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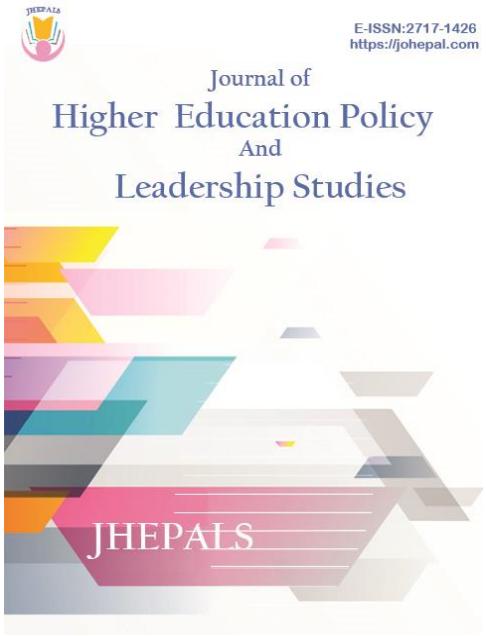

Postcolonial Critique and Decolonisation Process in Education

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Postcolonial Critique and Decolonisation Process in Education

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Abstract

This paper offers a theoretical exploration of decolonisation as a complex process that extends beyond the termination of colonial control. It necessitates a critical evaluation and dismantling of the deeply entrenched impacts and beliefs of colonialism that have permeated diverse sectors of society. This analysis emphasizes the central role of decolonisation in promoting social justice by tackling the systemic inequities and injustices rooted in colonialism. The paper explores the historical background of decolonisation, its broader conceptual foundations, and the critical importance of epistemic justice in addressing the marginalization of non-Western knowledge systems within academia. Adopting a postcolonial perspective, the analysis explores the enduring effects of colonialism on culture, society, and knowledge. It advocates for an academic discourse on successful decolonisation strategies that encompass both structural and epistemic transformations. The discussion also examines the significance of the National Education Philosophy in relation to epistemic fairness within the Malaysian education system. The paper emphasizes the imperative of continuously prioritizing decolonization as a crucial endeavor in establishing a just and inclusive global society. This involves the transformation of academic settings and societal structures to foster fairness, diversity, and inclusivity.

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Introduction

Decolonisation is a significant and extensive endeavour that engages researchers from various disciplines, including history, political science, sociology, cultural studies, and others. In order to fully address the impact of colonialism on formerly colonised communities, it is imperative for colonial powers to not only withdraw from the territories they once governed, but also to dismantle the institutional frameworks and lingering consequences of colonialism. As a result of colonial control, many civilisations possess ingrained prejudices and inequitable circumstances that have become integral parts of their social, economic, and political frameworks. Decolonisation endeavours to address these issues (Kessi et al., 2020). The analysis involves examining the deep-rooted presence of colonial concepts in all aspects of society, such as governance, education, and cultural manifestations, with the aim of fostering a more equitable and inclusive future for all.

In the realm of academic knowledge creation, it is crucial for decolonisation to actively transform and question the prevailing narratives and methodologies, which predominantly reflect Eurocentric or Western-centric perspectives. This entails challenging the hegemony of Western epistemologies and advocating for the acknowledgement and integration of indigenous and local knowledge systems that were marginalised or disregarded throughout the era of colonialism (Stein et al., 2020). The objective is to expand and enhance academic discourse in order to obtain a comprehensive and refined perspective of the world that acknowledges and appreciates the diverse range of human experiences and viewpoints. An in-depth examination is essential to create educational environments that are inclusive and represent the diverse array of views and information present globally.

Moreover, the pursuit of social justice is intricately connected to the process of achieving independence, since it seeks to rectify the unjust and inequitable systems established via colonialism. To address the enduring consequences of colonial exploitation and oppression, it is necessary to actively pursue rectification through actions such as restitution and policy reform. Decolonisation is a transformative process that requires sustained effort and commitment from individuals, collectives, and institutions (Chandanabhumma & Narasimhan, 2020). The statement by Stein et al. (2020) emphasises the necessity of reconsidering and reorganising our perspectives on history, identity, and power, with the ultimate objective of creating a more equitable and impartial society. Decolonisation is not solely an intellectual endeavour, but rather a profoundly moral and ethical undertaking that possesses the capacity to transform societies and reshape global interactions. This post aims to examine the perspective on decolonisation held by scholars, with a specific focus on significant concepts, discussions, and references.

Historical Context and Definition

Decolonisation commenced during the mid-20th century as a significant and momentous movement that facilitated the attainment of independence for countries in Asia, Africa, and other regions, liberating them from the dominion of European colonial powers. In the aftermath of World War II, the influence and control of colonial powers were diminishing, prompting colonised populations worldwide to assert their desire for self-governance and autonomy (Kessi et al., 2020). These revolutions had a profound impact on global politics, leading to the establishment of many independent nations and a transformation in the

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dynamics of international relations. The conventional perspective on decolonisation stems from a lengthy legacy of resistance against political and physical subjugation, with a particular emphasis on aspirations for national selfhood, autonomy, and effective governance.

The influence of critical theories and postcolonial studies on discussions of independence has been significant in recent decades. Within this extension, there exists a more profound comprehension that beyond mere political autonomy. According to contemporary academics, achieving political autonomy does not necessarily entail eliminating the systems, ideologies, and inheritances of colonialism in formerly colonised states. The imperative to decolonise culture, knowledge, and social norms is intensifying as a result (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). This more comprehensive perspective on decolonisation aims to rectify the unjust and prejudiced structures that were established and perpetuated by colonial powers. The aforementioned issues persist in other domains, including education, the economy, and social hierarchy (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016).

An integral aspect of this overarching concept is the process of decolonising knowledge, which entails questioning and challenging the Eurocentric perspectives that have traditionally dominated academic discourse. It refers to questioning the veracity and practicality of Western methods of understanding and doing tasks, which have historically marginalised non-Western perspectives and ways of knowing (Ndimande, 2018; Adefila et al., 2022). Individuals with this novel mindset advocate for the inclusion and appreciation of indigenous and local knowledge, recognising its potential to enhance our comprehension of the world on a profound and comprehensive level. The objective is to foster a more inclusive and receptive academic dialogue that embraces and respects diverse forms of human thought and experience. Within this context, scholars perceive decolonisation as a significant and profound undertaking that challenges prevailing frameworks, dismantles remnants of colonialism, and promotes equity and righteousness in the generation and dissemination of knowledge.

Decolonisation, in the context of culture, involves a process of reevaluating and reconsidering the narratives, symbols, and images that were influenced and created by colonial powers (Ndimande, 2018). Its objective is to revive and safeguard indigenous languages, traditions, and civilisations that were suppressed or disregarded during the colonial era. This aspect of decolonisation emphasises the significance of cultural independence and the entitlement to self-representation. The objective is to restore the respect and integrity of cultures that have been marginalised or marginalised (Kessi et al., 2020). Decolonisation contributes to rectifying historical injustices and fostering intergroup comprehension and esteem by acknowledging and commemorating the diversity of cultural manifestations.

Decolonisation entails restructuring societies and addressing the enduring impact of colonialism on social norms, values, and power dynamics (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). The text highlights the opposition to racial, gender, and class disparities that were exacerbated by colonialism, and advocates for fairness, equal opportunities, and transformative social progress (Kessi et al., 2020). The persistence of inherent disparities inside the system is evident in domains such as healthcare, education, and governance, necessitating a thorough examination and rectification. Decolonisation aims to address these consequences by

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fostering equitable societies that embrace inclusivity, self-determination, and respect for all peoples.

Ultimately, the notion that decolonisation is a multifaceted process demonstrates individuals' desire to address the intricate and enduring consequences of colonialism. It is a dynamic and ongoing process that requires individuals from all backgrounds to collaborate and engage in critical thinking. The objective of decolonisation is to promote equity and justice by questioning Eurocentric perspectives and embracing the diversity of human knowledge and culture (Stein et al., 2020). This comprehensive perspective on decolonisation highlights the significance of acknowledging and rectifying the enduring injustices and inequities that have influenced contemporary society. Only when everyone is able to govern themselves can true freedom be achieved.

Impact of Postcolonial Critique

Postcolonial critique is an intellectual and critical movement that aims to examine, analyse, and mitigate the enduring impacts of colonialism on cultures, societies, and knowledge systems. It encompasses a wide array of fields such as literature, history, anthropology, and sociology. Prominent leaders in this movement, including Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, have made noteworthy contributions to our comprehension of the intricacies of postcolonial circumstances. Their research investigates the manner in which colonial legacies impact present-day identities, power structures, and cultural stories.

Edward Said and "Orientalism"

"Orientalism" by Edward Said is a highly significant contribution to the field of postcolonial studies. The statement presents a profound analysis of how the Western world portrays Eastern (Oriental) cultures. Said's study demonstrates that these depictions are not impartial or objective, but rather imbued with notions of dominance and supremacy. According to him, Orientalism is a fabricated concept used by the Western world to perceive the East as not only fundamentally distinct, but also less developed and lagging in history (Said, 1978). In his book 'Orientalism', He argues that this perspective functions as more than just an academic or artistic endeavor, but rather as a way for the West to rationalize its colonial ideals and create cultural hegemony. Said's critique prompts readers to reconsider the accuracy and importance of Western narratives about Eastern culture. Said's critique prompts the reader to reconsider the accuracy and significance of Western narratives about Eastern cultures.

Said's criticism goes beyond theoretical discussion; it also looks at how Orientalist views have affected literature, art, and academic study in the real world. In his argument, he says that these fields are not represented separately, but are instead part of Orientalist thought as a whole (Said, 1978). By breaking down how Orientalism affects these places, Said shows how stereotypes and unrealistic ideas about the East have been created and spread in a planned way. People in the West see things differently because of these representations, which lead to wrong ideas about Eastern cultures (Narasimhan & Chandanabhumma, 2021). It's clear from Said's study how deeply these false ideas are ingrained in Western thought.

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Decolonization in Malaysia Education

Edward Said's work not only critiques the power dynamics involved in the production of knowledge about the East, but also advocates for a re-evaluation of these dynamics. He discusses the role of Orientalism in perpetuating the distinction between the "civilised" Western societies and the "savage" Eastern cultures (Eshreteh & Al-Qeeq, 2023). The distinction has traditionally served as the foundation for colonialism and cultural imperialism. Said compels scholars, artists, and individuals to critically examine the foundations upon which their perceptions of the East are constructed. According to Eshreteh and Al-Qeeq (2023), Said demonstrates how the Orientalist framework is employed to manipulate politics and shape ideologies. His call to action is not solely scholarly, but also a plea for a nuanced and equitable comprehension of the functioning of other cultures. Said's "Orientalism" remains a very significant work as it confronts biassed notions and promotes a discerning and introspective approach to intercultural research and communication.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a prominent person in the field of postcolonial theory, and her influential article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" had a profound impact on the discipline. The author employs the concept of "subalterns," derived from Antonio Gramsci, to challenge the conventional discourse of Western scholars who often discuss marginalised communities without affording them the opportunity to express their own perspectives. Spivak's critique primarily focusses on the suppression of these perspectives by the dominant power and knowledge systems present in colonial and postcolonial countries (Piu, 2023). She enquires about the possibility of the subaltern's voice being audible inside a system that inherently marginalises them. This highlights a significant ethical and philosophical dilemma in the field of postcolonial studies and beyond.

Spivak's argument is not merely an ambiguous theory; it also serves as a summons for the academic community to take action. It is crucial to dismantle the existing structures of authority and information generation that exclude marginalised individuals from participating in discussions, as she asserts. Spivak's approach is to comprehensively comprehend and accurately portray the perspectives of individuals who are marginalised or excluded, hence advocating for a more inclusive perspective (Srinivasan, 2020). Her work prompts us to engage in critical thinking around the ways in which researchers and intellectuals ought to acknowledge and endorse perspectives that are typically disregarded or suppressed. The emphasis on ethical portrayal and the pragmatic challenges of amplifying marginalised perspectives has sparked extensive discourse in academic circles, facilitating a deeper understanding of strategies for empowering individuals who lack a platform.

Spivak's critique extends beyond the realm of academia and encompasses matters of politics and society at large. Within cultural, social, and political discussions, she enquires about the individuals who have the privilege to express their opinions and others who are deprived of this opportunity (McAuliffe, 2020). These topics raise significant concerns regarding the portrayal, individuality, and authority within a worldwide context. Spivak's approach promotes continuous introspection and proactive measures to create equitable environments for discussion and comprehension. It does so by exposing the obstacles that prevent marginalised perspectives from being expressed authentically. Therefore, her work remains highly significant for researchers, activists, and politicians seeking to comprehend

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the interconnectedness of power, knowledge, and representation in a postcolonial global context.

Homi K. Bhabha and "Hybridity"

Homi K. Bhabha holds significant prominence in the field of postcolonial studies. He has exerted significant endeavours that have revolutionised our perception of cultural transformations following colonialism. Bhabha's research explores the intricate dynamics between colonisers and colonised individuals, focussing on concepts such as cultural hybridity, imitation, and ambivalence. This research highlights the creation of distinct cultural expressions that defy easy categorisation (Bhambra, 2014). Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity highlights the notion that colonial encounters not only impose the culture of the coloniser upon the colonised, but also facilitate the emergence of novel identities and cultures that are a fusion of both. These interstices, or 'in-between' places, challenge the notion that cultures and identities are inherently pure and resistant to change. Bhabha demonstrates the fluidity and constructed nature of cultural identities by examining these amalgamated forms. This highlights the continuous evolution of identities as individuals from many cultures engage and bargain with one another.

Bhabha's concept of the "third space" presents a novel perspective on cultural engagement and identity. This region is where the dichotomy between the coloniser and the colonised, which has historically influenced our perception, is deconstructed. This allows for the emergence of novel forms of identity that are difficult to fit into the current frameworks of cultural power and hierarchy (Bhambra, 2014). In addition, Bhabha's examination of mimicry as a means for colonised individuals to resist demonstrates how emulating the characteristics of the coloniser can serve as a sort of defiance (Bhandari, 2022). Through emulating the coloniser, the colonised individual engages in a discreet act of defiance that challenges the authority and credibility of the coloniser, so disrupting established hierarchies and power dynamics.

Scholarly Debates on Decolonization

Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha have made significant contributions to the fields of political science, anthropology, history, and literary studies. These works have provided us with distinctive insights into the profound impact of colonialism on the development of personal identity, global interconnections, and education. Their proposal of critical frameworks that questioned and dismantled the erroneous notions of progress and culture perpetuated by colonial activities is a notable contribution to the evolution of postcolonial studies. Their research has motivated academicians to conduct a more thorough and nuanced examination of colonial legacies, which has led to a more profound comprehension of the interconnections between power, society, and knowledge. How we comprehend the historical and contemporary connections between states has been altered by the adoption of a postcolonial perspective..

When discussing the process of decolonisation in academia and other contexts, there are numerous perspectives on the most effective methods for addressing and eradicating the long-term effects of colonialism on the development of knowledge, institutional frameworks, and cultural standards. This article examines a variety of strategies for

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promoting diversity and inclusion, such as minor modifications to existing institutions and the acquisition of new knowledge, as well as more substantial changes that are designed to alter the power dynamics in society. This aims to address the widespread and enduring effects of colonialism in a variety of educational and social contexts.

One perspective in this extensive discourse is to implement minor alterations to enhance the inclusivity and transparency of esteemed institutions such as colleges and academic journals. Advocates of this approach argue that modifying variables such as course content, employment procedures, and publication requirements, which have traditionally excluded non-Western and indigenous knowledge systems, could lead to positive improvements (Demeter, 2019). Possible solutions involve improving the inclusivity of staff and students, incorporating a wider range of cultural texts and research into educational curricula, and ensuring fair treatment of works from non-Western epistemologies by academic journals and publishers (Kessi et al., 2020; Moosavi, 2020).

In contrast, an opposing viewpoint in the debate over decolonisation contends that transformative and radical steps are required that go beyond ordinary improvements. These initiatives should immediately target and correct the basic inequities perpetuated by colonial traditions. This viewpoint advocates for the acceptance and assimilation of many modes of comprehension. It also intends to extensively review how information is generated, vetted, and disseminated (Kessi et al., 2020). The emphasis is on establishing active learning pedagogies that are context-sensitive and community-oriented. It also entails campaigning for the recognition and preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and oral traditions, as well as questioning the dominance of Western-centric ideology and elevating indigenous perspectives.

To efficiently pursue goals while exercising freedom, it is critical to avoid aligning with a specific essentialist viewpoint or being alienated in another way. Essentialism profoundly transforms culture by reducing it to a single, uniform element that exclusively explains specific features. However, it fails to recognise the complex and diverse nature of cultures in connection to their specific historical and geographical contexts, as well as our broader knowledge systems moulded by present conditions (Yalcinkaya et al., 2017). Acquiring a full understanding and respecting a diverse range of cultural histories and origins can be difficult, especially when they are viewed as unchanging characteristics. To accomplish this, we must modify our perspective and cease viewing culture as separate and adversarial things. Instead, we should think of it as a dynamic and interconnected force that influences and is influenced by all aspects of existence. Furthermore, it is vital that we stop creating strict borders between different factions.

To effectively address the issues of decolonisation, individuals must continually engage in introspective and analytical reflection on their own biases and assumptions that influence their professional pursuits. To successfully aid persons experiencing oppression, it is essential to refrain from reproducing colonial power relations, particularly in the quest for independence (Datta, 2018). It is essential to understand and value the varied approaches to information acquisition, research methodologies, and the interpretation of phenomena from different cultural viewpoints. Enabling efficient cross-cultural communication and collaboration is essential for producing new knowledge among persons from varied cultural backgrounds (Kessi et al., 2020).

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This holistic approach highlights the importance of both structural and epistemic changes in the process of decolonisation. The academic community may help create a fair and inclusive world by exploring essential questions about how knowledge is conceived, generated, and shared. The discourse on decolonisation in academia and other domains fundamentally calls for a substantial overhaul in the structure of knowledge and the allocation of authority. This leads us to reflect on the lasting influence of colonial customs on our world and urges us to develop creative methods that take into account many viewpoints (Datta, 2018). From this perspective, decolonisation is not merely an abstract mental activity, but rather a crucial and significant measure in the pursuit of creating a more equitable and inclusive global environment for all individuals.

Decolonisation is an ongoing process that requires unwavering dedication, resourcefulness, and collaboration. The purpose is to work together to dismantle the power structures that have historically suppressed non-Western and indigenous perspectives, as well as to forge new paths that appreciate and honour the breadth of human knowledge. Academia can benefit society by embracing variety, seeing it not only as a source of strength and creativity, but also actively commemorating it.

Epistemic Justice as Key Concept of Decolonisation in Education

Particularly in relation to decolonising education, epistemic justice seeks to correct past marginalisation of indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems inside academia. It does this by contesting the dominant Western epistemologies that have shaped academic approaches and educational programs. Decolonising education promotes the inclusion and recognition of diverse epistemologies, hence it is closely related to this idea. A novel approach is needed that not only recognises but also actively combines the several epistemologies into educational models. This would destroy the historical traces of imperialism that have maintained unequal access to knowledge production and dissemination for a long time. Epistemic justice promotes a fair and inclusive learning environment that values the several and great worldwide knowledge traditions. Scholars like Boaventura de Sousa Santos have underlined how epistemic diversity is necessary for a fair and decolonised educational system (de Sousa Santos, 2018).

Aspects of Epistemic Justice

Epistemic justice stresses the need of realising and valuing the many spectrum of knowledge systems that exist worldwide instead of giving the Western-centric scientific method top priority. For millennia-old indigenous knowledge systems offer a complete framework for understanding the surroundings, culture, and spirituality. These systems are based on great knowledge spanning not only logical conclusions but also spiritual and cultural understanding. They offer a whole picture of the planet that takes connectivity of everything into account (Dawson, 2020). Establishing a fair and inclusive epistemic culture that honours and respects all kinds of knowledge depends on realising the several ways in which people learn.

The central focus of the discussion on epistemic justice is the critique of knowledge frameworks that rely on hierarchical levels. This critique raises doubts about the widespread popularity of Western epistemology. It has occupied the highest position in a hierarchy that

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devalues and dismisses other forms of knowledge as untrustworthy or inferior. The hierarchical structure described here is frequently a consequence of colonialism and imperialism, wherein Western norms and modes of thought were imposed upon colonised nations, resulting in the marginalisation of native and indigenous knowledge systems (Bhargava, 2013). Epistemic justice seeks to promote fairness and respect in conversations involving different ways of knowing by critically examining and dismantling established hierarchies.

Epistemic justice advocates for the use of transparent and democratic methods for creating and verifying knowledge, along with the implementation of more inclusive approaches in universities and research institutions (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019). According to Wood (2020), this entails creating spaces that are receptive to many forms of understanding and challenging the established norms regarding who has the authority to generate knowledge, what information is considered valid, and how it is disseminated. The movement aims to challenge these established norms in order to transform the conventional responsibilities of gatekeepers in the creation of information. This will enhance the fairness and inclusivity of the process, while also valuing inputs from all backgrounds and perspectives.

Lastly, a crucial aspect of epistemic fairness involves addressing epistemicide. The occurrence of epistemicide, or the eradication of knowledge systems, can be attributed to the colonial and imperial endeavours aimed at suppressing or eliminating non-Western forms of knowledge (Bhargava, 2013). In response to this, advocates of epistemic justice endeavour to reintegrate and incorporate marginalised forms of knowledge into the predominant discourse. The objective of this endeavour is twofold: to restore and safeguard endangered forms of knowledge, while also contributing novel perspectives and insights to the global repository of information. This will contribute to enhancing the fairness and inclusivity of the epistemic community.

Implications of Epistemic Justice

The pursuit of epistemic justice has the potential to revolutionise various domains, such as education, research, environmental policy, and social justice initiatives. Within the realm of education, there is a push to incorporate indigenous histories, philosophies, and scientific knowledge into curriculum. This approach aims to provide students with a broader perspective and a more extensive pool of information to utilise (Dawson, 2020). This level of openness facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and appreciation for the diverse intellectual and cultural aspects of the world. It enables students to effectively engage and make meaningful contributions to a global society, while fostering understanding and empathy. In the field of environmental policy, the acknowledgement and utilisation of local ecological knowledge can significantly enhance the efficiency of conservation initiatives (Corburn, 2003). For millennia, indigenous communities have been responsibly stewarding their environments without causing any harm. Their expertise can assist us in resolving contemporary environmental challenges and promoting environmentally friendly initiatives that align well with nature.

Epistemic justice, in addition, advocates for methodological openness in research, endorsing approaches that involve study subjects and appreciate their knowledge and experiences. The adoption of more inclusive research methodologies not only enhances the

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calibre and comprehensiveness of academic research, but also ensures that the research process itself empowers individuals from marginalised communities. When academia recognises and incorporates the perspectives of marginalised voices, research can serve as a catalyst for social transformation, dismantling systematic inequities and fostering a more just society (Posholi, 2020). This significant shift in the process of knowledge creation and validation is a major advancement towards establishing a more equitable and inclusive global community, where diverse approaches to acquiring knowledge are recognised as crucial for addressing the complex challenges of our era.

Challenges in Achieving Epistemic Justice

Attaining epistemic justice is challenging due to the need to address multiple obstacles in order to ensure that all forms of knowledge, particularly those originating from non-Western and indigenous cultures, are acknowledged and esteemed on par with Western modes of understanding. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to address the long-standing prejudices and institutional obstacles that have hindered the broader utilisation of these knowledge systems in the past (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019). In the realm of environmental conservation, scientific data has frequently been prioritised over the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) possessed by indigenous communities, despite the latter's profound understanding of local ecosystems. Applying Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to inform environmental decision-making, such as incorporating Indigenous Australians' fire management practices into contemporary fire safety plans, exemplifies the concept of epistemic fairness. This approach acknowledges and values indigenous knowledge by placing it on equal footing with scientific research.

Undoubtedly, striving for epistemic justice entails the potential danger of oversimplifying or idealising non-Western and tribal forms of knowledge. This occurs when individuals solely appreciate this type of knowledge for its peculiar or antiquated attributes, without fully comprehending its intricacy and its relevance to contemporary issues. This phenomenon is seen in the use of traditional healing practices in Western wellness establishments, where there is a lack of comprehensive comprehension regarding the cultural context and significance of these practices (Posholi, 2020). This not only undermines the credibility of knowledge systems, but it also fails to consider their dynamic nature and potential to evolve, so impeding the attainment of genuine epistemic fairness.

Researchers and professionals who employ various epistemologies must possess a high level of self-awareness. This form of reflexivity refers to the deliberate act of examining and challenging one's own notions and prejudices regarding the nature of knowledge (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019). For instance, a researcher investigating urban development must critically assess their reliance on quantitative data and consider the value of local narratives and experiences in gaining a more nuanced understanding of urban environments. This shift towards a more inclusive mindset on knowledge acknowledges the value of different ways of acquiring knowledge and challenges the dominance of Western methodologies.

In order to attain epistemic fairness, it is imperative for educational and research organisations to undergo structural transformations. Possible modifications may involve the incorporation of non-Western theories and methodologies into educational curricula, promoting interdisciplinary research that bridges various knowledge systems, and

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establishing inclusive environments where scholars from diverse knowledge backgrounds can engage in dialogue and collaboration (Ndimande, 2018). Colleges worldwide implementing Indigenous Studies programs demonstrate their desire to include indigenous knowledge systems into academic discourse, recognising its significance in global study.

These examples illustrate the significance of collaborative efforts in comprehending and appreciating diverse knowledge systems in the pursuit of achieving epistemic fairness. To achieve a world where all forms of knowledge are equally acknowledged and rewarded, we must eliminate prejudices, avoid oversimplification, promote introspection, and implement reforms in the structure of academic institutions. Engaging in such discourse not only enriches the intellectual and cultural dialogue, but also fosters a more equitable and inclusive understanding of the world, revealing the true diversity of perspectives and experiences.

Epistemic Justice in National Education Philosophy (NEP)

The National Education Philosophy (NEP) is a concrete embodiment of epistemic fairness that has been implemented in Malaysia's educational system. The NEP in Malaysia has been inspired by a number of worldwide philosophical ideas resulting from the effects of colonialism and the emergence of religion. These influences continue to define Malaysian culture today. To ensure a harmonic growth of humanitarian features, these trends must be incorporated into the NEP in the form of the following statement:

> Education in Malaysia is a continuous effort aimed at further developing the comprehensive and integrated potential of individuals. The goal is to create individuals who are balanced and harmonious in terms of intellect, spirituality, emotions, and physical well-being, grounded in belief and obedience to God. This effort is undertaken to cultivate Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable, skilled, virtuous, responsible, and capable of achieving personal well-being. Additionally, it aims to enable individuals to contribute to the harmony and prosperity of families, communities, and the nation.
>
> (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2024)

The native population in the region had an education system that prioritised religion, particularly Islam, prior to Western colonisation. Islamic teachings experienced substantial expansion during this period. Philosophical conceptions from the West were introduced into the existing educational system by Western colonisers, including the Portuguese (1511-1641), the Dutch (1641-1824), and the British (1824-1957). Nevertheless, the influence of British rule on national education persists to this day. Ismail (2021) state that philosophical movements such as idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism have significantly influenced Malaysia's National Education Philosophy (NEP). The educational objectives, principles, and approaches in Malaysia are derived from these philosophical tendencies. The objective is to enhance pupils' knowledge, perspectives, and abilities. The Malaysian education philosophy is characterised by its emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge and truth, reflecting its idealistic nature. Idealism advocates for instructors to prioritise the intellectual

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and moral development of their pupils and strive to impart them with enduring truths and universal principles.

On the other hand, reality supports a successful learning approach that underlines the need of arming students with the required skills and information to succeed in pragmatic circumstances. Ismail (2021) claim that by encouraging experience learning and the growth of problem-solving abilities, pragmatism significantly influences the operation of Malaysian schools. This point of view stresses the need of using acquired knowledge in useful contexts and motivates teachers to include their students in active learning. Moreover, nihilism can help to explain the focus on personal responsibility and individualism in schools. This encourages among students in connection with their learning curiosity, research, and understanding.

The ideology of Islamic education is also the basis of NEP. From an Islamic perspective, education emphasises aspects related to religion, welfare, language, and duty (Ashraf, 1989; Abd Rahim & Kahal, 2017). According to Article 3 of the Malaysian Constitution, Islam is designated as the official religion of the Federation. This aligns with that. The Malay ethnic group, comprising of *Bumiputera* and Muslims, constitutes the predominant population of Malaysia. This phenomenon is evident in the historical records and the steady increase in the population of the country. This also increases the probability that the concept of Islamic education will be incorporated into the NEP framework.

The NEP framework incorporates elements of Islamic educational thought that have been influenced by current developments in the Islamic world during its construction. This text pertains to the global resolutions formulated during the inaugural International Conference on Islamic Education, held in Jeddah from March 31 to April 8, 1977. During this period, the Cabinet Committee Report was being compiled in 1974. During that period, Mecca asserted that the purpose of education is to facilitate the holistic development of individuals by nurturing their spirituality, intellect, reason, emotions, and senses, through the integration of divine guidance and human intellect. The meeting also discussed the integration of traditional and modern secular education systems as a means to address the dualism in education (Embong et al., 2018).

The NEP framework is rooted on the Islamic educational theory, which comprises three key concepts: *ta'lim*, *ta'dib*, and *tarbiyah*. These streams have divergent perspectives on pedagogy and epistemology (Syah, 2008), and they can be integrated to demonstrate the process of knowledge expansion. The term *ta'lim* is derived from the Arabic word *allama*, which translates to 'to teach'. *Ta'lim*, in essence, refers to the act of imparting knowledge or attempting to inform individuals about things they are unaware of (Thalib, 1996). When discussing education, this term can be employed to impart new skills to individuals, hence benefiting society. *Ta'lim* and *ta'dib* are synonymous. The term *adabba*, denoting the act of instructing or nurturing, is the origin of the term *ta'dib*. According to Al-Attas (1980), *adabba* refers to the practice of ensuring that an individual's body, mind, and soul are capable of utilising their complete potential at the appropriate time and location.

The term *tarbiyah* originates from an Arabic word denoting the actions of caring for, instructing, and fostering. *Tarbiyah* can be elucidated from several perspectives. According to Al-Ashqalany, *tarbiyah* refers to the process of educating a child by providing them with information that is practical and applicable to their daily life. According to Al-Maraghy, tarbiyah encompasses the acts of nurturing, cultivating, imparting knowledge, providing

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guidance, enhancing, and fostering a sense of ownership towards one's students (Ma'zumi et al., 2019). However, all interpretations are grounded in the same concept: that the process of potential growth facilitates individuals in becoming more authentic versions of themselves, ultimately benefiting society.

Hence, the NEP seeks to cultivate individuals who possess a harmonious integration of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects, with a significant focus on faith and adherence to God, as it has delineated its function within the framework of epistemic justice. The historical backdrop of Western colonisation and the assimilation of diverse philosophical ideas, including idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism, have profoundly influenced the development of Malaysia's educational system. In addition, the NEP framework integrates Islamic educational principles such as *ta'lim*, *ta'dib*, and *tarbiyah*, which prioritise teaching, discipline, and nurturing to develop individuals who actively contribute to the harmony and prosperity of Malaysian society. The NEP aims to promote comprehensive development and individual well-being by combining traditional and modern educational methods. It also aims to cultivate moral values and a sense of duty as a Malaysian citizen.

Conclusion

Decolonisation is a multifaceted process that necessitates a concerted and coordinated effort to eliminate deeply embedded colonial influences in societal, educational, and cultural frameworks. Academics include Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha emphasise the necessity of challenging Eurocentric narratives, fostering indigenous knowledge systems, and pursuing epistemic justice. In academia, modifications to educational programs, recruitment methods, and publication requirements are required to accommodate marginalised voices. To redress historical injustices, it is necessary to execute government changes and provide reparations on a larger scale. As a result, the declaration of the National Education Philosophy (NEP), which has been implemented in Malaysia's education system, appears to have successfully integrated various philosophical and educational principles to promote holistic individual development, which includes intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical growth. It also emphasises the value of cultural variety and inclusiveness in order to attain prosperity and well-being.

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There is no conflinct of interest to be cited here.

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Human Participants

No participants are involved in this research as it is developed based on the literatures gathered for further research. However, the ethical guidelines in preparing the paper are observed in alignment with the journal's policy.

Originality Note

The authors confirm that the research is their original works; and proper citations are included where others' works are cited.

Use of Generative AI/ AI-assisted Technologies Statement

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