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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
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Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
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## Decolonisation and Indigenisation in contemporary Africa: a puzzle in need of a Critical Pedagogy magnifying glass

**Corlie van der Berg**  
**Department of Social Work and Criminology**



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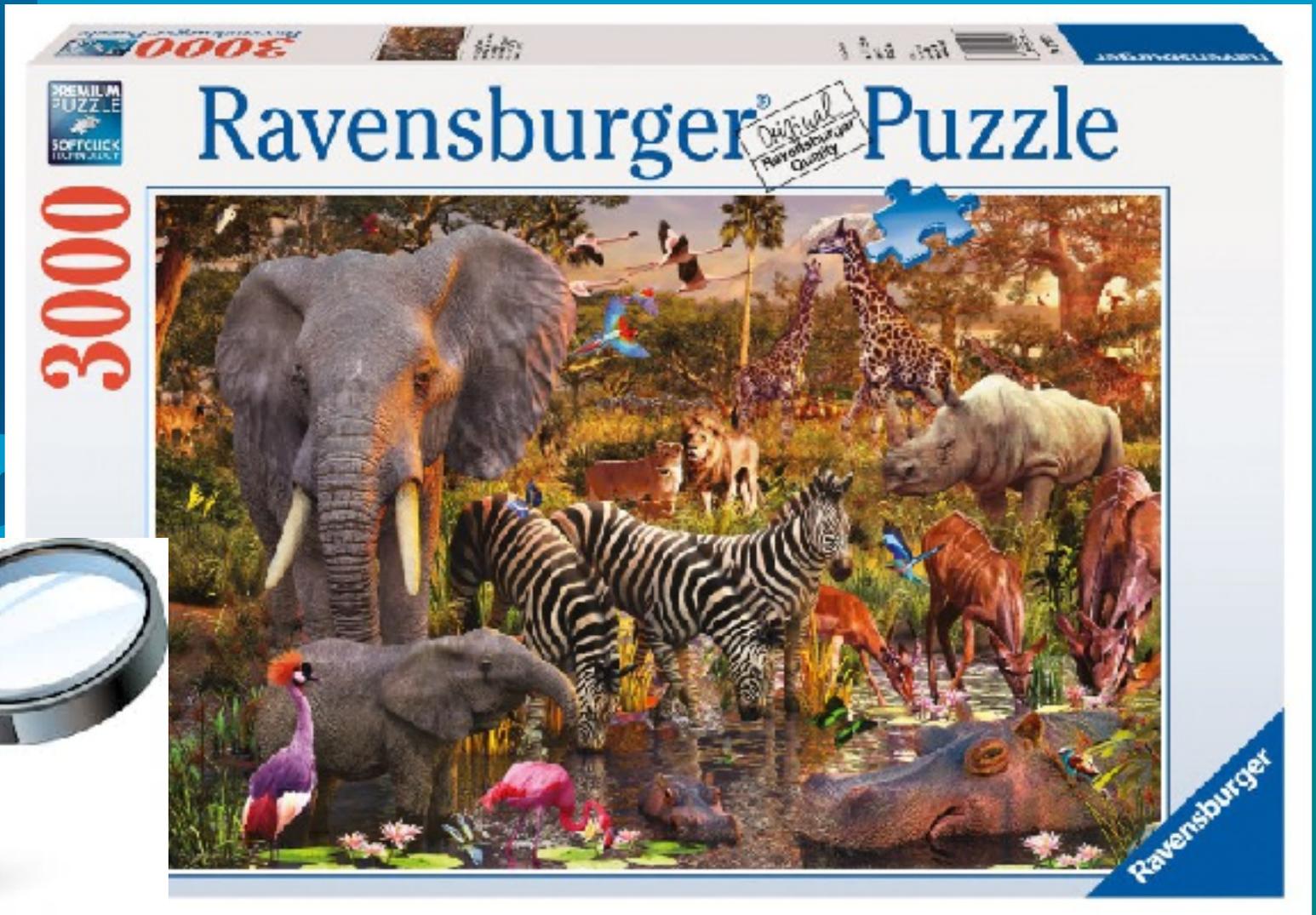
# Why do we need to have this discussion?

I'm not convinced  
we've wasted  
enough time  
on this.



someecards

# How will we build this puzzle?



# Building without a picture



# Certain questions

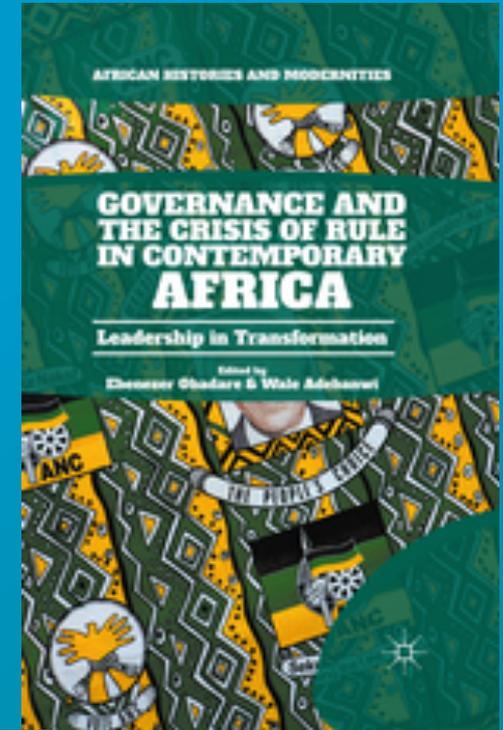
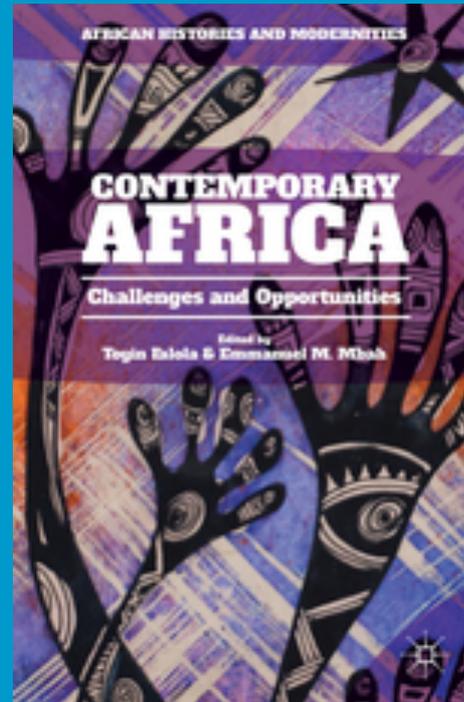
- **What is meant by contemporary Africa?**
- **What is meant by indigenisation**
- **What is meant by decolonisation?**
- **What can critical pedagogy do for us?**
- **Are these concepts or constructs the same or are they different, or both and...?**
- **The both/and... view**



*"But epistemology is always and inevitably personal. The point of the probe is always in the heart of the explorer: What is my answer to the question of the nature of knowing?"*

**Gregory Bateson**

# What is contemporary Africa?



# Contemporary Africa

## The image of Africa

**African solutions for African problems do not exist – Africa is a hopeless victim of its own making**

**“Africans need to think and act for themselves, and learn from their mistakes”** Wangari Maathai (2009)



**Agenda 2063  
The Africa We Want (AU)**

**OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR THE AFRICA WE WANT**

- 1. A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development**
- 2. An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance**
- 3. An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law**
- 4. A peaceful and secure Africa**
- 5. An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics**
- 6. An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children**
- 7. Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner**

# Decolonisation

**“Decolonization is a process that begins with the understanding that one is colonized (at whatever level that may be). It is creating and consciously using various strategies to liberate oneself from, or adapt to, or survive in oppressive conditions. It is the restoration of cultural practices, thinking believes and values that were taken away or abandoned but are still relevant or necessary for survival and well-being. It is the birth and use of new ideas, thinking, technologies and lifestyles that contribute to the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples” (Yellow Bird, 2008:284)**

# Decolonisation

**“The decolonisation of social work first and foremost means acknowledging and harnessing the strengths of Indigenous communities rather than engaging in blaming games compounding deleterious effects of several hundred years of colonisation”. He argues that, “Social workers have the opportunity either to support Indigenous People’s rights or continue with practices that further erode them” (Yellow Bird, 2013, p. xxi).**



## **Indigenisation an accepted controversy?**

### **Different views of indigenisation:**

- **It has often been used to describe the adoption of colonial culture in Africa because of the effects of colonialism by Europe in the 19th and early 20th century**

# **Indigenisation an accepted controversy?**

**“A current understanding of ‘indigenization’ holds that social work knowledge should arise from within the culture, reflect local behaviours 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” (Gray, 2013:2).**

**Indigenization and cultural relevance or appropriateness, is seen as “a process of localisation” which is easier achieved through grassroots participation as opposed to “imposition of Western theories and models totally foreign to local cultural contexts” (Osei Hwedie & Rankopo, 2012:733).**

# **Four areas of indigenisation and decolonisation**

**Shaoguang Wang (2011)**

- 1. “When determining topics of research, we must distinguish which questions are ‘real’ and which ones are ‘fake’”. Shaoguang Wang (2011:254) Could also be translated asking “which questions are relevant for our context and which questions are irrelevant?”**

**E.g. Should we have more research on clinical social work or rather developmental social work?**

# **Four areas of indigenisation and decolonisation**

**Shaoguang Wang (2011)**

## **2. Revealing the underlying presumptions lurking underneath Western theory**

- They must be analysed, doubted, and sifted through**
- Certain underlying presumptions that exist within Western theory usually are not stated explicitly.**

# **Four areas of indigenisation and decolonisation**

**Shaoguang Wang (2011)**

- **In other words, societies that prioritize individualism tend to emphasize individual rights while societies that prioritize the social group will be more concerned with duty.**
- **Will the ranking of all kinds of human rights (civil, political, social, and economic) in such a society be the same as in the West?**

# **Four areas of indigenisation and decolonisation**

**Shaoguang Wang (2011)**

## **3. Determining the actual meanings of certain key concepts within social work.**

- **Any kind of theorising will always enlist the help of certain concepts and how we define such concepts will directly influence our analytical framework and even our logical conclusions.**
- **For example, what is understood under social development and or community development in US text books is very different than what SA text books for example would focus on – sometimes it is not such a huge difference, but a nuanced difference – or e.g the contextualisation of the history of social work in the West...etc**
- **Or gender – focus on women and poverty**



# **Four areas of indigenisation and decolonisation**

**Shaoguang Wang (2011)**

**4. The fourth task concerns methodology. We must be careful to avoid emphasizing methodology merely for the sake of it.**

**While methodology is important, it is only a tool**

**Using the “newest”, most “progressive”, or most “scientific” methods at the expense of abandoning more important research topics must be avoided. In the United States, the “newest” methods that political scientists exclusively employ will often end up dictating research topics themselves. This is a lesson we should learn from.**

**Critical pedagogy...a magnifying glass that may guide the puzzle pieces to find their fit – but it is not a blueprint**



# Critical pedagogy

**“Critical pedagogy problematizes the relationship between education and politics, between socio-political relations and pedagogical practices, between the reproduction of dependant hierarchies of power and privilege in the domain of everyday social life and that of classrooms and institutions. In doing so, it advances an agenda for educational transformation by encouraging educators to understand the socio-political contexts of educative acts and the importance of radically democratizing both educational sites and larger social formations”.**

**Fischman and McLaren (2005:425)**

# **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts**

**McLaren (2007:194-220)**

- **The significance of theory**

**Theories that are dialectical in nature**

**Meaning that these theories recognise societal problems as more than simply isolated events of individuals or deficiencies in the social structure, but rather as part of the interactive context between individual and society (McLaren, 2007:194).**

# **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts**

**McLaren (2007:194-220)**

- **The significance of theory**

**“Constantly spitting out theories, some Western theorists claim to hold the key to describing the third world. In-fact, all they are doing is ‘cutting feet to fit the shoe’ that is, simplifying a complex and colourful world to fit into their own model” (Wang, 2016).**

# **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts**

**McLaren (2007:194-220)**

- **The social construction of knowledge**
- **Knowledge = a social construction deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations**
- **The social interactions that we have with others symbolically construct the world we inhabit, depending to a great extent on culture, context, custom and historical specificity.**

# Critical pedagogy: the major concepts

McLaren (2007:194-220)

- **The social construction of knowledge**
  - **Forms of knowledge – emancipatory knowledge**
  - **Class - the economic, social, and political relationships that govern life in a given social order**
  - **Culture - to be cognisant of how cultural questions enable us to comprehend with whom power lies, how it is reproduced and manifested in social relations, and link education to the wider social order**

# **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts**

**McLaren (2007:194-220)**

- **The social construction of knowledge**
  - **Dominant culture, Subordinate Culture, and Subculture - Dominant culture is seen as representations and social practices affirming the core values, concerns, and interests of the social class controlling the symbolic and material wealth of society (McLaren, 2007:201). The subordinate culture constitutes “groups that live out social relations in subordination to the dominant culture of the ruling class”, while subcultures can be seen as subsets of the dominant and subordinate cultures**

## **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts McLaren (2007:194-220)**

- **Cultural forms** - those social practices and symbols that express culture, for example those found in music, dress, food, religion, dance, and education.
- **Hegemony** - a process of social control that is carried out through the intellectual and moral leadership of a dominant social class over subordinate groups
- **Ideology** - the formation of hegemony cannot be separated from the production of ideology - Ideology infiltrates all aspects of social life
- **Prejudice** - the negative attitudes derived from prejudice can occur so often, that they take on an ideological character that can be used to justify acts of discrimination

# **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts** McLaren (2007:194-220)

- **The power/knowledge relation**
- **A fundamental concern of critical pedagogy**
- **Knowledge is always an ideological construction linked to social relations and particular interests, it normally receives little attention in educational programmes because the dominant curriculum divorces knowledge from the issue of power and treats it in a technical manner.**

# **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts** McLaren (2007:194-220)

- **The curriculum**

- **Is founded on the idea that there is not a universal methodology that can work for all populations, implying that there is no fixed curriculum or programme, because all decisions related to curricula and study material are based on the needs and interests of students (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011:79).**
- **Interested in the unintended outcomes of the educational process, better known as the hidden curriculum**
- **Another aspect of curriculum highlighted by critical pedagogues is that it is being viewed as a form of cultural politics.**

# **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts**

**McLaren (2007:194-220)**

- **Social reproduction and cultural capital**
  - **“Social reproduction refers to the intergenerational reproduction of social class (i.e., working-class students become working-class adults; middle-class students become middle-class adults)” (McLaren, 2007:215)**
  - **Schools and higher education institutions reflect the wider societal inequalities because they reproduce the structures of social life through the socialisation (colonisation) of student subjectivities and by establishing social practices distinctive of the wider capitalist society**

# **Critical pedagogy: the major concepts**

**McLaren (2007:194-220)**

- **Cultural capital**
  - **Related to social reproduction is cultural capital, which McLaren (2007:218) explains as referring to:**

**“....the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition and skills that are passed on from one generation to the next; and it represents ways of talking, acting and socialising, as well as language practices, values, and styles of dress and behaviour”.**
  - **This implies that students from the dominant culture will inherit profoundly different cultural capital than students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, while educational institutes will reward and value the students exhibiting the dominant culture above those that inhabit inferior class positions**

"EACH OF US  
IS A **PIECE OF THE PUZZLE**  
AND EACH OF US HELPS  
TO SET IN PLACE OTHER  
IMPORTANT PIECES."

**NEIL L. ANDERSEN**

**Thank You**  
**corlie.vanderberg**  
**@up.ac.za**



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