conversation, which is a website that takes academic ideas and gets journalists to edit them for public audience. So there was a paper I had there called \*\*\*\*\* or something like that. And that I know, has been used in a lot of higher education spaces to think about developing policy developing questions around curriculum design. So I know that that piece has been used, but I personally have never known not being called into to consult.

**Luqman Muraina** 56:51

Okay. I think, how do you think we can, you know, actually reduce the gap between, you know, research on decolonization and what is happening in practice?

**Interviewee** 57:06

Um, I'm not sure. I think it takes I think it is. I'm not sure. So I think there's two parts of that question. One, there's a gap in terms of the research around the theory and research around what's happening in practice. I don't, I mean, I think what's I think there's a huge amount that is happening in practice out there that individual academics, just in terms of higher education are busy instituting that students are busy instituting, etc, and that are happening at the policy level. So I think if there's a gap, it's just a gap in terms of getting the research done. And as I say, I think that is starting to shift, because there's a lot of researchers looking, looking at the area.

**Luqman Muraina** 57:51

Okay, nice. So I'm going to ask some follow up questions now, based on the responses you have given before, so I think we are rounding up. So the first follow up question is, why do you think, decolonization, has come to reside, maybe only in the academic spaces?

**Interviewee** 58:16

I don't know that it has. Certainly, those are the spaces in which I am most familiar. But again, to just think of the example of I don't know, of public health, or of all of the push that's happening at the moment, with organisations like anti Phonak, ahwazi (UC), and stuff around land claims, etc, etc. I think if we set out to look for it, we could find that decolonization is happening everywhere, it's just only called decolonization by the academics maybe.

**Luqman Muraina** 58:49

Okay, okay. Because, for me, I understand that, you know, for us to actually decolonize the education sector, we cannot take out that sector, from the general part of the society. So the way education, you know, interacts with other sectors, you know, its limits its ability to actually decolonize and, for me, you know, decolonization as, you know, has left, you know, space, political spaces, spaces of activism, where it's actually started from, to try to now accommodate and reside in the academia alone which, to some extent, according to my understanding, limits, our you know, our ability, you know, to decolonize the whole society.

**Interviewee** 59:38

Yeah, I suppose. I mean, I see. I see. I see the point you're making there. I mean, I'm not sure 100% agree. I think that those spaces of activism still exist hugely the that work is being done, where the problem lies is in the fact that that the work is not being done that much in university to shift what it is that the university is for. So that as you say, you still have this gap between universities sort of sitting up in their ivory towers, and what happens out there in the world. And I think that's something that that a lot of decolonization work is trying to shift. So it's trying to say that universities exist within the communities, they should be part of the communities. And so through that, you know, so the buzzword that exists with that, through at UCT is social responsiveness, which I think is not quite enough, right, you need to actually be be thinking quite differently about about the university. And it ties into the idea of free education, for example, and opening up the university spaces. And it ties into the research funding models, and what are we doing the research for, and all of all of those ideas, and it ties into this notion of the individual researcher who's actually just career building rather than doing work for for the good of the wider community? So in that way, yes, I think you're right. But I don't think that decolonization isn't happening outside. I just think that the I suppose the universities are doing a particular kind of academic work around it.

**Luqman Muraina** 1:01:11

Hmm. Okay. So University need to move closer to the community that it serves? Yeah, I think so. I think so. Okay. Okay. I think so I'm going to ask, what is the importance of the self in, you know, in the call for decolonization?

**Interviewee** 1:01:31

Sure. What a big question. Um, I think, I think a lot of self reflexivity is important, right? Because we do come, we live in a society that has deeply historicize historicized categories, identity categories, and that really do matter, to the ways in which in which things are done. So I think, speaking now, from a position of self, so from a position of, of whiteness, I think there's a huge amount of work that has to be done, particularly by white academics to recognise and stuff that they currently we currently have unrecognised, right. So things around power and practice, and what kinds of knowledge are valued and language practices, etc, etc, that a lot of white academics just see as this is how the university works. And those things are, yeah, so I think that I suppose the short answer is I think a lot of self reflexivity is needed to recognise what are some of the patterns that we're not seeing? And how can we interrupt those patterns? Yeah,

**Luqman Muraina** 1:02:47

if you can share with me in these last minutes, how do you think we can bring that self reflexivity? Over flexivity, you know, to happen? Sorry, how we can bring that self reflexivity to? Yeah, to happen to come alive?

**Interviewee** 1:03:05

Oh, it's also a very good question. So in a very practical answer that I can give right now is that UCT has started this process as part of the transformation office of starting a practice called decentering whiteness across the university. And it's in very early stages. But the idea is to set up a series of what's called affinity groups, where people work together to do this kind of self reflective work. So that the, the pressure is taken off things like the black academic caucus, for example, to keep doing the work for white people and to actually say, okay, white academics, you need to sit down and, and reflect and think quite carefully about that. So obviously, it's a hugely slow process. It's very difficult, particularly, I don't know, in a way to get the people who most would want to do it would be the ones who are most unlikely to join an affinity group and do that kind of work. But I think there is a political will at the moment, which is, which is, which is helpful. Yeah. So I don't know, I don't know how you get people to do it. But I think there are some structures in place that are that are going to try.

**Luqman Muraina** 1:04:21

And then the last question, so you personally, what are your future plans to continue to research on decolonization? And as a researcher, where do you think decolonization should further concentrate in our collective will to change the society for progress?

**Interviewee** 1:04:41

So personally, as I say, I'm getting more and more interested in in teaching and learning and the curriculum. So I still do well. So there's also COVID has come into the mix. So I still do a fair amount of work in in Zimbabwe and more sort of anthropological work on on knowledge. But I'm also doing a lot more work specifically on on individual course curricula, that kind of work and thinking about how do we how do we Institute changes at that level? And then in terms of what, yeah, where I imagine it should go on a sort of broader level, I think there are so many levels to decolonization, right? So teaching and learning is just one part of it. But as you rightly say, there's questions around what is the university space for? there's questions around local activism, there's questions around climate justice, etc, etc. So I think that I imagined that decolonization debates in the future are going to go in lots of different directions, they'll probably be held together by a thread of social justice. But that the Yeah, the scope for it is enormous. It could go in any direction because of what you're dealing with is knowledge. And obviously, we, yeah, we have knowledge about all manner of things.

**Luqman Muraina** 1:06:09

Hmm. I'm going to appreciate you for your time, and then the, you know, the zeal to really provide our this response. At this stage, I'm going to say that our interview has come to an end. I don't know if you can turn on your camera so we can pose for a picture. I'm just going to do a screenshot of my screen. That's been great. Yeah. So I'm going to do some follow up email questions, you actually mentioned some things like, I'm going to ask if there is any link, you know, to read maybe some of the outputs of your PhD research, as well, as you said that there is a questionnaire you provided for academics, so they can, you know, self-ask themselves to actually know if they are decolonizing. So I'm going to accept for those materials and as well as some other teams, you know, maybe just collaborate with you in some way, maybe help you in summary, your own research, and all of that. And it's really interesting to learn about what is happening in Zimbabwe, I've never heard or learnt about that. It's interesting, I hope to maybe visit the space sometime in actually see what his happening and all of that thank you so much, for

**Interviewee** 1:07:25

the one thing just before we end, which is not not to do with the interview, but I was just thinking as you were talking now we have a research project running in the \*\*\*\*. Funded by Mellon called \*\*\*\* that's doing research into some of these courses. So if you want when, if it would be useful for your personal research, I can check with the research team, if you wanted to sit in on meetings or whatever, as participant observation around the curriculum change project, I think it would be very welcomed. So just have a thing. I don't know. I mean, I don't know what your main aims are around research. So that might not be useful to you at all as a source of data of data. But if it is, then I can check with the team if people would be willing. So I'll send you a description of it. And then you can see if you think it might be it might be a nice thing for you to sit down on occasionally.

**Luqman Muraina** 1:08:12

Okay, please send it out. I'll be expecting that from you. And I can, you know, make a decision, but I'm sure I would be very glad to you know, be you know, in those spaces. Yeah. Because I hope to continue to build my myself as a student, you know, in decolonization research. Okay, well, it's lovely to meet you. Thank you so much. Good luck with her. Yeah, good luck with all the work in a bye bye. Thank you for attending. Bye Bye. Have a beautiful day

**Interviewee** 1:08:40

Bye, You too

**Luqman Muraina** 1:08:49

Aaah, Olorun meee