

Decolonising the Criminology Curriculum in South Africa: Views and Experiences of Lecturers and Postgraduate Students

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Abstract

For many years, the lived experiences, knowledge systems, and histories of previously colonised people have been misinterpreted, removed, and devalued by university teaching. The present curricula of African universities are predominantly Eurocentric, and Criminology is no exception. In the wake of the #RhodesMustFall student protest action, there is a recognition and need to include African epistemology within the discipline of Criminology. This paper reports on the views of lecturers and postgraduate students regarding the content, transformation, and decolonisation of Criminology curricula at South African universities. A total of 87 respondents, 42 lecturers and 45 postgraduate students, voluntarily participated in an online survey. Lecturers were purposively selected while postgraduate students were recruited via snowball sampling. Nearly all the respondents had heard of decolonisation before, with the majority of the academic staff members being aware of it prior to #RhodesMustFall. Respondents agreed that the Criminology curriculum needs to be decolonised, with statistically significant differences emanating between Black and White lecturers. Overall, the study shows that decolonisation and transformation have been debated for many years without meaningful translation in and changes to Criminology curricula.

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