Scholarly Communication for Social Justice and Decolonised Education: Implications for LIS Curriculum Realignment

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Abstract

This essay considers implications for a realigned library and information science curriculum for the achievement of social justice in scholarly communication and decolonised education. The essay explores the issues that make the realignment imperative and argues that the decolonisation of education in general and LIS education specifically is crucial. In this way, the essay makes a link between scholarly communication, social justice, decolonised education, and LIS curriculum realignment. Its main thesis is that a decolonised LIS education system is critical for promoting social justice in the scholarly communication system and a decolonised education system. The essay explores how LIS has dealt with the issue by applying Fraser's 2005 framework of social justice to characterise the interventions. The conclusion is that there have been interventions that are affirmative and transformative, and argues for a continuation of these interventions to engender social justice in scholarly communication through a realigned LIS curriculum and practice.

Keywords: scholarly communication, social justice, decolonised education, LIS curriculum, epistemic justice

Introduction

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2003) defines scholarly communication as the

> "system through which research and other scholarly writings are created, evaluated for quality, disseminated to the scholarly community, and preserved for future use. The system includes both formal means of communication, such as publication in peer reviewed journals, and informal channels such as electronic mailing lists".

There is acknowledgement that the scholarly communication is dominated by a handful of Western publishers, resulting in inequitable access and contribution to global knowledge, especially for Global South scholars (Asare-Nuamah, 2003; Claasen, 2024; Lor, 2023; Pratt & De Vries, 2023). Social justice is about parity of participation (Fraser, 2005), which in this case is about participation in all aspects of scholarly communication from access to recognition, contribution, and representation in the global body of knowledge. The scholarly communication system, which feeds from and reinforces the current system of education does not represent a parity of participation. This essay is premised on the fact that the current practice of scholarly communication perpetuates the power relations in the global knowledge economy and in institutions of higher learning. There is a nexus between scholarly communication, social justice and decolonised education that has an impact on a LIS curriculum which has been recognised, and a lot of work has gone into finding ways of addressing the decolonisation of education, and the role of scholarly communication and library education (Adam, 2020; Birdi, 2021; Brunette-Debassinge et al., 2022; Campbell & Sich, 2023). This essay discusses these interventions using Fraser's 2005 framework of social justice to situate current strategies into the framework that articulates two types of change: affirmative and transformative change. The essay highlights the need for both affirmative and transformative change for the decolonisation of education and LIS education to achieve epistemic justice (Kidd et al., 2017).

Background

There is no single agreed-upon definition of decolonising education (Campbell & Sich, 2023). Decolonising education requires a move from "minor reforms" at individual level to "major reforms" (Stein, 2019; Brunette-Debassige et al., 2022). Marsh (2022) defines decolonialising education as "a consideration of the ways that legacies of colonialisation prevail and are perpetuated in hierarchies of power and of knowledge in universities". Decolonalisation is about reversing the dominance of Eurocentric worldviews for a more balanced representation of knowledge and viewpoints. It involves unlearning, uncovering and transforming legacies of colonialisation, and making space for other knowledges (Campbell & Sich, 2023). Since it is rooted in the historical struggle against colonialism, it continues to evolve in response to contemporary challenges. Many scholars view it as an epistemic practice aimed at moderating and modulating the voices of colonial knowledge and centering African experiences and knowledge systems (Ndlazi, 2021).

The seeds of decolonial education were sown during the anti-colonial struggles of the mid-20th century. The latter half of the 20th century saw a resurgence of interest in indigenous knowledge systems. This movement was instrumental in shaping the decolonial education discourse.

The era of globalization brought new challenges and opportunities. While it facilitated global connections, it also intensified economic inequalities and cultural homogenization. This context led to a renewed critique of Western dominance and a call for more equitable and inclusive education systems. In recent years, student movements like #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in South Africa have brought the issue of decolonising education to the forefront (Ndlazi, 2021). But calls for decolonised education are not just limited to the Global South as the discourse has gained traction even in the Global North (Marsh, 2022; Camphill & Sich, 2023).

Education is described as a "site of social reproduction which upholds one canon of knowledge to the exclusion of others" (Faul & Welply, 2021). Numerous authors (Raju & Badrudeen 2022; Funk & Guthadjaka, 2020; Cox, 2023) have explored and decried the role played by the dominant education system in perpetuating a standard of academic scholarship that overlooks the epistemologies of cultures outside the Euro-Western environment. The academy acts as a powerful gatekeeper of what is considered worthy research and knowledge, through its teaching, research, service, and promotions. Decolonising education involves the interrogation of historical legacies and dominant forms of knowledge, as well as an understanding of how they privilege certain groups, countries or cultures over others. It seeks learning that is embedded in local realities rather than made to adhere to universalised standards. Education is known to be transformative, and therefore its decolonisation is about relevant education to enable that meaningful transformation. Chimamanda (2009) made the point that the one-sided story leaves humanity poor.

Scholarly communication and current education systems reinforce each other and perpetuate the current global politics of knowledge. What is taught and researched, and the methodologies used reflect the global politics of knowledge and the value they place on epistemologies. The decolonisation of both education and scholarly communication are therefore key to ensuring systems that advance the principles of social justice. And so, in the quest for social justice, calls have been made to decolonise education and to reengineer scholarly communication.

Problem statement

There is an intersection between scholarly communication, decolonised education, and social justice which needs to be inhabited to address the lack of parity of participation in scholarly communication. How this space is inhabited through a realigned LIS curriculum is the subject of this essay, which aims to determine this. It is contended that scholarly communication and an education system influenced by historical forces of colonialism and current forces of neocolonialisation are complicit in keeping some voices unheard. Given this situation, what is the implication of this on library education realignment?

Much has been written on interventions to decolonise education in general and library education and practice in particular (Birdi, 2021; Brunette-Bassinge et al., 2022; Campbell & Sich, 2023; Hopkins et al., 2023). However, to the best of the author's knowledge, no one has considered the interventions and categorised them in terms of the approaches taken. Using Fraser's 2005 framework of social justice, the essay identifies and discusses the interventions that have been made. The categorisation of the interventions provides a clear picture of the measures that have been taken. This essay explores how library and information science programs have integrated the principles of social justice and decolonisation into their curricula to ensure that future librarians are prepared to foster inclusive environments that support diverse voices in scholarly communication. By so doing, the essay aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on education and practices in library science for a realigned curriculum for decolonised education and system of scholarly communication. Fraser's (2005) Social Justice Framework is used as a lens to determine the nature of the interventions Three dimensions of social justice are identified as economic, cultural and political. Social injustice occurs in scholarly communication when there is economic maldistribution, cultural misrecognition, and political misrecognition. In scholarly communication these injustices occur as follows:

- Economic maldistribution, where participants do not have equitable access to required resources for equitable participation in scholarly communication. This translates to inequitable access to published knowledge, research funding, institutional support and research capacity.
- Cultural misrecognition where scholars are denied opportunity to be published because of their identity, culture, methods, geography, and language. The extant editorial and peer review processes play a major role in gatekeeping who gets published.
- Political misrepresentation where the existing power relations inform decisions as to what is valued knowledge without considering the views of others in those decisions.

To address these social injustices, affirmative/ameliorative and transformative approaches are typically used (Fraser, 2005). A literature review of interventions in the LIS community was conducted and provided an opportunity to analyse and classify the interventions accordingly. Affirmative measures are regarded as measures that seek to apply ameliorative adjustments – these do not address the underlying structural power issues, whereas transformative approaches seek redress of power and social relations (Fraser, 2005).

Social justice, epistemic justice and scholarly communication

Social justice

Social justice can be defined as a movement or practice that is focused on achieving fairness, equity, inclusion, and self-determination of individuals or groups in a society. Borrowing from Fraser (2005) cited in Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter (2018), social justice is also defined as parity of participation and is both an outcome and process. Lambert (2018) defines social justice as a process and goal to achieve a fairer society through actions guided by the principles of redistributive justice, recognitive justice and representative justice. Social justice has a broad intellectual tradition (Etchezahar et al., 2024) that recognises that we live in a world characterised by economic, social and political inequalities. Notably, early discourses on social justice focused on redistribution of resources and recognition and representation were added later (Lambert, 2018; Adam, 2020). Redistribution refers to fair allocation of resources, opportunities and wealth in society to address economic inequalities. Recognition is about respecting diversity, valuing people equally and giving visibility to marginalised groups. Representation refers to ensuring the active participation of people/communities in decisions and activities that affect their lives. Thus, social injustice comes about when there is “economic maldistribution, cultural misrecognition, and political misframing” (Adam, 2020). Social justice can therefore be analysed by considering the redistribution of resources, recognition of diversity, and representation or participation in decision-making. Fraser’s 2005 social justice framework identifies three ways that the participation and processes in life and any endeavour can be deemed to be socially unjust. These injustices are referred to as economic maladministration, cultural misrecognition, and political misrepresentation.

Addressing these injustices can take two forms, affirmative and transformative, where affirmative responses address injustices in an ameliorative manner through the redistribution of resources, attempts to recognise others, and improved representation of others. Affirmative approaches aim to correct inequitable outcomes of social arrangements, whilst not disturbing underlying social structures (Fraser, 2005). Transformative responses address the root causes of injustice as in the economic structure, social and power relations, and thus include the restructuring of economic models to achieve a parity of distribution, ensuring inclusiveness of others and their perspectives, and lastly, re-framing for parity of rights. In essence, they do this by attempting to restructure the underlying framework which gives rise to social injustice (Khan, 2021).

Due to the transformative nature of education, social injustices can be addressed through a decolonialised education that embraces different worldviews, knowledges, cultures and values.

This would lead to transformative as opposed to affirmative change. Levels of decolonialisation include a focus on curriculum transformation to reflect diverse perspectives and experiences; a focus on reclaiming and revitalising the use of indigenous languages, knowledge and culture; and pedagogical innovation that is inclusive of culturally responsive and empowering teaching and learning methods.

Epistemic justice

The concepts of social justice and epistemic justice intersect and influence each other. Epistemic justice is a component of social justice, being deeply rooted in how power dynamics influence knowledge access, production and contribution. Both social and epistemic justice highlight inclusivity, equity, and the recognition of diverse forms of knowledge in creating a more just society. Since scholarly communication is about access, production, contribution and dissemination of knowledge, it is appropriate therefore to apply the concept of epistemic justice in a discussion of the system. Pratt and De Vries (2023) identify and unpack the concepts that are related to epistemic justice:

- The coloniality of knowledge - knowledge from the Global North is dominant in the scholarly communication system.
- Extraversion – where philosophers have adopted concepts and theories emanating from external sources.
- Cognitive justice – the right of different forms of knowledge to coexist equally in the global discourses
- Testimonial justice and hermeneutical justice – testimonial justice being a disregard of the views of others as insignificant or not credible; and hermeneutical justice where the knowledge and experiences of a group are marginalised resulting in a dearth of concepts and knowledge as vehicles of sensemaking or articulation of their own experiences.

Pratt and De Vries (2023) identify three layers of epistemic justice that provide a framework for understanding the problem of epistemic injustice and identify possible entry points for addressing the injustice. These layers include questions regarding who produces knowledge (knowledge production), what theories and concepts are recognised and applied in the knowledge production (knowledge application), and whose voices are heard and being sought, and used to produce knowledge (knowledge solicited). Epistemic injustice has been defined by Fricker (2007) as unfair treatment of individuals in their capacity as knowers. The social injustices in scholarly communication, such as inequality and discrimination lead to epistemic injustice by silencing the voices of the marginalised and excluding their knowledges from dominant discourses.

It is a result of unfair treatment in "knowledge related and communicative practices in which the voices, experiences and problems of marginalised individuals, communities, and societies are not being taken seriously" (Cummings et al., 2022, p. 1965). Five conditions under which epistemic injustice can be said to occur are laid out by Byskov (2021):

- The prejudice condition refers to the credibility accorded to a knower based on preconceived ideas or race, gender, ethnicity, social background, sexuality, accent, etc.
- The disadvantage condition which occurs because of the prejudice condition, which affects what is structurally included as credible knowledge in the body of knowledge, leading to an underrepresentation of marginalised groups' knowledge and experiences.
- The stakeholder condition leads to epistemic injustice when a knower should be contributing to a decision, or in this case a body of knowledge, and is prevented from doing so.
- The epistemic condition is where the knower possesses the knowledge that is relevant, but which is disregarded resulting in underrepresentation.
- The social justice condition holds that epistemic injustice occurs when a knower is excluded by virtue of the other social injustices that they may suffer from.

Epistemic injustice is also defined by Battiste cited in Campbell and Sich (2023) as "cognitive imperialism" where indigenous knowledge and cultures are stolen, silenced or destroyed while Eurocentric epistemologies are presented as more superior and civilized.

Scholarly communication

The history of scholarly communication highlights the ongoing struggle for equitable access to knowledge, and representation of other worldviews and epistemologies. It has witnessed discourses around how knowledge is produced, disseminated, and accessed. The early days of scholarly communication began with the formalisation of scholarly communication through learned societies, and by the 20th century, peer-reviewed journals were established as the primary means of scholarly communication. The peer-review system was criticised as a gatekeeper that ensured the hegemony of Western scientific endeavours. Throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, access to scientific communication was contested due to the rise of publishing conglomerates that hiked the price of journal titles. The open access movement was led by academics and academic librarians who decried the monopolistic tendencies of the publishers and the fact that they required academics to sign away their copyright and then buy access to their own and other journal articles. Despite this opening up, it has been acknowledged that the current scholarly communication landscape carries with it biases against scholars from certain regions (Raju et al., 2023).

Using the three dimensions of Fraser's framework provides a lens through which to identify the ways that the current system of scholarly communications does not equate to a parity of participation. The first is economic maldistribution which focuses on the inequality of distribution of resources. Scholars in the Global South do not have equitable access to published knowledge, research and dissemination funding, and adequate institutional support for research (Lor, 2023). Scholarly communication currently offers different models of open access to address the inequalities of access to research where, for the most part, the cost of publishing is flipped to authors (Asare-Nuamah, 2023) through article processing charges (APCs).

The second is cultural inequality or misrecognition, where scholars are unable to participate on an equal footing based on their identity, race, culture, and their geographical location. This is due in part to the dominance of Western academic institutions and established researchers in the publication ecosystem, who discriminate against the offerings of less well-known institutions and researchers based on the subject matter covered and the research paradigm adopted (Lor, 2023). It is argued that the open access movement, whilst attempting to provide access to knowledge products, has overlooked the aspect of equity of contribution to the system of knowledge (Claassen, 2024; Baildon, 2018). The open access movement has not addressed the existing biases and power structures that lock out the diversity of knowledge that exists. Whilst authors gain access to knowledge in international journals, they have greater difficulty publishing in them (Raju et al., 2023).

The third is political misrepresentation which is the lack of representation of diverse voices and knowledge production from the Global South (Cummings et al., 2022), due to political and cultural hegemony that privileges voices from the Global North over those of the Global South. The much-vaunted open access movement has not been a solution due to the concentration of power in the few publishers that are based in the Global North. Gaining access to journals of "international repute" does not remove the reality of the power structures that dictate whose knowledge is valued. Scholarly communication systems disadvantage scholars from the Global South (Cox, 2023) by enforcing high APCs that lead to "testimonial injustice", where they are silenced, and cannot give "epistemic testimony". This is further reinforced by editorial board compositions that exclude scholars from the Global South (Roh et al., 2020); the dominance of the English language (Roh et al., 2020), fewer research grant opportunities from the Global South resulting in a reliance on foreign research grant opportunities with their own research agendas, and often having to work with Western scholars and effectively becoming glorified research assistants.

Interrelation between scholarly communication, social justice and epistemic justice

The interconnections between scholarly communication, social justice, and epistemic justice highlight the need for a transformative approach to knowledge production and dissemination that addresses historical inequities and power dynamics (Fraser, 2005). Scholarly communication reflects the site of power as it is deeply rooted in structures that perpetuate social inequalities (Campbell & Sich, 2023). The social justice lens on scholarly communication reveals the global knowledge imbalances and the gatekeeping function of the system. It highlights the power plays within scholarly communication and the exclusionary effects from knowledge production and dissemination (Dawson et al., 2024). Even as the open access movement attempts to promote knowledge as a public good, it is clear that access without participation is not enough (Boyle, 2023). Since epistemic justice refers to the fair treatment of diverse knowledge systems and the recognition of their validity, it challenges the dominant narratives that often marginalize indigenous and local knowledges. The relationship between epistemic justice and scholarly communication is critical; without incorporating diverse epistemologies into academic discourse, the potential for achieving social justice remains limited (Dawson et al., 2024).

Clearly there ought to be a positive relationship between scholarly communication, social justice and epistemic justice. Scholarly communication can play a crucial role in advancing social and epistemic justice within the framework of decolonized education. This process involves recognizing and addressing historical injustices embedded in educational systems, particularly those influenced by colonial legacies. However, this is not the case as noted by various scholars (Baildon, 2018; Cox, 2023), in part due to the underlying politics of knowledge, the monopolistic concentration of the scholarly publishing industry in the Global North, and the current exclusionary system of knowledge. Scholarly communication should offer a platform accommodative of multiple ways of knowing, but hardly does so due to its publication policies and peer review systems that act as epistemic gatekeeping (Campbell & Sich, 2023).

Decolonisation of education, scholarly communication and implications for a LIS curriculum realignment

While social justice has always had a prominent place in the practice of library and information science where libraries and librarians/information professionals are guided by codes of conduct that emphasise social justice such as the ALA Core Competences of Librarianship, they commit “epistemic injustice” in the way they practice collection development, preservation, library instruction, etc (Campbell & Sich, 2023). Libraries and information systems play a critical role in influencing the education system and in scholarly communication, thus their importance in the decolonisation discourse and practice.

In the education space, they play a role in library collections, information literacy programs, and guide the academic staff on appropriate reading lists. In facilitating scholarly communication, they decide on publication outlets to subscribe to; assist in information seeking; help to evaluate possible communication outlets; educate and advocate for open access; assist the navigation of copyright issues, self-archiving, and data management; and have been one of the loudest voices advocating for open science and open data. These roles elevate the need for LIS professionals to be critical practitioners.

Although for the most part the social justice aspect of librarianship is acknowledged, some have pointed out that libraries are a product of and operate in economic, cultural and political contexts that negate the "neutrality" they profess (Jones et al., 2021). It is therefore critical for an education that fosters more awareness and advocacy for change. In addition, the education of LIS students is critical in ensuring that professionals understand the scholarly communication system, their role in it, and how it may contribute to epistemic injustice. All these call for a realignment of the LIS curriculum towards decolonisation. In realigning LIS education, attempts to decolonise LIS curricula have been made, and can be categorised as affirmative and transformative change.

Table 1 below presents a distillation of the decolonisation interventions using the social justice framework adopted from Fraser (2005). In this case the affirmative is viewed as practical interventions that address inequalities, which do not delve into the social structure that gives rise to injustice, and how it might be changed. Affirmative change is largely ameliorative aiming for resource redistribution, cultural recognition and representation. This type of change seeks to bring solutions to structural problems without digging deeper into the causes and addressing the. The focus is on adjustments that may offer some respite. They encompass the inclusion of social justice as a topic in the curriculum, engendering intentionality about decolonising practices, for example, diversifying the collections and challenging non-inclusive structures in knowledge management and their impact on library collections (Clarke, 2019). Such interventions are important as they bring into the mix the practicalities of change.

The transformative approaches, however, go deeper and seek to question and, in the process engender a positionality of change in the LIS professionals. Transformative change involves delving deep to understand and unearth the underlying causes of social injustice and using the understanding to bring about change that includes economic restructuring, re-acculturation (Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter, 2018), and reframing which is about involving the marginalised in the decision making or creation of appropriate frames (Fraser, 2005).

They involve the adoption of critical pedagogy (amongst others) that explores the current system of knowledge disparity and how to address it by, for example, indigenising the curricula (Ngulube et al., 2015).

Table 1: LIS realignment/decolonisation interventions

Injustices	Affirmative	Transformative
Economic/Maldistribution *issues of lack of or limited access to published scholarship due to high subscription costs and ICT infrastructures, research funding, institutional support, and research capacity*	**Redistribution of resources** Champion Open Access Models Review and advocate for diverse library collections Lead in the implementation of institutional repositories in respective institutions Adopt the role of the library as publisher	**Restructuring of the economic model** Use a decolonial and social justice lens to critique, understand and reflect on: • the power and impact of colonialism on the education project in general • the impact of the above on the LIS profession and practice • the colonial legacy of LIS and its impact • the role and impact of LIS on the institutions they serve and in perpetuating economic maldistribution Determine how to implement change both in the curricula and in the practice for a restructured economic model in scholarly communication

Injustices	Affirmative	Transformative
Cultural/Misrecognition	**Recognition**	**Re-acculturation**
Lack of recognition and value of scholarship based on biases; devaluation based on identity, cultural background, and socio-economic status; domination and hegemony of Global North Publishers and institutions	Influence change using the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) lens on the: • Collection • Services • Spaces • Community service Strengthen the alignment of user-centred services and DEI within the curriculum. Integration of Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in teaching and library collections Integration of oral traditions in teaching and learning Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and multicultural studies in the curriculum	Diversifying LIS content through a curriculum that includes diverse perspectives, theories, and methodologies, prioritising contributions from historically marginalised groups Understanding the scholarly communication system and its role in devaluing non-mainstream knowledge Integrate critical information literacy – equip students to critically evaluate information sources, identify biases, and recognise the power dynamics embedded in knowledge production Educate for the dismantling of domination and hegemonic relations

Injustices	Affirmative	Transformative
Political/ Misrepresentation	**Representation**	**Re-framing**
Limited visibility of research and scholarship from the Global South; decisions made on who and what gets published by dominant scholars and publishers	Forge partnerships with faculty and students to bring awareness to bias in knowledge systems Facilitating research partnerships that centre the voices and expertise of the Global South Diversify the voices included in the curriculum and those teaching it Offer and encourage publishing in alternative platforms Develop local journals Advocate for decolonised research methodologies, embracing diverse epistemologies	Infusing critical literacy as a key part of scaffolding a decolonisation approach to scholarly communication Infuse critical librarianship into the curriculum Understand the role of the peer review process and how it should be diversified Support and push for a reframing of the academic promotion system beyond the current metrics being used Question and call out the indexing mechanisms of the main journal databases Understand the scholarly communication system and what needs to be done to change it

Affirmative responses

Economic maldistribution

To address economic maldistribution, the LIS discipline has played a significant role in the development of open access, changing to a degree, the landscape of scholarly communications. Open access is an evolving area that has galvanised funding bodies to play a role in moving knowledge back to being a public good. However, providing access to what is predominantly Global North knowledge is helpful, but more can be done to ensure the same for knowledge from the Global South, ensuring equitable participation by scholars (Baildon, 2018).

Efforts at diversifying library collections abound in the literature. Ocholla (2020) points to the need for academic libraries to acquire, process and disseminate alternative forms of knowledge (local knowledge, indigenous knowledge, etc), side-by-side with Western knowledge. He calls for special collections, institutional repositories and open access platforms to publish locally produced knowledge. Hopkins et al. (2023) document a project that involved the co-creation of a decolonised reading list. This was part of a larger project to decolonise education at Aston University. The aim was to engage racially diverse students to determine alternative voices that could be added to the reading list. Scrutinising reading lists is seen as a step to raise awareness of race or gender bias in the subject (Charles, 2019). This is underscored by Birdi (2021), that LIS education can contribute to university decolonisation where LIS students are encouraged and supported to engage critically with the concepts of decolonisation.

Libraries have also ventured into publishing to ensure equity of participation in scholarly communication for their researchers (Raju & Badrudeen, 2022). Library publishing programs are disrupting the scholarly communication system by enabling “other” voices to be heard, and they address 5 shortcomings of the traditional scholarly communication system - copyright transfer, high rejection rates, slow publication processes, high publishing prices, and limited distribution (Roh & Inefuku, 2016). The participation and visibility of authors in the scholarly communication system are now possible. Raju et al. (2023) describe this as “denorthenising” scholarly communication. An African Continent Platform has been built, enabling multiple institutions to create their own publishing space. They further state that their efforts “will scaffold the transition to information democracy and a reimagined OA movement driven by social justice principles” (Raju et al., 2023, p. 2). Furthermore, academic libraries have championed institutional repositories, whose implementation has grown globally and has enabled access to local content both locally and globally, improving scholars’ visibility (Ocholla, 2020).

Cultural misrecognition

In addressing cultural misrecognition, libraries address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in various aspects of their work. DEI has been recognised as a global trend that must be included in the LIS curriculum. "DEI principles emphasise the importance of recognising and valuing diversity, promoting equity, and creating an inclusive environment. Incorporating DEI principles in the LIS curriculum can prepare future information professionals to work with diverse communities and serve them effectively. It can also promote social justice, reduce biases and discrimination, and enhance access to information and services" (Mubofu & Mambo, 2023). Librarians must understand DEI principles so that they can review their activities from that understanding (Wilson, 2021). As far back as the 1980s, lamentations that African librarianship was anchored on Western ideologies (Zimu-Biyela & Chisita, 2023) led to calls for the re-Africanisation of libraries. Thus, indigenous knowledge systems, oral traditions and community-based library services were introduced into the curriculum. This introduction has progressed gradually: Ngulube et al. (2015) mapped the inclusion of IKS content in LIS education in Eastern and Southern Africa. Their findings were that the inclusion of IKS content in Africa did not occur as expected - "as colonial pedagogic practices that undervalued IK have continued to dominate the higher education landscape at the expense of the inclusion of IK" (Ngulube et al., 2015).

Tumuhairwe (2013) noted the lack of information on the integration of indigenous knowledge and multicultural studies in LIS curriculum, citing challenges such as perception and attitude, inadequate skills, and funding. Yet in other jurisdictions, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, there are efforts to work in partnership with marginalised groups to agree on how sections of the library collection can be grouped and labelled, and this entailed a critical look at the tools used to organise knowledge, for example the terms used to reflect marginalised people in the classification schemes (Charles, 2019). Omarsaib et al. (2023) report that indigenous knowledge in LIS curriculum is gaining momentum globally. Crilly (2023) examined how academic libraries are incorporating social justice concepts such as diversity, decentering and decolonising into their practices. The concept of diversity was found to mainly focus on addressing the culture of whiteness in the staffing of libraries.

Political misrepresentation

Forging collaboration and partnerships for decolonisation is regarded as paramount for addressing political misrepresentation. For example, partnerships between librarians, faculty and students towards decolonising library collections and other resources, reading lists, and what ought to be included in the curriculum (Hopkins et al., 2023). According to Mubofu and Mambo (2023), collaboration can involve working with other institutions, agencies, and stakeholders to share resources, knowledge, and expertise. It can entail

agreements on how to provide information services in an inclusive way. It is thus important to incorporate collaboration and partnership principles into the LIS curriculum to enable information professionals to develop the necessary skills and competencies to work effectively with other stakeholders and organisations (Mubofu & Mambo, 2023). Other measures include the facilitation of research partnerships that centre the voices and expertise of the Global South (Lumb, 2023); offer and encourage publishing in alternative platforms (Raju et al., 2022); advocating for decolonised research methodologies and embracing diverse epistemologies (Moahi, 2020).

Transformative responses

As indicated, transformative approaches speak to the heart of the matter, unequal power, social and economic relations. Birdi (2021) proposes a decolonising framework for LIS education that will focus on a deeper understanding of colonialisation and how it has affected their education, academic libraries, higher education and library services.

Economic maldistribution

Addressing economic maldistribution requires a reflection on the role of the library as an institution and librarianship as a profession and discipline (Jimenez and Cox 2023). It requires a two-pronged approach of reflection on the extent to which the library is a conduit and perpetuator of coloniality, and a reflection on the contribution of the professionals coming out of LIS Schools. This requires a critical consideration of the role of the curriculum in shaping the discipline and the practice of librarianship. The question would be how well the education is preparing professionals to grapple with the issues. Decolonisation of education is inextricably connected to the scholarly communication system. Achieving a decolonised education system requires a re-evaluation of the scholarly communication system following an understanding of its inherent underlying biases and prejudices to other forms of knowledge. Educating the LIS professional to recognise and acknowledge this is a first step towards bringing about change, and to reflect on their tools, frameworks, and practices is yet another step. Birdi (2021) suggests that in addressing structural inequalities, library education must recognise and challenge the systemic and structural inequities inherent in traditional scholarly communication systems. These systems often reflect and reinforce colonialist structures of power, which can exclude marginalised voices and perpetuate social injustices. This is why LIS students must understand colonialisation and its reverberating impact in scholarly communication (Roh et al., 2020). The pedagogy of LIS education must go beyond the objective of students gaining an understanding but focus more on deeper reflection of their role in addressing the issues both through research, and practice.

Cultural misrepresentation

Addressing cultural misrepresentation requires a focus on inclusive and diverse representation of perspectives and voices in the library collections, ensuring that library collections and scholarly communications represent a broad range of authors, languages, and epistemologies, rather than being skewed towards dominant groups. This will entail students' understanding of the level of underrepresentation and appreciating the biases that leads to this situation (Birdi, 2021). Following the discourse of a transformative change in the current systems and practices calls for a realignment of the LIS curriculum towards decolonisation. The realignment involves the unlearning and learning of new ways of valuing and encompassing diversity of knowledge. The focus of the curriculum should be in engendering a deep understanding of the root causes of epistemic justice and how to address it. Realigning the LIS curriculum requires a rethinking of the way information is taught and presented – moving away from Eurocentric perspectives to an incorporation of diverse knowledge systems and experiences. Major reforms to the curriculum can disrupt the very core of epistemic hegemony in higher education and ensure the intentional integration of the knowledge systems of the epistemologically marginalised (Campbell & Sich, 2023). Stein (2019) suggests a number of questions to be asked: what is considered knowledge and why; and who is considered knowledgeable or an authority. This will lead to an understanding of the current scholarly communication system. There are many issues to unpack here, but Asubiaro et al. (2024) highlight the invisibility of Global South journals in the two main indexing databases, Scopus and Web of Science, as a demonstration of the geographical bias inherent in the scholarly communication system which must be understood by LIS graduates.

Political misrepresentation

Addressing political misrepresentation requires a LIS curriculum that engenders agency in the graduates to be in the forefront of changing the status quo – re-framing it. Thus, library education should adopt critical approaches where students actively interrogate the commodification of information, its credibility, and the impact of systemic biases on knowledge production. Critical approaches help students understand and challenge the power dynamics embedded in information systems, fostering a more equitable and just environment for scholarly communication. Further, critical approaches enable students to do the following, as outlined by Campbell and Sich (2023):

- Critiquing and probing positionality of knowledge in educational spaces
- Constructing an inclusive curriculum beyond dominant knowledge system, that is, including other knowledge systems
- Decolonising the environment to bring about relational teaching and learning, encouraging inclusiveness in teaching and learning

- Connecting institutions of learning with those in the community involved in decolonisation movement – exposing students to the colonisation discourse.

In the area of professional values and ethics, library education should emphasise the importance of professional values that align with social justice principles. This includes recognising the role of academic libraries as cultural institutions that can either perpetuate or challenge systemic inequalities. Educators should encourage librarians to engage in self-reflection and critical examination of their practices, ensuring that they do not inadvertently reinforce existing power structures. Mehra (2021) describes the use of critical pedagogies and reflective practice in 3 undergraduate courses covering the following topics: social justice and inclusion advocacy, diversity leadership in information organisations, and community engaged scholarship at the University of Alabama. Campbell and Sich (2023) describe the approach their team took in developing a decolonised LIS curriculum. They involved or co-created the curriculum with their students that revolved around five principles which constitute a decolonisation framework:

a. Grounding – interrogating the meaning of decolonisation and contextualising it to derive a common definition and a meeting of minds on the rationale of the project, and level of commitment.
b. Interrogation – involves interrogating the origins of the field and critiquing its impact on the modern knowledge system. Questioning its theories, concepts, institutions etc., and whether they stand.
c. New learning – involves a new understanding of the discipline through a consideration of perspectives from alternative ways of knowing.
d. Commitment - having reflected, this involves committing to making or effecting changes in the curriculum.
e. Rebuilding – the final writing of a new decolonised curriculum.

The result of this exercise yielded a curriculum that included 6 broad outcomes: Knowledge Justice, Critical Reflection, Searching, Identifying and Evaluating Sources, Responsible use of Knowledge, Creation and Dissemination of Knowledge.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) through the Building Strong LIS Education (BSLISE) has endorsed a framework for developing LIS programmes that recognise the role of library professionals in engendering social justice. They recognise that education and, by extension, LIS education are engaged in a process of decolonising teaching, learning and knowledge production (Chu et al., 2022).

They therefore assert that: “LIS, which engages all aspects of information, needs to integrate multiple ways of knowing in its education to prepare professionals to provide effective, equitable, inclusive, and accessible services appropriate to a diverse community and relevant to its local contexts in a globalised economy” (Chu et al., 2022). This is a clear call from an organisation that is in the forefront in promoting the quality of LIS education.

Challenges impeding the alignment of LIS curriculum

Notwithstanding recognition of the need for education and scholarly communication decolonisation, there remain challenges to the transformation of the LIS education in support of the decolonisation project. Birdi (2021) comments that despite calls to decolonise the university, it has been a challenge to understand where LIS education fits in. Whilst the need to decolonise or weave issues of social justice, decolonisation, and epistemic justice into the LIS curriculum is recognised, Campbell and Sich (2023) note that this has not been a wide-scale practice. Accordingly, they have found that while decolonised pedagogies have been introduced into teaching at individual levels, there has not been a widespread adoption of decolonised LIS education programmes. LIS education has been adept at incorporating technology into the curriculum, but not as much the issue of decolonisation (Birdi, 2021). But since the role of academic libraries in addressing decolonisation is acknowledged (Jiminez & Cox, 2023; Ocholla, 2020), it stands to reason that the LIS curriculum must be decolonised to, in turn inform and influence decolonisation of the library. Several challenges have been identified in efforts to realign LIS education.

The first is resistance to change, where LIS programs remain in their belief in traditional information retrieval methods and established databases. It is difficult to bring about change in a system that has been perceived to work for many years. Some see the decolonisation discourse as a fad, and others are apathetic about it. It is a system that has worked for those who have more power to change it and who are advantaged by it, leaving a few lone voices of those who have long been marginalised. However, the need for decolonisation is growing and may yet find its way into LIS education systematically.

The second is the fact that to fully realign a curriculum requires resources in the form of knowledge and expertise on the part of the faculty as well as requisite diverse course materials and these may not be available, especially in some countries in the Global South. Hence there is need for greater advocacy and conferences and workshops that aim to build up the resources required.

The third is uneven implementation where the changes are simply left to individuals as opposed to being a full system change effort. The integration of social justice aspects of library and information work are not even or universal, some programs may offer specific electives without deeper analysis. This may also be due to entrenched systemic barriers that make it difficult for change to be more evenly spread.

The fourth is the limited voices and documentation on the realignment efforts of the LIS curriculum in the Global South. The LIS Department at UCT has been very active in this area and continues to be so. Much of the literature from LIS schools in Africa, for example, centres around reviewing the LIS curriculum in terms of its alignment to global trends, with the focus being on ICTs, digitisation and artificial intelligence. The above notwithstanding, much has been written on the promotion of social justice by librarians through the promotion of culturally relevant collections reflective of the needs of the community; providing active outreach services to underserved communities; and providing information services that do not necessarily involve books and reading, but rather information relevant to empowerment and participation of communities, inclusive for all people. However, LIS curricula must come out clearly on the implementation of critical information literacy, critical LIS scholarship, staff and course materials diversity to ensure wider perspectives, and to include courses on social justice issues in information access and representation. Indeed, Dali and Caidi, cited in Birdi (2021) state:

> 'If every librarian or information professional inevitably finds themselves working in a diverse environment, why are courses on diversity not part of the LIS core curriculum? Every LIS program realizes the vitality and ubiquity of technology and offers core technology courses, despite the fact that not every LIS graduate will end up in a highly technology- saturated environment. At the same time, practically every LIS graduate will work in a diverse setting with diverse community members, regardless of the type of library or information technology (IT) setting. Yet, courses on diversity are not built into the core.' (Dali & Caidi, 2021, pp. 14-15).

Conclusion

This essay has situated a realigned LIS curriculum in the nexus between scholarly communications, social justice and decolonised education. The contention is that to achieve social justice in both scholarly communication and education, the education and practice of library and information professionals is critical. Given the importance of the academic library within higher education systems and the influence the LIS professionals wield in determining the nature of collections, their organisation, information literacy programmes, and the various services and products, it is imperative that their education be one that

gives them a deeper understanding of the underlying cultural and political structures that determine what is knowledge and who is knowledgeable.

This is important given the fact that both the scholarly communication and education systems do not lend themselves to a parity of participation, and they serve to entrench the extant cultural and political systems. It is however not enough to obtain a deeper understanding, and it is critical that this translates into advocacy and practical measures to decolonise the systems. This essay has distilled the measures into the affirmative and the transformative, and both are important in bringing about the required changes.

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