

Approaching Ubuntu in Education Through Bottom-Up Decolonisation

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In our paper we contrast the idea(l) of an education that aims at community and planetary wellbeing with the current educational reality in South Africa. Drawing on our initiatives to integrate local indigenous knowledges (including use of home language) with the Western curriculum we address the question how to approach educational transformation *despite* and *within* the given educational context. We do this through telling our narrative stories as well as reflections on our research project geared towards bottom-up decolonisation. We offer this paper as an invitation to researchers worldwide to engage in scholarly debate around issues on decolonisation.

bottom-up decolonisation, indigenous knowledges, integration of knowledges, science Education, stories, Ubuntu

1. Introduction

The education envisioned in this paper builds on the Southern African philosophy of Ubuntu. Understood as *humanness*, Ubuntu comprises a dimension of 'becoming human' and 'being human' (Ramose, 2009). Both dimensions are realised through 'humble togetherness' (Swanson, 2009) in lived community and respectful, caring relations among humans, other species, nature and the universe (Seehawer, 2018a). Ubuntu offers a decolonial holistic framework for Southern African education that is steeped in African epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies (Afonso-Nhalevilo, 2013). Thereby, Ubuntu's dimension of *being human* presents ethical and methodological directions for how to

teach, that is, relational and holistic pedagogical approaches. Ubuntu's dimension of *becoming human*, in turn, provides normative aims of education, that is, educational 'agendas' that aim at the wellbeing of the (local, regional and planetary) community (Seehawer, 2021), which includes environmental togetherness.

Notwithstanding, there seems to be little scope for such education in South Africa's current educational system that aims at producing workforce for competing in the global (knowledge) economy, while regularly making headlines about poor student performance. Despite acknowledging indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) as part of the country's cultural heritage, the curriculum is tailored to the dominant Western epistemology (Ogunniyi, 2018). That is, both curriculum content, assessment and the structural set-up of education facilitate the reproduction of epistemic colonisation. For example, the South African school education is compartmentalised into subjects, which is in accordance with the atomistic understanding of knowledge that characterises Western knowledge production, but may clash with the holistic nature of indigenous ways of knowing. Correspondingly, current South African testing regimes centre on the individual and are exclusive and extractive rather than building on an inclusive and relational approach which would be characteristic for Ubuntu (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2017). Such educational features bring about "a generation of African children who are being reared and educated without any anchorage in their own cultural and ancestral value systems" (Boukary, 2020, p. 149). How do we approach educational transformation against this background then?

The approach foregrounded here shifts the focus from the seeming powerlessness to the agency of teachers and educators (Seehawer, 2018b). In the following, we draw on our work on integrating local indigenous knowledges with the Western curriculum as examples of small-scale bottom-up initiatives that are possible despite and within the given system. We do this by presenting stories from three South African educators,¹ Mthembu, MaMthembu and Jola (clan names). They have experienced colonisation and Apartheid whose hegemonic agendas were to denigrate other ways of knowing, thinking, doing and being thereby alienating students in science classrooms. Similarly to Keane, Khupe and Muza (2016), we present these stories of our life experiences to illustrate how these shaped our values and belief systems, in particular, on the integration of indigenous knowledge in science teaching.

2. Our Personal Stories Count In Indigenous Research Agendas

2.1. *Mlungisi's personal story*

My clan name is Mthembu (*isiduko*) and my ²umbilical cord was buried in the late 1950s at Victoria Road, in the Fingo Village township in Grahamstown now called Makhanda. The Fingo Village is about 3 kms from the city centre and is separated by a river (in which I learnt to swim). The term 'township' was used by the apartheid government to designate a geographical area set aside for Blacks only. Notably, Victoria Road has the best view of the city and Rhodes University, in particular. Yet, in my childhood

¹ Africans and in particular South Africans use clan names to level power gradients in the community and also to show respect not only for people but for their cultures as well. For example, the clan name for our first democratically elected President in South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela is Madiba and any one could call him like that regardless of age or gender. Also, the prefix Ma in MaMthembu denotes that the gender is female and there is no Ma, for example, Mthembu or Jola the gender is a male. Also, in South Africa children take the father's clan names.

² In isiXhosa culture when people ask a place where you were born they often say, "*Iphi inkaba yakho?*" [Wherewere you born]. This suggests the importance of place to them.

years we knew that we were not allowed to go and study at Rhodes. Rhodes University was then a faraway Promised Land, which was never to be reached.

Here I am a child in the late 1950s in a house made of poles and mud mixed with cow dung and old corrugated iron roof. For insulation purposes, my parents improvised and used card boards to make ceiling. My mother, MaRadebe (clan name) used cow dung as floor polish. She was a domestic worker. My father, Mthembu was working on the railways as a labourer. But home was home not only for us.

I remember that one day, bees came to our house and as children we were scared that they would sting us. To us children bees were a symbol of fear and pain. Surprisingly, when our mother came back from work she said bees were visitors (*iindwendwe*) and were not a bad omen but instead were bringing good news to the family. So, we were told not to kill them. Instead, my mother made ³*umqombothi* to thank the ancestors. When *umqombothi* was ready, our parents showed their Ubuntu by inviting our neighbours to come and drink it together with them. They sang and danced and the bees left the house unharmed. I remember that one of the songs that was sung was: “*Ubonqonqoza xa ungena endlwini yam, ubothi molo xa ungena endlwini yama*” [You have to knock when you come to my house, you should greet when coming to my house] and we also joined in the singing and dancing.

I remember that as a child as one of my household chores I used to go to the forest with my mother to fetch firewood. This is called *ukutheza* in isiXhosa and a song associated with this indigenous practice says: “*Ndoda yam iyalinda soze ndotheza kwenye ilali*” [My husband has jealousy and I won't go and fetch firewood in another village]. She would make a bundle of firewood (*inyanda*) for me and for herself. Like any curious child, I would complain and ask: “Why is my bundle of wood smaller than yours?” (*Kutheni nje incinci eyam inyanda?*). She would then calmly ask me to go and lift up her bundle of firewood (*hamba uyokuphakamisa leya yam inyanda*). I would try and lift it up and I would say it is heavy (*Iyhoo inzima*) - Experiential learning! She would then put a piece of cloth on top of my head and then put my bundle of firewood on top of the cloth and would do the same with hers. As we walked home, I would observe that she did not put her bundle of firewood in the middle but instead the part with thick firewood was closer to the head whereas the elongated part somewhat protruded. A wonderful fulcrum effect!

The trouble though started when we got home as she would start making fire in what we called *imbawula* using my firewood. *Imbawula* was made from a 10 litre drum and holes were made on the sides for ventilation purposes. When I complained why she used my firewood, she would tell me that we do not start the fire with logs but instead we start it with twigs – the surface area effect. When *imbawula* was ready, it would be placed in the middle of the room and we would sit around it so that we could get equal heat. Stories would be told. Indeed, human stories are great teachers, we learnt listening skills and how to tell stories. What a wonderful way to share knowledge! She would also cook traditional food for us such *imifino* (wild vegetables mixed with maize meal) using an iron pot. In the morning my mother would sprinkle some wood ash in the toilet because at that time we were using a bucket system. She would throw some of the remaining wood ash in our small garden and she told us that she learnt that from her mother in the rural village in Peddie where her umbilical cord was buried.

I have very little experience of that rural village as my mother wanted me to get education unlike my older brothers and sisters who had to look after cattle and goats and hence were deprived of education. Although I was able to get education, I might have missed out on many indigenous practices at the village. I remember when I visited my brothers used to milk the cows, pour milk into a bottle and then

³ *Umqombothi* is traditional alcoholic beverage made by many families in South Africa especially those who practice cultural rituals. Also, we do not brew *umqombothi* but we make it or do it. We make it for drinking it in celebrations and we do it for the ancestors.

put it under the cow manure in the kraal. I also used to enjoy eating the indigenous fruits such as *iingwenye*, *isiphingo*, *intsenge*, and *incumncum* in the forest. We also ate traditional food such as *ingxangxa*, *umxhaxha*, *uqhumatata*, *umvubo*, *umcuku* to mention a few. I still eat and enjoy some of this food. But I remember that boys were not allowed to eat *imifino* and we were told that we would be weak men. On the other hand, girls were not allowed to eat eggs (*amaqanda*) and it was said that they would be fertile. These food restrictions contradicted with my township life and I found myself living in two worlds.

Sadly, from primary school through to university, none of my experiences mentioned above were taken into consideration during teaching. This is an experience that I share with so many Africans (see e.g. Khupe, 2014). Yet, for me the forest and the home were schools. Instead, we were made to memorise or rote learn science concepts and regurgitate them during the examinations. Indeed, we memorised them and obtained good marks. We even perpetuated the status quo as we used to walk tall because we were labelled as bright learners. But we could not apply the science we memorised in our everyday lives (Gwekwerere, 2016). Even for essay writing, we used to be asked to write an essay on a journey by train yet we were never on a train. I often pondered, were we taught to be creative and innovative or to be good liars? On reflection, however, I was better off compared to other learners as my father used to tell us stories about trains.

However, I do not blame my school teachers, college lecturers and university professors. I have no reason to do so as they themselves were taught the way they taught us. I also regret that when I was a science teacher myself I did not take my learners' funds of knowledge and socio-cultural backgrounds into consideration so that science could be accessible and relevant to them (Gwekwerere, 2016; Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). That would have, according to Aikenhead and Jegede (1999) enabled them to cross borders from their homes to school science, but also to embrace and respect their cultural heritage. Scholars such as Cocks, Alexander and Dold (2012) and Smith (2012) refer to this phenomenon as cultural revitalisation. However, culture has not been a barrier for me. For instance, I challenged the cultural stereotypes by marrying a Sotho woman, Mokoena from Grahamstown. Both her father's and mother's side do practice cultural practices something that resulted in us being compatible with no contradictions. Before we got married, she used to like *amasi*. But when we married she was not allowed to eat before a cultural ritual was performed. But one day she craved for *amasi* to such an extent that she ended up stealing it, that is, from a cultural point of view eating it illegally. She had an aching stomach and confessed to me that she had drunk *amasi*.

Looking back, I have also come to appreciate that much of what my parents taught us was teaching through doing and experiential learning, but also that some of the doing experiences were later to also become the source of my interest in the sciences embedded in traditional and everyday practices. On reflection, also, I have often pondered what might be the events and people that help explain my journey from the Fingo Village of that time, across the great economic, social, psychological and cultural divide to the university across the river.

For instance, as part of my courses, I collaborate with a local community elder, MaMngwevu, who teaches my university science students about the indigenous technology of making the traditional alcoholic beverage known as *umqombothi*. My aim is to take science from the community to the university by tapping into their cultural heritage with a view to indigenise and decolonise the science curriculum at a former English university in South Africa (Ogunniyi, 2018). Seehawer (2018) refers to this approach as bottom-up decolonisation. The indigenous technology of making *umqombothi* also affords my students to identify any science concepts embedded in the practice and thereby understanding there is dialogue between indigenous and westernised knowledges as reiterated by Seehawer and Breidlid (2021). This innovation has had a domino effect in that most of our students both in South

Africa and Namibia are doing their research projects on the integration of indigenous knowledge in science teaching.

2.2. Zukiswa's personal story

My clan name is MaMthembu and my umbilical cord was buried in the late 1970s, in a small town called Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Unfortunately, I have never known that place as my home since my parents divorced when I was only 4 years old. Due to this, I was moved to my aunt's place in a small town that used to be called Grahamstown and was recently named Makhanda. This is where I did my pre-school years up to grade 2. Again, after sometime a decision was made that I should move to my grandmother's place where other grandchildren were staying. I moved to a village called Ndwayana in Peddie, in the Eastern Cape, not far from Makhanda and where life was totally different from a city life. For instance, there was no electricity then at that remote area.

Coming to the village as a young girl, growing up in such an environment was exciting but with lots of fun moments as well as some challenges. We were 11 grandchildren, six girls and five boys, my grandmother who played a parental role at my young age was an amazing woman whom in my view made sure that as her grandchildren we were all under one roof. My mother was working in the city and would visit from time to time. Being around 10 other children taught me much about Ubuntu and caring for others. Whenever clothes were bought we used to share them amongst ourselves regardless of gender. Moreover, our parents would buy clothes for all of us and not for their own individual children.

At that time, the village had two schools, a primary school and a secondary school. Notably, the two schools were known for their best performance compared to other schools in other villages in Peddie. I attended both the primary and the secondary school there in the village. The primary school was just 5 minutes away from my home. Almost every teacher knew my grandmother, and she was well-known for her strong character, and how she nurtured and mentored us as her grandchildren. Yet, she had very little education by the western standards. If a teacher reported any challenge about one of us, she would never take it lightly. We would need to explain our actions and if she saw the need; she would even add to the punishment.

At home, my grandmother, MaMngwevu was our mentor, our teacher and a parent at the same time. Though I was not aware of it then, but how I grew up had an impact on how I do and view things at a later stage in my life. My grandmother contributed to my being. She made sure we all learnt the various chores that in other homes could be seen as roles of different genders, but our village home there were no gender roles or responsibilities in household chores. We fetched water when needed and we fetched firewood as well. Fetching water from either the dam or the river, as younger ones we carried the smaller baskets, and when we went to fetch firewood as the younger ones we were always told to pick up the lighter firewood and dry shrubs that would be used to start fire.

Eating times were special. We used to have moments in which we shared a big bowl of dry pap mixed with *amasi* (*umvubo*), and during that time we also used to share a spoon so that we took turns to eat and to wait for each other. Similarly to Mthembu's experiences, boys were not allowed to eat *imifino* and we were told that they would be weak as men. On the other hand, girls were not allowed to eat eggs (*amaqanda*) and it was said that they would be fertile.

One could have never thought how powerful and educative such moments were. This taught us to respect each other, to care for one another and to share with one another. I also remember that our home was a home for everyone, people knew that if they came to ask for water; they would be offered *amasi* (sour milk) to drink and something to eat as well. My grandmother would even give away our own food.

As young ones in the family we also had turns to make tea for our grandmother and that was an opportunity to have a cup of tea. Otherwise as children, we were only allowed to have tea in the morning and making it for our grandmother was an opportunity for a second cup. We continue to reflect and laugh about those experiences even today. Coming from school, we needed to account to our grandmother. She would look at our books individually and monitoring our day's work. Whenever there was an 'x' you needed to account why you did not perform well for that specific day.

From my home experiences, I was always curious on how ashes from firewood were used as a cleaning agent for pots and for toilets. Additionally, as children when we started to have hair in our underarms; our grandmother did not allow us to use a roll-on. Instead, she used wood ashes; especially for smelling underarms. Also, the same wood ash was used for stomach aches and Kuhlane (2011) refers to this as prior everyday knowledge. That is, if there was no medication, a clean spoon of wood ash with lots of drinking water was the solution. The making of *amarhewu* and the making of *umqombothi* were other hands-on experiences which at my young age I never realised how these could be a powerful tools to teach science at school.

On another note, my grandmother, my mother and my aunt (both MaMiyas) were very interesting individuals who taught us to trust God and to pray all the time. What a contradiction in my world of life! For instance, my grandmother who used to cure people using traditional medicines, she was neither a *sangoma* nor a traditional healer, but she knew each traditional herb you could find in the village and they helped people. That was also true with my mother. On the other hand, however, my aunt was truly unique. For instance, for most of my life having been under her wing I was taught Christianity, nothing else but 'God' and she was anti-cultural practices. However, having to understand that I am young black African woman who is identified by the power of her clan names and her African roots, I had to ponder about the boundaries and where to stand in these two worlds – Christianity and indigenous knowledge.

When my family noticed that I was interested in science subjects, they suggested that after passing grade 10, I should move to the city where I did pure mathematics and physical science. The relevance of science or any subject to everyday life was never something I experienced at school. My teachers only focused and relied on the use of textbooks. Another contradiction in my life emerged when I married a husband coming from a family which is very strong in cultural practices. Given my aunt's past Christian influences, at times I felt uncomfortable with some of the cultural practices.

But it dawned to me when I started to teach Natural Sciences and engage in research that what learners come with to class should be valued and built on. This is where I observed the opportunities of teaching science using prior knowledge of learners from their homes. For example, in my Master's study I investigated the use of wood ash in teaching acids and bases to my learners. It is through my research that I extend this understanding of making my teaching relevant to my students' everyday life, the integrating indigenous knowledge is of paramount and necessary. One of my learners, similarly to uMthembu's story and experience highlighted above, used wood ash as a detergent in a bucket toilet system toilet for her science expo project and was awarded a gold medal and a Rhodes bursary. This shows the power of indigenous knowledge if it is appropriately integrated into teaching.

As a teacher educator, I now also foreground the use of IsiXhosa/home language (Ngcoza, 2019) and *storytelling* in making science accessible to learners (Iseke, 2013; Tzou et al., 2019). In an African culture, *storytelling* itself is a primary form of the oral tradition, primary as a mode of conveying culture, experience, and values and as a means of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, feelings, and attitudes in oral societies. For instance, elders together with their children would sit around the fire while sharing the stories with them. In this way, all children would be in the centre position to carefully listen to the elder while telling a story. At the same time, everyone would be able to feel the equal heat and warmth. Consequently, this manner of sharing stories promotes Ubuntu amongst the African families.

I believe that using *storytelling* to promote science learning allows young learners to develop an understanding of how science works and to make sense of the world around them. In my study of how Early Childhood teachers developed scientific process skills in young learners, I observed that one teacher created a comfortable environment in her learners through foregrounding her teaching by using storrtelling (Nhase, Okeke & Ugwuanyi, 2021). In most of her observed lessons her learners would surround her on the carpet while she introduced a lesson by sharing a story that would later build towards the content to be taught.

2.3. Sipho's personal story

My clan name is Jola from the *Mpondomise* kingdom and my umbilical cord was buried in a small township of Queenstown currently called Komani in the late 1960s and attended a primary school in that township. In our culture, people with the same clan name are not allowed to marry each other. Also, our clan names are associated with animals and we as Jola clan are associated with a snake which is called *MaJola*. This snake is not venomous, and it can visit the family anytime. It can also visit when the child is born or is sick and people believe that the child will be cured. When *MaJola* visits the homestead, it can be welcomed with traditional beverage (*umqombothi*) or pleadings so that it disappears because some people are afraid of it. We are not allowed to kill u*MaJola* but the truth is that I never saw it. This is not a surprise as cultural practices were not part of my upbringing because of my family's Christianity. For instance, some members and leaders of the Seventh Day Adventist church believe that anything that is traditional is unholy.

In contrast, however, some of my relatives who are not part of my church do traditional and cultural practices like *imbeleko* (a cultural practice where the elders slaughter a goat and take the skin, dry it and use it as blanket to cover the child). These contradictions between Christianity and cultural practices have put me in a tight corner. Because of my Christian mother, MaMgcina, I ended up following Christian principles only. I grew up in the extended family where I stayed with my parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and my grandmother. My grandmother, MaMthembu was a general worker in one of the former model C schools and she used to bring us leftover food from work. We ate leftovers for supper and some before we went to school. After school, we used to play township games including indigenous games such as *icekwa*, *upuca* and searching and hiding games. There was no television in my home and we watched television in our neighbour's house. We had to pay ten cents to watch for the day.

During my school years, most of the times we learnt through rote learning rather than learning with understanding. Reference to the indigenous games we used to play as children was never made in school. I started school at the time when slates were used and there were no exercise books at that time. Slates helped us to learn every subject and we had to clean them in between the subjects, and we ended up succeeding at the end of the year regardless. As I was so playful at school, I ended up repeating standard 4 (grade 6) and I learnt my lesson after that I did not repeat a class again. My favourite subject at school was geography but in standard 8 (grade 10) I had to choose between geography and physical sciences. I chose physical sciences until I exited secondary school in 1991.

As a teacher, I taught mathematics and natural sciences science from 1996 to date. Similarly, to my schoolteachers, for many years I taught science without integrating local indigenous knowledges as it was not catered for in the South African curriculum and we just followed what was in the textbook. My enrolment at Rhodes University for Bachelor of Education (BEd) started to change things as I gradually started integrating indigenous knowledges in my science teaching. A great opportunity came in 2015, when a German/Norwegian researcher, Maren Seehawer,¹ came to Grahamstown (Makhanda) to facilitate a participatory action research study in schools (see Seehawer 2018, Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021). There were five science teachers involved as co-researchers in Maren's study, one of them being

me. We explored how we could integrate our learners' indigenous knowledges into our regular science classes. Thereby, we teachers would assign our learners to inquire about specific knowledges and practices in their homes and to present their findings in class. The aims were to ground our teaching in local epistemologies and to strengthen the traditional role of community in education. This project helped me to plan exemplar lessons that integrated my students' indigenous knowledges into my regular science classes and it triggered interest to take further studies in indigenous knowledges. During the implementation of the lessons we found that learners actively participated in the lessons (Sedlacek & Sedova, 2017).

From that day, I never turned back and in 2018 I enrolled for Masters in Education (MEd) with Rhodes University and in consultation with Mthembu I decided to go for science and to do a study in indigenous knowledges. I met caring and motivating supervisors as well as great a community of practice in which we shared everything that developed us academically and professionally. This community keeps me going forward and I adopted the slogan "backward never and forward ever". I have decided to take local indigenous knowledge studies all the way and am preparing to collaborate with colleagues locally, continentally and internationally. So far, I am working with colleagues from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Germany/Norway.

I am currently teaching science in grades 5, 6 and 7 and am integrating local indigenous knowledge in science with a belief that they must co-exist (Ogunniyi & Hewson, 2008). As a teacher I have worked in three education districts of the Eastern Cape, starting in Queenstown (known as Chris Hani West), Grahamstown (known as Sarah Baartman) and I am currently in King William's Town (known as Amathole West) districts. I mostly learnt about indigenous knowledges in my hometown Queenstown, as the city is surrounded by rural areas where most people are the custodians of indigenous knowledges.

In 2010, I married a woman from the rural areas of Peddie, where many people are more rooted in cultural beliefs than in the peri-urban areas where I come from. Unlike me, my wife used to work hard in the fields to plant and harvest vegetables. In her home, traditional leafy vegetables called *imifino* are grown and even today my wife likes to prepare them for the family (Cimi, Ngcoza & Dold, 2020). My wife is also a member of the Seventh Day Adventist church, and we share the same religious beliefs. However, each time I visit my wife's home in Peddie, I socialise with the elders, who are always open to my questions.

It is against this background that I decided to a study using Grade 6 researching about cultural beliefs and practices about traditional foods such as *amasi*, *imifino*, *amaqanda* and *inyama* in a Grade 6 township class. Additionally, I also invited two expert community members who were both women to share their stories on these traditional foods. The presentations enabled my learners to argue and engage in lively discussions, something they were not accustomed to in the past. Also, some cultural stereotypes such as not questioning parents were challenged in the process resulting in the expert community members realised that their cultural heritage and wisdom was respected and has a place at school. Aikenhead and Jegede (1999) accentuate that when the science culture is consistent with learners' culture it will be meaningful to the learners. I try to make science meaningful to my learners by recognising their funds of knowledge.

3. Reflections On Our Narratives – Does It Matter Who We Are?

Concurring with Keane et al. (2016), we state that it matters who we are in research and that "[s]tories help us to bridge awkward divides, and to talk about who we are and where we come from" (p.16). In this regard, Chikamori, Tanimura and Ueno's (2019) advice is totake the *past* and *present* and focus to the *future*. What permeates throughout our three stories is that

Ubuntu was cultivated in various ways to us. For instance, emphasis was on sharing, respect and humble togetherness as we grew up as reiterated by Swanson (2009). Moreover, exposure to traditional foods and beverages played an important role in revitalising our culture and identity. Similarly, knowledge was selflessly passed on from elders to us through storytelling. Such indigenous way of sharing knowledge is currently central in our research projects that focus on the integration of indigenous knowledge (including home language) in science teaching. This is operationalised through tapping into the cultural heritage of elders or community members who are the custodians or repositories of such cultural heritage.

However, what is striking about the three stories is that, Jola's life was completely dominated and dictated by Christian beliefs, MaMthembu's was characterised by the mixture of the two worlds (cultural practices and Christianity) and Mthembu's was mainly characterised by cultural practices. Despite this, as well as the fact our socio-cultural backgrounds (Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020) were not taken into consideration at school, we are determined and committed to engage in research in which we indigenise science in our teaching.

4. Concluding Remarks

It goes without saying that the above presented efforts to integrate local epistemologies and to ground our teaching in the local context are nothing more than small drops in the sea. What is needed is a comprehensive educational transformation that we envision as restoring Ubuntu as the basis of African education. Yet, we argue that no effort is too small to disrupt colonial reproductions in education and address learners' epistemological alienation in the classrooms. Strategies such as the presented examples can be decolonial in a bottom-up manner. Bottom-up decolonisation emphasises the agency of individuals and groups such as teachers, communities, parents, learners, elders, traditional healers, teacher educators and academics. These actors do not have the power to change education system from the top, but can enact actual change in small ways (Seehawer, 2018b). They can, in the words of Cameroonian thinker Achille Mbembe (2021), initiate 'small ruptures' which 'create myriad "tipping points" that may lead to deep alterations in the direction that both the continent and the planet take' (p. 10).

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