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Session 4

Decolonising Knowledge and Education

Convenor: Finex Ndhlovu

University of New England

Misguided Faith in the Global South

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The main research question explored in this paper is ‘what role has Christianity played in enabling the Global North to have social, economic and political dominance over the Global South?’

A large body of historians are agreed that when Christian missionaries first arrived in Africa in the 1880s, their purpose was to prepare the ground for the social, economic and political colonisation of the African Continent and other parts of the Global South. It was at the Berlin Conference of 1884 where the colonisation of Africa was realised. The expression ‘the flag followed the cross’ has been used to explain the sequence of events post the Berlin Conference.

This paper examines the incursions into Africa by the early Christian missionaries and the role they played in abetting colonisation. Some of the strategies used by the colonialists included introducing ‘western education’ where reading the Bible was considered as a pathway to understanding the western ways as well as providing ‘the gateway’ to heaven. This also included adopting western names, western clothes and embracing the western culture. Important in this argument was that those that did not follow the Christian ways were condemned to burn in eternal fire in hell. Those converted into Christianity had their entire lives transformed ‘and secured salvation in heaven’.

Further the paper looks at postcolonial Africa and examines how leaders in the Global South responded to the colonial masters upon securing flag independence. Economic independence became elusive as power went to those that had played a minimal role in political emancipation of the continent. In all this, religion appears to be a key factor in the Global North dominating the Global South. Data was collected from texts in African history and African literature.

Bio: Dr Mutuota Kigotho

Mutuota is a Literacies and English Education lecturer at the University of New England. His research interests are in the areas of multiliteracies education, narrative writing, African literature, and the use of technology in teacher education. He has also published in Open and Distance and Flexible learning. He also does research in multicultural education.

Promoting decolonisation in the Global South through African studies

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African studies are important in pointing out the existing coloniality in the Global South. Some countries in the Global South suffered first colonisation and then coloniality. Colonisation refers to one group wielding power over another while coloniality signifies the unequal power relations that remained after independence of the colonised countries.

This paper presents a report that is part of a larger study conducted in Kenya that explored the instructional strategies used in mainstream schools to support students with disabilities. The study also explored Indigenous knowledges used in inclusive classrooms. A postcolonial perspective was employed. Data was collected in central Kenya. A case study format was used in the study which took place in four schools. The results showed that the education system is a site of coloniality which is maintained through the curriculum, books, language, parent-teacher relations, and pedagogy.

A decolonial perspective will be used to discuss inclusive education in Kenya in relation to the coloniality of knowledge, the coloniality of power and the coloniality of being.

Decolonising education systems in the Global South is one step in undoing the existing power relations between the Global South and the Global North. It is an important step because of the role education plays in cementing people's beliefs about themselves in relation to the rest of the world. This paper adds to the literature on decoloniality in the Global South and the role of indigenous knowledges in decolonisation.

Biography

Rose Mutuota is a Lecturer in Learning and Teaching at the School of Education at the University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia. Her research interests include inclusive and special education, culturally responsive teaching, Indigenous knowledges and methodologies and teaching English to speakers of other Languages (TESOL).