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A Contextually Responsive Framework for Decolonizing Student Support at North-west University

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Abstract

This paper proposes a contextually responsive framework for decolonizing student support services at North-West University (NWU), South Africa. Drawing on critical decolonial theories and the university's strategic imperatives, the study's objective is to examine how NWU can transform its student support structures to authentically serve its diverse student population. The framework integrates three foundational principles: Ubuntu philosophy as a guiding ethos for communal responsibility; epistemic pluralism through formal integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS); and culturally responsive practices that transcend English-language hegemony. The methodology involved a qualitative content analysis of institutional documents, including the NWU strategy plan, and a review of decolonial literature. Results reveal that NWU's established multilingual policy and pioneering IKS initiatives uniquely position the institution to advance transformative support models. The proposed framework moves beyond superficial cultural accommodations toward fundamental restructuring of support paradigms that center African epistemologies and lived student experiences. The conclusion is that this research contributes to the broader decolonization discourse by offering a replicable model that balances theoretical rigor with practical implementation strategies, providing a pathway for other institutions seeking authentic decolonial transformation.

Keywords: Keywords: Decolonization, Ubuntu, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Student Support, Higher Education