

### **The Imprint of Education**

The Imprint of Education (TIE) is a project of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation that is exploring the post-graduation trajectories of Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program alumni. TIE is investigating topics such as ethical and transformative leadership, give back, employment and entrepreneurship, student support and mentoring. It consists of five sub-projects or learning activities. The TIE project principal investigators are Prof. Sharlene Swartz, Dr Alude Mahali and Dr Andrea Juan.



### **Reimagining the African University – Conversation Series**

Learning Activity Four consists of a series of conversations with experienced scholars and thought leaders on the future of higher education in Africa. In Reimagining the African University, they discuss challenges, best practices, and the potential for innovation to initiate further dialogue. This transcript is part of a series of interviews conducted in 2021 and may be used with appropriate attribution for scholarly purposes. The learning activity is coordinated by Prof. Thierry Luescher, under the intellectual leadership of Prof. Crain Soudien.

## **Interview with Prof Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni Interview conducted by Prof Relebohile Moletsane on 15 May 2021**

**Relebohile Moletsane:** Please describe your career trajectory and your relationship to higher education in Africa and globally.

**Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** I entered university in 1990 to begin my undergraduate and by then, I was not yet conscious of questioning the purpose of a university. I thought it was a great place to be and celebrated being part of the student body. My aim was just to acquire a higher education and perhaps also find a good job, or something like that. By then, those who went to the University of Zimbabwe, which was difficult to enter because of high points demanded, were considered part of an elite. So, that was my first taste of a university. That generation of students rarely questioned what the professor was teaching in my experience though in our private spaces we complained about some of what was taught. The common default position was to run for our exercise books and took notes so that we could acquire the knowledge imparted by the professors. If we were ideological, we were mainly nationalist and others were Marxist in a country that was embracing neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programme.

Of course, there were some ideological ructions. We were taught by some who were Marxist, who were always emphasising the issue of class struggle and knowledge that was meant to promote workers and the poor. Then we had

liberals who were always talking about human rights and democracy. I also remember the first time we were exposed in the history department to feminist thought. A professor from the United States (US) came to the university and introduced a course on “Women in African History” and this was when I began to develop gender consciousness and appreciate feminist scholarship. That was a very minority course, people did not understand its purpose. In fact, I became a teaching assistant for that course, which is when I began to understand these issues of gender and that history is always androcentric.

At that time, the state was financing the university. So, all fees were paid and students were even given a grant for their upkeep. However, with the introduction of the structural adjustment programme (SAP) in Zimbabwe, education became a commodity. Money was needed to attend university. The catering and the accommodation were privatised. The change led to strikes and riots among a cohort who were used to the state being responsible for education as a public good. For those from peasant or working-class backgrounds, it became very difficult to access a university education.

In line with the pressure from neoliberalism, the government began to question the relevance of the humanities and the social sciences. For example, historians were required to justify their existence. Some historians responded by redefinition of themselves as teachers of development or international studies, indicating a changing role for the university. Similarly, there was an emphasis on applied knowledge, which led to the liberal arts being decried as a waste of money. In addition, the World Bank promoted the view that African states did not need higher education.

In short, I must say, I witnessed a reshaping of the role of a university into a space where there are only commercial subjects and the natural sciences. I saw that instrumentalisation of knowledge at close range; and how a university can redefine itself, not as a result of internal shifts, but because of external forces.

My time as a university student was characterised by heightened student resistance to privatization. At the same time, there was a defence from within the institution of the importance of a rounded education – that, for example, the study of history is important to cultivate citizenship. Education was seen as more than skilling.

I can also say that the Zimbabwean higher education system after independence, did not undergo systematic and concerted decolonization. What happened was Africanization of staff, students and curriculum. Generally, there was what I would call “radical emulation” of British standards and there was pride in the British heritage in education. Remember that the University of Zimbabwe was a successor to the University College of Rhodesia, which was a college of the University of London. The question of maintaining standards of excellence was privileged and this accounted for the success of the education system. The



question of relevance education to the local Zimbabwean needs remained open.

What I remember is that in the 1990s, when a commission of enquiry appointed by the government to try and look at curriculum and education transformation, the commissioner's report was never implemented. So, pupils continue to undertake O levels and A levels as per the British system. Only later was localization of O and A levels undertaken and currently the minister of higher education is pushing what is known as heritage-based education (Education 5.0)

At the beginning of 2000s I moved from Zimbabwe to South Africa as the Zimbabwean economy was collapsing. I moved from Zimbabwe to Monash University in 1995, which is a private university in South Africa, and became lecturer and senior lecturer in International Studies. I found a curriculum which was imported from Australia. A good debate ensued on context as a key factor on in designing a curriculum.

In short, I must say I have actually not worked in any other sector except higher education, beginning in 1995 when I became a teaching assistant in the history department at the University of Zimbabwe. Then, I was a lecturer at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe before joining Monash University (Australian institution with a South Africa Campus). In 2008, I moved to the United Kingdom and worked as Lecturer in African Studies at the Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies at the Open University in Milton Keynes. I returned to South Africa in 2010 and joined the South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) as Senior Researcher for South African Foreign Policy and African Drivers (SAFAD Programme) briefly before moving to the University of South Africa (UNISA) in 2011.

UNISA, I joined as Associate Professor in the Department of Development Studies and by 2012 I was promoted to Full Professor. I spent a decade at UNISA where I became the Founding Head of the Archie Mafeje Research Institute for Applied Social Policy (AMRI) from 2012 until 2015; and then I moved to work in the Principal and Vice-Chancellor's office as Director in the newly established Change Management Unit (CMU), which was dedicated to drive institutional transformation and decolonisation. By 2018, I was given the position of Acting Executive Director of CMU until 2019, when its name was changed from the "change management" unit, which sounded quite neoliberal, to the Department of Leadership and Transformation (DLT). In 2020, I left South Africa to become Professor and Chair in Epistemologies of the Global South, with an emphasis on Africa, at the University of Bayreuth in Germany.

**Moletsane:** What does your current position entail exactly?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** My current position is almost a continuation of the decolonization and transformation work in the higher education sector that I

started at UNISA. At the University of Bayreuth, I am part of a big funded research project called the “Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence” with a mission to reconfigure African Studies. In 2022, I became Vice-Dean for Research in the “Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence.” My task includes pushing the agenda of taking seriously epistemologies and knowledges from the Global South as well as making sure that African Studies is liberated from colonial matrices of power, straightjacket of “Area Studies” where they served post-1945 imperial and geopolitical designs of the US. In short, I teach, research and contribute to administration of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence. I have made sure that in teaching I introduce new courses/modules such as “Empire, Colonialism and Decolonization;” “Decolonial Theory/Thought;” “Epistemologies of the Global South;” “Knowledge in Development Studies;” “Liberation Movements and Social Orders in Southern Africa;” and others such as “Development in Postcolonial Africa” and “Postcolonial History.” I deliver a number of seminars, workshops, keynote addresses and presentations across the world, pushing forward the issues of decolonization.

With regards to reconfiguring African Studies strand of my work, I must say, there are many African studies centres across Europe but most of them they are driven by Eurocentric thought under which Africa is viewed as little more than a field of research, a kind of living laboratory. Against this background, the aim of my new position is to ensure that the work of Africa-based scholars is taken seriously and placed at the centre of African studies. In this regard, the terms of the debate seem to be that there are those academics who engage in objective non-political, non-situated truthful universal knowledge and others who are caricatured as political, ideological and subjective in their thinking.

Meanwhile, although I have moved geographically, I have not abandoned my cognitive and the epistemological commitment to Africa and the transformation and decolonisation journey of universities on the continent, particularly in South Africa.

**Moletsane:** What in your view are the purposes of the university; and, in this regard, how relevant are African universities at the present moment?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** My experience on university education as a student and teacher has been that the university still continued as though it was an agent of civilization –and by this, I mean it equipped African students with values and cultures which are not African including making them to develop some accents that are borrowed. My view of an African university is one that is solidly anchored in the African context and advances the African agendas of liberation, development and epistemic freedom. My idea of the university is partly informed by progressive African nationalism and progressive “African national project” as well as pan-Africanism as a leitmotif of African renaissance. Here, the university has to be an active force for change from colonialism to concrete decolonization, from dependence to self-reliance, from underdevelopment to development.



Instead of being an institution of inculcation of foreign values and cultures, the university has to contribute to cultivation of national and pan-African consciousness necessary for the active advancement of African renaissance that was disrupted by enslavement and colonialism.

My second point is that an African university has to liberate itself from the invasion and colonization by the intervention of the Washington Consensus and its neoliberal philosophies, which redefinition away from the national and pan-African agendas. Because of neoliberalism and its promotion of market fundamentalism, knowledge became commodified and universities became increasingly corporatised. At this point the institutions started to adopt log frames and other tools to quantify their knowledge production. This happened at a time when African economies were collapsing and government funding for universities had become very limited. Universities in Africa have not yet emerged out of the woods of neoliberalism and corporatization. I must say that the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements were partly responding the consequences of neoliberalism in which the very access to education was dependent on money and education was no longer a public good but a commodity. There was also the casualization of black/African labour in accordance with dictates of privatization and outsourcing of services.

**Moletsane:** What would be your vision of an African university of the future, and what would be the competing visions or barriers to that kind of university?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** I would be cautious about using the term “African university”. Although our universities are sited in Africa and have been given local names, they are not yet African in orientation and generally fail to take their locations seriously. Like the postcolonial state, they tend to look outwards rather than towards the places in which they are situated. In this regard, the problem is not that they are not international enough but rather they continue to lack local anchorage. Unless the institutions take seriously where they are located on the African continent, they cannot be considered “African universities”. Furthermore, if a university is located in a particular space, such as KwaZulu-Natal or Gauteng, it must of necessity be alive to its context without losing its universality. For example, by considering seriously the local languages as languages of instruction, learning and research, rather than continuing to conduct its research, teaching, and learning in those languages imposed by colonialism only. Without such a sensitivity, it will remain a university in Africa rather than an African university.

Second, a truly African university must address the relevance of its curriculum to meeting African challenges and realising African visions and agendas. The curriculum needs to be informed by the concerns of the continent rather than intellectual fads. French philosopher Michel Foucault has argued that the modern academic disciplines emerged historically to meet particular demands. Similarly, contemporary disciplinary knowledge should be shaped to solve local, contemporary problems. So, the disciplinary knowledge currently being

produced needs to be checked for relevance, for whether it is advancing society towards what should be achieved.

The issue of epistemic freedom must also be addressed in order to establish an authentically African university. African people must be able to think as themselves within the university. When I entered university, it was like I was moving into a European space in which I needed to change my clothing, my accent and the food I ate. But as the pressure for decolonisation mounts, Africans no longer need to be ashamed of who they are; and the university needs to reflect this in its catering and other aspects. It should become a public good by serving Africans instead of taking us from our own histories, our own cultures and our own languages into somewhere else, a European space; instead of pursuing a colonial agenda and seducing with its promises which fail to bring African scholars to the anticipated destination, but deposit them into an academic/intellectual limbo of a constant search for identity and selfhood.

What I have witnessed in my academic career are particular responses to coloniality of knowledge and academic extraversion among academics and intellectual of Africa. Out of frustration, some try to refuse and claim that there is a radical difference between Africans and other people, ending up facing a risk of what some call “ghettoization” and “nativism” as a response to alienation. This is a problematic position that some dictated even within the ranks of the Negritude movement. Then there are others who just surrender and say: “There is no choice but to assimilate everything.” Then there are others still who continuously pursue what one may call a “liminality” approach – always navigating and negotiating in-between positionality and being careful not to rock the boat and remaining ambivalent and ambiguous in what they stand for in knowledge production and teaching.

But there are those that have embraced the current insurgent and resurgent decolonization of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and are forming transnational alliances and solidarities with other like-minded thinkers from the rest of the world to push forward the agenda of epistemological decolonization. And this is where I am at the moment. My position is that we should open up these spaces and make a case for their transformation – for our own good and for our own sanity. At present, many people develop mental problems in universities because of the alienation they experience in these spaces which feel at once within their reach and forever beyond them.

Meanwhile, there are a number of competing visions for the university in Africa. The colonial vision of civilising which is resilient and can come in many guises, including its emphasis on excellence and standards hiding the dangerous colonial matrices of power, imperial designs and racial capitalist cognitive interests. Then there is the elitist vision, under which the university is only meant to cater to the elite, the talented 10% of the population.



There is the African nationalist vision of a developmental university, which is still pursued by states on the continent, although states in Africa seem to be struggling to liberate themselves from agendas of modernisation masquerading as a vision of development. This can be problematic given that many states are quite uncritical of their own drives to modernisation, which may be shaped by neo-liberalism, and can tend to dismiss the intellectual critiques of the approaches adopted by the governments. Capitulation to the failing neoliberal dispensation is one that continues to drive towards turning of universities into what Mahmood Mamdani termed “the market place.” In the “market place” the framing is what I have termed “coloniality of markets” to the extent that knowledge and education have become commercialised and commodified.

Then there is the resilient and popular vision, as embodied by the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements, which calls for universal access and more relevant institutions that are not culturally alienating and that produce knowledge in the public interest rather than as a commodified product.

In this regard, if the state wants to promote knowledge-driven development, it needs to fund education as a public good, as happened in the 1960s. All the talk about development plans and the Fourth Industrial Revolution will come to nothing unless governments invest in education to build the human capacity and intellectual capital required to spearhead development.

**Moletsane:** Who should have access to higher education and how? Should not the private sector as well as the public sector invest in the sector? How can universities support different social identities so that they are no longer spaces of alienation? And what should be the role of universities in preparing youngsters for employment?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** In terms of access, it is important to emphasise that education is a public good. The greater the number of educated people, the better the society; although the question then becomes: What kind of education should be provided? Access and relevance of education have to be dealt with simultaneously.

Addressing the issue of access, it is important to define the nature of the access being sought. Access may be viewed in terms of state provision of capital required for university education. In this regard, there should be a mode of access for people who lack certain certificates but who possess particular knowledge. There must be other routes into the system other than just matric results, for example, routes that enable access for older people with relevant skills and experience who have had no opportunity to attend school.

In relation to the issue of funding, the private sector as well as the state requires educated people. Investment is needed to produce an educated society, which otherwise does not emerge naturally. So, the private sector and the state must

collaborate to establish the required benchmarks for an educated society and invest to meet these standards.

In relation to the issue of providing appropriate support for students the key is for Africans to take ourselves seriously, which is also the basis of promoting indigenous knowledge systems. This entails understanding the students' sociological background, including, for example, why their grasp of English may be limited. At present, the onus is on the students to adapt to an alien system of higher education, rather than on the universities to meet the students' needs. So, for instance, low throughput rates are blamed on poor schools or some such and the broader issue of the inaccessibility of much of the content in some of the disciplines, such as accountancy, remains unaddressed. My response to this is to ask: If the content of a particular course is above everyone's heads, then what is its purpose? The curriculum's content needs to be from us and for us. In other words, it must be comprehensible.

Rather than questioning the competency of the students, the teachers should question the content of their lessons. Perhaps the students cannot relate to what is being taught due to its perceived lack of relevance. The point is that the experts in each discipline must seek to change the content of their curriculum so that it is relevant to the students. The examples and case studies need to be made accessible – they need to be relevant to the lived experiences of the students so that they can relate to them. This entails decolonization of teaching methods and approaches to make them effective.

In terms of the employment, universities should be decolonised so that they no longer focus only on creating labourers or workers – the implementers of a preordained plan – but rather take Africans seriously as entrepreneurs and teach them the skills required to create jobs.

**Moletsane:** Could you say more about the role of indigenous knowledge in re-imagining the African university?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** An important starting point is to acknowledge that all knowledges are indigenous to somewhere. There is no single knowledge which is universal, while all the others are indigenous and local. In this regard, all humans are born into a particular valid and legitimate knowledge system. This is not a cultural relativism issue at all. It speaks directly to how processes of colonisation and neoliberalism resulted in delegitimation of other ways of knowing and other knowledge systems in order to disempower local people and in order to reproduce Africans as labourers. This process of delegitimation was also accompanied by the theft of local knowledges which were then presented as aspects of the new, dominant knowledge system – as if these knowledges were an endogenous creation of colonisers and therefore a gift to the rest of the world population from Europeans and North Americans.

The second important point concerns the pedagogic process. Effective teaching should always move from the known to the unknown – from local or indigenous knowledge, which is the known, into other epistemes such as the European, which can be of significant use as long as it doesn't displace local ways of knowing. In this regard, there is an Ethiopian conception of knowledge which has much to offer. The idea is that while there is pride in local knowledge there was also, historically, an acceptance that it was never adequate on its own. So, Ethiopian youth were sent into the world to garner insights from elsewhere which would replenish, rather than replace, the local knowledge base.

A further example of such a process is offered by Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who borrowed the allegory of the cave from Plato. He describes a cave community which sent its daughters and sons out into the world to go and learn and then return. Some never came back; others came back speaking another language; and still others came back as agents of the outside world. But a few returned with knowledge which could enrich the life chances of the cave community – and I think that is what Africa needs leverage on this. Not to abandon its own knowledge systems, but to add to them.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o also promotes the importance of speaking in one's own language – whether that be isiZulu, or Sotho, or Tswana, for example – at the same time as he recommends adding English or French or another such language, although not to replace one's own language since this would divorce the individual from their own culture. Similarly, indigenous knowledge should be seen as a point of departure and return, not as an end in itself but as a site that can be replenished and made more effective.

**Moletsane:** Where do digital technologies and the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) fit into your conception of the African university?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** If these technologies are viewed as modes of delivery of knowledge and medium to enable people to arrive at better lives, they are definitely of great use to Africans. They can deliver indigenous and other forms knowledge effectively. For example, under Covid-19, they enabled the universities to stay open and continue teaching. The technologies can be used for progressive purposes, including for decolonisation. They can be used to increase access through the establishment of online courses and the dissemination of readily available information resources via the internet. My own vision is of simultaneous pursuit of decolonization and industrialization.

However, there is a lingering concern, which is that these technologies can be deployed as a means of domination – as a way of exerting pressure on Africans to conform with external stimuli antagonistic to African internal imperatives. In this regard, I argue that the relevance, the usefulness of any technology depends on its alignment with cosmology – as an anchorage to make sure technologies do not end up being forces of colonization and alienation once more. And without being

a neo-Luddite, it is also important to note some practical concerns in relation to the new technologies, such as the prospects of data colonialism and the restriction of privacy rights through data mining and the scanning and surveillance of individuals.

I must also, from a decolonial perspective, question the validity of the term “fourth industrial revolution”, which only really makes sense from a strictly modern European perspective – that is, if the first such revolution took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> century on that continent. This numbering discounts the numerous technological revolutions such as that which took place in the Nile Valley and produced the celebrated Egyptian civilisation. One can also raise a question about the technological and industrial changes which produced such civilizations as that of precolonial Ghana, Mali, Songhayi and Great Zimbabwe. Remembering that Cairo, Timbuktu and Fez were once very majestic cities with universities such as Sankore University in Mali. Why then are those technological and industrial initiatives underpinned by infusion of Islamic and African tradition outside notions of progress?

**Moletsane:** What stands in the way of a truly African university?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** What I witnessed at close range is a tendency in South Africa to try and implement decolonisation in isolation, university by university, rather than at the systemic level. If the state supports decolonisation, then it should promote the simultaneous transformation of all 26 public universities in the country. Unless there is change across the system, it is almost impossible to decolonise even one institution. Effective decolonisation requires government involvement and coordination across the sector, including through engagement with the quality assurance and certification bodies such as the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Otherwise, the efforts at decolonisation may not only be taking place in isolation, they may even be violating the disciplinary basis of knowledge in the tertiary sector as certified by SAQA.

Secondly, I also witnessed celebration of the government’s establishment of a commission on the fourth industrial revolution, I asked: Where is the decolonisation commission? I still wonder whether there can be any serious and meaningful democratization without decolonization? The point being that the absence of such a body indicates a lack of state support for this agenda; the lack of a national decolonising project in a country where there are clear iconographies of apartheid colonization. Without which the response of universities seeking transformation can only ever be reactionary – responding to the challenges in an *ad hoc* fashion, and seeking to pacify students in the meantime.

Such an approach is also insincere: the epistemic revolution envisaged by decolonisation is not the kind of change that can be produced by two people sitting under a tree; it requires a national dialogue that should be conducted for

the good of the country, the continent and the world. It entails asking the bigger questions. In this regard, it is not that the individual universities are necessarily being insincere in their efforts at transformation, but rather that decolonisation realistically requires a larger and more coordinated approach. In this respect, I would advocate a return to the methods used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the establishment of regional and continental decolonial projects building on national decolonial initiatives. This would entail careful consideration of what such a project could and should deliver, paying close attention to its ideological orientation and addressing the reasons why the earlier decolonisation efforts failed to deliver what was expected of them.

One approach may be to adopt the position that what are presently conceived as systemic or institutional crises are actually epistemic problems, that is, these crises indicate the limits of the present conception of knowledge. Adopting this perspective, a comprehensive review of what constitutes knowledge would be required, including whether it is fit for purpose in addressing contemporary challenges. Under this view, decolonisation would no longer represent a romantic nationalistic project but rather a set of practical actions with the goal of updating the approach to knowledge at a global level so that humanity can move forward.

Furthermore, the support of the elites in the state, including in the ministries of higher education, is necessary for transformation. There is need for national and continental political will to pursue decolonization as vigorously as during the period of anti-colonial struggles. However, South Africa might have missed a great opportunity to leverage the momentum created under the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements to ask the bigger questions and identify what is fundamentally wrong with the country's higher education system, including: the institutional cultures at the universities; the languages of instruction; and the ways of teaching.

**Moletsane:** How do you view academic freedom in relation to this vision of systemic decolonisation?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** I place the emphasis on epistemic freedom without dismissing academic freedom. The idea of the right to express is important but it has to be deepened into epistemic freedom, that is, establishing a link between rights and cognitive and epistemic justice issues. In isolation, the issue of academic freedom can be used by liberals and conservatives to block change, to protect the *status quo*. Epistemic freedom seeks to open academia to other ways of knowing, addressing concerns that may be obscured by a narrow focus on academic freedom.

I also seek to place the emphasis on academic democracy, which is linked to academic freedom but goes beyond it. It is a question of governance and a concern about the representativeness of the structures of the universities, such as the senates, which tend to comprise old men. In this regard, the question is

how to democratise and de-hierarchise university structures which are impeding change.

**Moletsane:** Are there any other questions that I should have asked which you want to address?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** I think it is interesting to address the issue of first- and second-generation scholars on the continent. The first generation were that group of people who, having been pupils at mission and colonial schools, went to university in Europe and North America and were inducted in Eurocentric thought, which was the only game in town at that point. What is intriguing is that it was this generation that also developed an anti-colonial consciousness, although their educational background also made them advocates of issues of standards and excellence, which were deployed then and have been deployed subsequently to resist decolonization. For example, when Nkrumah sought to change the University College of the Gold Coast into the University of Ghana, he was opposed by some black scholars rather than the white scholars, which left him with no option but to establish the Institute of African Studies as a parallel project in the hope that this would fertilise decolonization of knowledge. What I have noticed today is that there is older generation in academia and in the state that resist decolonization efforts of today, saying that they resolved the problem of decolonisation long ago; that the contemporary drive to transformation is purely ideological and fails to address the substantive socio-economic issues being faced; and that what is required is adaptation to the present circumstances. Students and progressive young academics are always said to be misreading Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon as part of dismissing their demands for decolonization and delegitimizing their struggles for change.

**Moletsane:** What is your advice to African universities on becoming more agile in terms of responding to changes in the world; and, in relation to that, do you have an example of a university best practice in terms of innovation?

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** I think universities in Africa, which sit at the frontier between African and European thought, have a unique opportunity to be extremely agile, more so even than the universities in Europe which are bound by Eurocentric thinking. Being at the border, which they were pushed into, they can take advantage of their situation and produce what decolonial thinkers refer to as “border gnosis”.

For example, in seeking to address the practical question of low throughput rates and whether the language of instruction may be a factor in this, UNISA decided to conduct an experiment. It went into a college and translated all the exam questions into the eleven South African official languages, so that the students could answer in, for example, isiXhosa or isiZulu or Setswana, and so on. This is indicative that universities in Africa have a higher potential to examples of

multilingualism in their teaching, research and learning.

Another opportunity presented by South Africa's position on the border between Africa and elsewhere is the presence of a large number of academics from other African countries at its universities. The experience and understanding of these scholars in, for example, Nigeria or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) needs to be shared and leveraged to the benefit of South African higher education.

**Moletsane:** But first we need to get over the xenophobia in South Africa.

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** Yes, because these scholars are then liable to put their heads down and hide instead of making open contributions to decolonization. In this regard, such professors can provide advice on where their countries went wrong and where they succeeded, which would have the effect of creating a practical rather than a theoretical debate. So, for example, those who came from Zimbabwe can talk from their own experience of why and how things collapsed there, so that South Africa may learn from the lessons of their past. Europe and North America are harvesting academics and intellectuals from Africa, while in Africa we are degenerating into nativism and xenophobia, to close each other out.

**Moletsane:** I see also that increasingly grants are offered to develop research and thinking in relation to the Global South.

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** Yes, such funding bodies as Mellon Foundation are funding decolonial initiatives whereas African governments are silent and pretending that decolonization has already taken place. We are worried that funding has been another technology of global imperial designs to capture and dilute anti-systemic formations from the Global South.

**Moletsane:** And patent it as their invention.

**Ndlovu-Gatsheni:** Yes. And then Africa will have lost once again the initiative aimed at self-liberation.