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Defamiliarization in advancing a decolonial approach to global citizenship education

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Abstract The purpose of this article is to investigate whether defamiliarization used in schools by some preservice teachers during their teaching practice can be considered an appropriate decolonizing pedagogical practice for advancing global citizenship education (GCE). The research used a case study design, with data collected in the form of reflection essays from 11 preservice teachers during their teaching practice period. The findings indicate that the specific defamiliarization practice used by these teachers aided both them and their students, through a reflective and collaborative process, in recognizing and critiquing the hierarchical knowledge paradigm in the current school curriculum and consciously resisting epistemic violence. The defamiliarization practice increased participants' self-reflexivity and served as a pedagogy of dissensus. This is a novel study in that it accounts for the perceived benefits of defamiliarization in advancing certain aspects of critical GCE from the Global South.

Keywords Defamiliarization · Decoloniality · Global citizenship education · Pedagogy · South African schools · Teaching and learning

In South Africa, despite the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements calling over the past 8 years for free, decolonized higher education, the lack of curriculum transformation in schools has remained uncontested. Curriculum renewal in basic education in the country post-1994 has seen several education reforms, including the outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum, the National Curriculum Statement, and the Revised National Curriculum Statement—all of which were replaced in 2014 by the most recent Curriculum

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Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), whose stated purpose is to address the shortcomings of the former curricula. While curriculum transformation has been high on the South African government's agenda post-1994, no evidence suggests these reforms have begun to yield the desired democratic values espoused in current and past curricula (Jansen, 2017). The familiar top-down hierarchical approach to teaching and learning assessment practices remains prevalent in South African schools, commensurate with a rigid and prescriptive school curriculum (Waghid & Waghid, 2018).

A school curriculum that relies extensively on preparing school learners to be employees in the economic context both exacerbates and perpetuates undemocratic teaching and learning practices (Giroux, 2015). Western/European standards continue to be embedded in the South African curriculum and to dominate the country's educational settings (Heleta, 2016). In this context, one can argue that the rigid pedagogical control of teachers and learners, and of "legitimated" knowledge, via the current curriculum—which dictates what to teach, when to teach, and how to teach—has become routine practice in public schools. We agree with Le Grange's (2016) assessment of the failure by education researchers, policymakers, and educators to critically scrutinize the curriculum, its relevance to the contextual realities within the school and community environment, and its influence on learners' identities as Africans. Moreover, the expectation that school learners remain passive recipients of such a curriculum and regurgitate prescribed knowledge has rendered these learners silenced, marginalized, invisible, and erased (Amin et al., 2016). A curriculum that, in addition to prescribing knowledge and pedagogy, fails to cultivate deliberative engagement would seem to lack any understanding of education in itself being an encounter (Waghid et al., 2018).

What has not been explored in any depth is whether preservice teachers who enter schools in South Africa during teaching practice (i.e., a form of work-integrated learning) are adequately prepared not only for the realities of many South African classrooms but also for the curriculum's prescriptive nature and Western focus. In addition, expecting preservice teachers to adhere to a form of curriculum delivery that endorses traditional pedagogical approaches and teaching styles, commensurate with customary assessment practices, risks reproducing existing undemocratic classroom relations. How preservice teachers (re)conceptualize their understanding of democratic teaching practices is undoubtedly important. Considering these prospective teachers are envisaged by universities as necessary to helping (re)shape the pedagogical direction in schools, a critical pedagogical approach whose aim is to create conditions for the liberation of learners in a classroom would, in theory, be required to stimulate them to think and act with concern for all others, rather than purely as individuals.

The study documented in this article explored the defamiliarization of a group of preservice teachers from a higher education teacher training institution who were employed during their teaching practice period, and considers the potential of this as an appropriate decolonizing pedagogical practice for advancing global citizenship education (GCE). Defamiliarization through art and film seeks to extract entities from the habitual patterns of cognition by presenting the ordinary in an unrecognizable guise (Waghid & Hibbert, 2018; Waghid & Ontong, 2022). The essence of defamiliarization lies in compelling the imperative to disrupt specific realms, where objects are observed through a distinct and purposefully conscious lens, one that is novel and unfamiliar (Waghid, 2023). Based on a study conducted 5 years ago, we (i.e., the researchers and students) found this defamiliarization practice enabled students to look beyond received accounts of history and invested canons, by shifting their and their learners' attention toward a critical awareness of the curriculum's silence, which was characterized by an omission of historically marginalized cultures

and experiences (Waghid & Hibbert, 2018, p. 63). Defamiliarization can be said to have strong linkages with Freire's (2006) critical pedagogy, an approach that aims to deepen students' cultural, economic, social, and political awareness concerning identity and language, and to undermine hierarchical power structures that work to reproduce and maintain social injustices. The article responds to the following main question: In what ways can defamiliarization seek to advance a decolonial approach to critical GCE in South African schools?

South African education policy promoting the values of global citizenship

Post 1994, South African education policymakers proceeded to promote six fundamental values for good citizenship: equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability, and social honor (Department of Education [DoE], 2000). Three considerations of educational philosophy frame these values: (a) to cultivate students' intellectual capacities and critical faculties in schools; (b) to include the rich variety and diversity in culture, language, and the essential characteristics of citizenship; and (c) to equip students with the skills to adapt to the challenges of contemporary society (p. 1).

Ten core values further corroborate the six fundamental values of good citizenship in the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy*, a document founded on the ideologies informing the South African Constitution (DoE, 2001). The manifesto contains suggestions for ways to promote these values through the current educational system, through 10 core values: democracy, social justice, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, *ubuntu* (human dignity), an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect, and reconciliation (p. 1). The manifesto expands the purpose of education beyond serving the market to include serving society by instilling in students a broad sense of values from both the humanities and the sciences.

The manifesto (DoE, 2001) outlines several approaches toward developing in students the democratic values considered by policymakers to be necessary for the learning environment and to be developed through the school curriculum—values the authors of this article see as essential to achieving GCE. These include cultivating the essential knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes in students for developing good citizenship. The introduction to CAPS contains six main statements of intent regarding the commitment of the curriculum. The first is to achieve universal numeracy and literacy, not solely by students' developing these essential skills but also by fostering their capacity to think critically. The second commitment is to infuse the classroom with "a culture of human rights" (p. 4). This means that integrating a culture of human rights should extend beyond mentioning human rights in the CAPS introduction to including a disruption of pedagogical approaches that work to silence students' voices.

The third commitment is to integrate "arts and culture" in the curriculum (DoE, 2001, p. 4)—in other words, to create spaces in the classroom to empower students through the emancipation of their imagination and the cultivation of the skills they need to express themselves creatively. The fourth is to [re]integrate history into the curriculum. This is premised on the notion that [re]orienting students to history as a social science is central to promoting human values, such as tolerance and morality, and to developing a depth of knowledge and consciousness. Localization is a further way of equipping students with a practical sense of how to address social injustice, the abuse of human rights, and unsustainable development in South Africa.

The fifth commitment, to teach religious education, aligns with the Constitution's guarantee of the right to equality and non-discrimination based on religious freedom, freedom of belief, thought, and conscience (DoE, 2001). As a strategy for adoption in both hidden and written curricula, the manifesto affirms that integrating interfaith religious education—Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and other faiths—into the curriculum is a means of [re]affirming the values of compassion, commitment, diversity, respect, tolerance, and justice. By implication, this educational strategy would seem to balance the unfamiliar with the familiar in ways that could enable students to develop novel insights into both of these (p. 33).

The last commitment is to integrate multilingualism into the curriculum and the classroom. This is considered an essential constitutional right and pedagogically significant, and has been linked to students acquiring knowledge most effectively and efficiently when learning in their mother tongue (DoE, 2001). It is also in line with the South African government's economic policy and the National Development Plan, and includes the crucial transformation and unity goal of ensuring that all South Africans are encouraged to learn at least one of the 11 official African languages (Republic of South Africa, 2011, p. 72).

Theoretical underpinnings to a decolonial approach to critical GCE

Mignolo (2006) called for a "decoloniality of being and knowledge" when new laws and public policies fail to bring about transformation (p. 323). Decoloniality requires a disruption or decolonizing of the mindset of individuals and requires that they understand the historical roots that have formed their beliefs and sensibilities. Decoloniality in this sense lends considerable weight to human agency through self-liberation and transformation by exploring liberatory alternatives to neoliberalism, globalization, and laissez-faire capitalism (El Bouhali, 2015). Uncritical discussion of such ideological and economic systems risks perpetuating inequality in the context of colonial relations (Bosio, 2021). Our study explored a decolonial approach to GCE by creating spaces to empower individuals to disrupt hegemonic power structures that work to maintain global inequality and economic injustice. This requires a reorientation of one's thinking and acting outside such hegemonic systems of power (Mignolo, 2006).

Andreotti (2011) argued for the appropriateness of "soft" GCE to specific contexts. However, she considered soft GCE alone to be insufficient for engaging with the assumptions of teachers' pedagogical practices, because the risk of reproducing the systems of belief and practice carries potential harm to those who ought to be supported: the learners. A critical GCE that advances transformative change is not about telling learners what they should think or do but instead about cultivating space for them to critically analyze and experiment with other forms, and the interconnectedness, of knowledge. Critical GCE emphasizes the cultural production of knowledge and power to empower learners to make informed decisions instead of imposing ideologies and beliefs on them.

For Andreotti (2011), critical GCE through decoloniality emphasizes specific approaches. The first approach requires that educators encounter other epistemologies and social movements (p. 395). Stein and Andreotti (2016) argued that higher education institutions continue to reproduce an epistemological hierarchy that assumes the universal value and relevance of Western knowledge, while non-Western knowledge is either condescendingly celebrated as "local culture"; appropriated; commodified for Western gain; or worse, unrecognized (p. 3). The second approach involves a strong curricular emphasis on the geopolitics of knowledge production (epistemic violence), one that enables learners

to face "abyssal lines" and work through their unmaking (Andreotti, 2011, p. 395). Santos (2007) called for post-abyssal thinking as necessary for learning in the "South through an epistemology of the South" (p. 55). Andreotti (2011), drawing on the thoughts of Santos, contended that post-abyssal thinking should confront the mono-epistemicism of "this side" of the abyssal line, with an ecology of knowledge (p. 391). An ecology of knowledge also aims to promote interaction and interdependence between scientific and non-scientific knowledge.

The third approach involves developing hyper-self-reflexivity (vigilance above and beyond conventional self-reflexivity), which means learning to disrupt one's mindset by unlearning dominant knowledge paradigms and representation (Kapoor, 2004). One learns to unlearn and re-learn through a practice involving breaking free from, for instance, Western/European ideology concerning the ways we function in society. Fourth is a pedagogical emphasis on "dissensus" for students to develop their capacity to hold paradoxes without being overwhelmed by ambiguity, conflict, complexity, uncertainty, and difference. Säfström (2011) described a pedagogy of dissensus as the contesting of a hierarchy that silences individuals in educational contexts. This pedagogy strives to create conditions for the equality of relationships between individuals in discourses by probing with the question "What do you think differently?" (p. 102).

The last approach involves (re)imagining GCE beyond ethnocentrism and absolute relativism (i.e., viewing knowledge systems as homogeneous, static, and independent). Andreotti (2011) acknowledged the challenges of this approach, and the need for knowledge, critical insight, and approaches from a Southern perspective to serve as a point of departure to transcend and move beyond ethnocentric and absolute relativist discourses. In sum, a decolonial approach to GCE would enable students to undertake analyses of their preconceptions, group and individual identities, and perceptions related to the complexities of local and global structures (Bosio, 2021).

Methodology

This research followed a case study design to both explore and describe the data in a real-life context, and to explain the complexities of real-life situations (Zainal, 2007). The interpretive paradigm was considered appropriate for understanding the particular context, based on the core principle that reality is socially constructed (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Our qualitative approach was to acquire a deep and nuanced understanding of the sampled preservice teachers' perspectives on their use of defamiliarization during teaching practice. It was also to ascertain the extent to which defamiliarization could be considered appropriate for advancing critical GCE through decoloniality, and from a Global South perspective.

Data collection and procedures

The sample population was generated from preservice teachers in the Faculty of Education. Reflective essays were purposively selected from a total of 11 preservice teachers ($n = 11$). Despite the small sample size, a single case participant has been seen as sufficient to provide reliable indications for future research directions (Boddy, 2016).

Data were collected from the reflection essays that formed part of an assignment on participants' use of defamiliarization as a teaching strategy during their teaching practice.

For the first part of the assignment, the preservice teachers required their school learners to artistically illustrate how they saw themselves as Africans in the global world. The following questions assisted the preservice teachers in constructing their essays about their observations and reflections on the influence of defamiliarization on their learners' knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes toward and experiences of the current school curriculum:

- What were the learners' responses and attitudes toward the activity before and after it was completed?
- Comment on the illustrations done by the learners—for example, were the illustrations generally positive or negative regarding the probing question about how they saw themselves as Africans in the global world?
- What else happened that might be important to the question of, for example, their identities, perceptions, or life experiences?
- What do the differences between the curriculum and the learners' own knowledge and experiences in the course of the activity, and in their own lives, suggest about changes to the existing curriculum that may be needed to adapt it to place African knowledge at its center rather than in the margins?

The responses were analyzed, and themes were developed in line with the theoretical underpinnings of decoloniality, using qualitative content analysis, which is seen as able to provide new insights and understandings about a particular phenomenon (Krippendorff, 2018). The responses were further coded, in several instances using the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), ATLAS.ti. CAQDAS provides researchers with the opportunity to manage large amounts of text efficiently and effectively through ease of access to the coded material (García-Horta & Guerra-Ramos, 2009).

From the essays, we extracted sentences that described participants' perspectives and encounters with their learners, and the benefits they perceived their learners derived from defamiliarization, while at the same time maintaining the meaning, context, and original words. After establishing interrater reliability, and before coding all the responses in line with the theoretical underpinnings of decoloniality, we coded and verified the data separately. In instances of disagreement, we continued discussions until we reached agreement on the particular themes that were developing.

We consider this research to be exploratory, as its purpose was not to generalize the results but to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' responses from their reflection essays. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. The participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty of Education's Ethics Research Committee, and ethical considerations were consistently adhered to throughout.

Findings

The need to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems into the school curriculum

Several preservice teachers' responses indicated their view that the current school curriculum continues to significantly favor Western/European knowledge. They saw the defamiliarization practice as assisting them in the process of recognizing the need to disrupt this dominant knowledge paradigm. Individual participants, such as AD,

appreciated the need to recognize and engage with the history of other countries. AD pointed out the risk inherent in the current curriculum's failure to recognize cultures and history from an African perspective by continuing to position the local context as irrelevant or marginally relevant:

> I understand that it is important to know about other countries and what has happened in those countries, but if you do not know anything about your country and your culture, then all of the information and facts that you were taught about all the countries around the world become irrelevant, because you need to start with yourself before you can move on and get to know every other country better.

NF corroborated the need for the curriculum to extend beyond Western epistemologies, in the form of teaching about African values and ideals, and more specifically, integrating Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). NF argued for the integration of IKS for developing a greater understanding and appreciation for Africa:

> We need to teach our learners to value the ideas presented by "African" individuals instead of focusing on Western theory and approaches to teach our children. Placing African knowledge at the center, we are teaching learners with what they are accustomed to and with the things that they can see in their own environment. To teach from the known to the unknown. If the curriculum were to teach Indigenous knowledge systems first, and then all the rest, a lot of the learners today will have a better understanding and appreciation for Africa.

EC, together with her learners, was able to recognize the value of disrupting the dominant knowledge paradigm by integrating locally produced knowledge. AD also remarked on the effect of the absence of African knowledge on the identities of some of her learners, manifested by their initial lack of appropriate response to and insufficient probing of the question:

> The learners argued the curriculum planners should contribute to the project of redressing and infusing the content of the curriculum with the wealth of knowledge that originates from local communities. (EC)

> The South African curriculum needs to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the school curriculum. This refers to learners being taught the knowledge systems embedded in the cultural traditions of regional, indigenous, or local communities. I feel the reason why the learners may have struggled, or found the activity difficult at the beginning of the lesson, is that they lack that knowledge and understanding of what it means to be an African. (AD)

The discovery by EC and AD of their learners' attitudes to and perspectives of the curriculum resonate with the call by Stein and Andreotti (2016) for Indigenous epistemologies and horizontal collaborative encounters with local communities. The findings of our study indicate the defamiliarization practice developed learners' epistemological resistance toward the curriculum's dominant knowledge paradigm (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Although EC's and AD's learners did not reject the Western/European curriculum content, they did express the need for local knowledge integration.

Recognition of epistemic violence through the school curriculum

Participants placed a strong emphasis on the disruption of the geopolitics of knowledge production (epistemic violence) that occurs through the language and Western values embedded in the curriculum. The results appeared to confirm that defamiliarization helped learners develop an awareness of the weighting of Western knowledge/values and the lack of IKS in the curriculum. It can be inferred that the defamiliarization activity/process empowered the learners at NG's school with the capacity to talk from the "other side of the line" (Santos, 2007, p. 47):

> The learners felt like the South African education was failing them, because the curriculum that they are taught is Eurocentric, which mean they are taught about Western values; African values are not included in the curriculum, but they are living in African and they should be taught in African language, not in English, because English is a foreign language to them.

CG's more radical view was that decolonizing the school curriculum requires the removal of all Western/European content, replacing it with African knowledge. CG reported that her learners' critique of the rationale and relevance of the current school curriculum was based on how it related to their future work environment. CG saw her learners' concern for how they themselves would benefit, or not, as signifying their primary focus on gains for them as individuals:

> The curriculum should be decolonized by removing all European content from the curriculum and putting more emphasis on South African or African content. For example, as an English major, and when I taught literature on teaching practice, the learners would always ask why is it important for them to understand Shakespeare's work, and the question/s that normally follows is "How is this going to benefit them after school when they enter the workforce?" I normally struggle to answer this but urge the learners to get back to the content at hand.

CG's call for a total rejection of knowledge outside the African context contrasts with Santos' (2007) call for an ecology of knowledge, wherein scientific knowledge (in this case, Western/European knowledge) should not be discredited but instead be promoted through interaction and interdependence with African knowledge. We agree with Santos' position that a total rejection of Western/European knowledge, including scientific knowledge, further risks producing a nationalist or essentialist discourse and perpetuating an internal colonial divide (Grosfoguel, 2002).

The results also indicate the limited exposure of learners to the African ethic of *ubuntu*. MM was critical of the curriculum imposing a limit on learners thinking beyond individualism. MM found learners not always able to consider the impact of their own actions on the environment and their community. Such respect requires tracing learned habits and unlearning dominant ways of knowledge and representation—that is, individualism (Kapoor, 2004)—as a means of disrupting epistemic violence:

> Taking care of the environment is one of our important aspects as Africans; however, learners are not well and don't see the need to take care of the environment. The curriculum should therefore change and give focus to the philosophy of ubuntu, because it is where they are going to be taught of taking care of the environment, taking care

> of one another. If you see someone struggling, even if it's economically, you assisted him/her, even if he/she has a business idea and you have the ability to assist in any way, then you do so to enhance the economy and standard of this continent. Learners don't like working in groups because they lack the spirit of ubuntu, not knowing you cannot fully succeed on your own.

For CJ, historicizing the curriculum was one possible approach to disrupting epistemic violence:

> Many of the learners who also do history as a subject had more knowledge about Africa and its background and history, which allowed them an advantage in this activity. Therefore, I feel that in my opinion the curriculum and teaching methodology should consist of more African influence and presence.

While integrating history, specifically African history, into the curriculum is relevant to what these students were reflecting on, CJ did not explain its importance in instilling the human values the manifesto (DoE, 2001) advocates for: tolerance, morality, and critical awareness of the past. CJ's comment concerning the advantage that certain learners who were taking history as a subject may have had was limited to the inclusion of African history. She did not reflect on the specific ways in which this could assist them in developing critical perspectives of historical and ideological reasons for Western/European knowledge being integrated into the current curriculum. Nor did she speculate on the possibility that particular learners did not know how to engage in debate around contentious topics beyond the curriculum, or in what ways their knowledge of history may have broadened their perspectives. These findings indicate that some preservice teachers did not perceive the problem as simply caused by poverty or helplessness, as soft GCE approaches aimed to uncover, or that the problem arose through inequality and epistemic violence enacted through the dominant Western/European knowledge paradigm. Andreotti (2006) postulated this awareness is developed through critical GCE.

Preservice teachers' and learners' heightened self-reflexivity

The results indicated the defamiliarization practice heightened the critical awareness of some but not all of the participants and of some learners. According to NF, the practice extended one learner's awareness of being a global citizen and heightened NF's awareness of the need to look beyond the dominant narratives and to internalize what she as an individual was able to do to enact transformative change:

> One of the learners personally came to thank me. According to him, I opened up the door to the global world and he is slowly starting to feel like a global citizen. As I reflected on the day it hit me, we sometimes get so caught up in the bad, the negative, and the ugly we start to think that this is all that there is. Instead, acknowledge that this is what is happening, but what can I do? How can I help to make a difference? And that's a question I too lack at asking.

Several participants were in agreement about the benefits to their learners' heightened consciousness, critical and independent thinking, and collaboration. One could see how these potential benefits resonated with Andreotti's (2006) implications of critical GCE.

CJ attributed the enhancement of her learners' capacity to work independently and collaboratively as member(s) of a community to the defamiliarization practice. This could be attributed to the activity initially requiring students to work independently, and thereafter to engage in group discussions:

> The skills that the learners obtained after completing the activity were critical thinking, collaboration, and reflection because they had to apply independence, productivity, and responsibility to complete an activity. The learners had to work on their own by taking responsibility for their work, and practice the ability to work independently without assistance or guidance. They collaborated with each other to brainstorm and communicate their own opinions and thoughts, which became their own personal self-reflections.

TNL reported that the practice assisted her learners in reflecting on their positions in relation to how they could apply themselves to tasks: "Learners have gained a better perspective of where they are now and where they come from, and how and what can be done to improve the way that they think, and apply it to future tasks".

EC reported on specific learners offering solutions to economic growth through Africa's capacity for independent production instead of relying on developed nations to provide finished products. They were aware of the opportunities available in Africa through entrepreneurship and innovation commensurate with the abundance of natural resources:

> Some of the learners argued that Africa as a continent should only industrialized [sic] in order not to rely on importing all the products for consumption from other continents. They argued that Africa has a huge opportunity to … implement ideas of entrepreneurship innovations, for it to help the youth. Africa is rich with resources; all that is needed is utilizing the natural resources and developing the continent.

Learning to unlearn and re-learn means breaking free from contemporary society's individualist ideology and exploring alternative practices. LJ corroborated this concerning the need to encourage learners' capacity to learn the importance of "contribution and not consumption, humility and not arrogance, confidence not dependence, collaboration not competition, and lastly compassion and not selfishness". LJ was of the view that the current educational system fails to develop learners' criticality, that this system "wants conformity and control". LJ summed up the effects of the defamiliarization practice: it generally heightens preservice teachers' and learners' awareness of the need to disrupt the individualistic frame of mind influencing their roles in both the classroom and in their communities; this starts, as Andreotti (2006) maintained, by recognizing that one is both part of the problem and part of the solution.

Defamiliarization enabled dissensus

The results indicated defamiliarization and the participants' reflections enabled dissensus for some preservice teachers. LJ found defamiliarization created the space for him to think differently and enabled an environment in which his learners could think critically. LJ's comment on the environment could be linked to the rigid school curriculum that, in most instances, does not allow for the engagement of learners with their teachers on an equal basis:

> This tasked [sic] allowed me as an aspiring teacher to think differently and encourage the learners to develop critical thinking. It also broadens my spectrum in terms of the classroom environment, and what you as a teacher can bring to the classroom on different levels besides the prescribed curriculum in which one don't always have to adhere to on a daily basis, but bring a task to the classroom in this form would develop learners on other spectrums as well as not restricting learners to a conform prescribed knowledge.

This was corroborated by TNL, who saw the current school curriculum as tending to make learners conform to traditional "chalk and talk" teaching and learning styles, which offer few opportunities for learners, because of a lack of exposure to contentious topics, to think more deeply and to hold paradoxes. TNL emphasized that her learners were able to express themselves creatively through defamiliarization, which resulted in a mind shift on their part:

> I would raise my opinion by stating that our learners are limited when it comes to being exposed to controversial topics; our learners are deprived of so many things that could broaden their horizons. The learners were bemused by the activity as it was something other than the ordinary teacher explanations and question and answer type of lessons. They were allowed to let go of their creative juices on paper by illustrating how they felt after they have brainstormed amongst their peers, having a mind shift from the known to the unknown.

Despite several participants advocating for defamiliarization as a means of enabling their learners to think critically, others expressed uncertainty regarding their learners' heritage, as ME described: "For me, the feedback of the question that I got was more negatively. The learners felt that they don't really have a heritage to base they knowledge on; therefore they couldn't express they thoughts on the topic properly". This uncertainty may be linked to these learners being accustomed to a Western/Eurocentric curriculum whose focus/content tended to obliterate their own heritage/knowledge. Andreotti (2006) highlighted this: one of the problems with critical GCE is its potential to create internal conflict, critical disengagement, or a feeling of helplessness. This was MM's experience. She observed a level of emotion among her learners during the defamiliarization activity:

> After the activity was done, the learners were in a different mode; they were very emotional and angry. Reason being most of them were viewing themselves in a global world as the subordinates of the richer continents: from education to culture everything is being influenced from the outside not within. As a result, they viewing themselves as a sad continent that does not have a stand or a say in the global world. This led to feeling like they are useless currently in this world, therefore change must take place and it should start from them.

According to MM, these learners attributed this sense of uncertainty to the dominant Eurocentric knowledge paradigm, and their sense of "uselessness" to notions of cognitive damage. Although, according to preservice teachers, some learners had feelings of uncertainty, others, such as CG, alluded to the influence of the defamiliarization practice on their learners' ability to think differently and not be overwhelmed by uncertainty. CG reported that

defamiliarization "sparked a debate in the class" and led learners to reaffirm their proud heritage:

> I also had to admit to the learners that, even though the activity seems strange, it is important to recognize how they see themselves because people from other countries' opinions do not matter if they understand where they come from and why their identity holds importance to the world as a whole. This sparked a debate in the class and the learners fed of [sic] my words as they added that they are proud of their heritage, and if they were somewhere else in the world and saw South Africans they would probably think, "It must be cool to live in South Africa".

This was vindicated by JL, who reported that certain learners consistently started to think differently—for instance, by questioning the rationale for the negative or deficit classification of groups in the global context instead of reaching a consensus on being treated as human: "The main question that kept popping up and was on the minds of the students was 'why do they have to be classified as Africans in the global world, and why can't they just be classified as human?'"

The findings suggest the effectiveness of defamiliarization in creating conditions for equal and reciprocal relationships between preservice teachers and their learners to encourage learners to think differently (Säfström, 2011). Despite several participants agreeing on the rigidity of the curriculum, defamiliarization seemed to have enabled learners to function as subjects instead of as mere objects or empty vessels needing to be filled with knowledge. The findings further corroborate Andreotti's (2006) view of critical GCE approaches promoting engagement between teachers and learners around complexity and power relations.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings indicated that, for the most part, the pedagogical practice developmentally benefitted both preservice teachers and learners. The practice assisted them in recognizing the hierarchical knowledge paradigm in the current school curriculum and led them to resist epistemic violence. Defamiliarization heightened the self-reflexivity of teachers and learners and functioned as a pedagogy of dissensus.

The implications of this research for critical GCE are threefold. First, we advocate for education departments, policymakers, and educators to critically scrutinize the curriculum in the context of the Global South and the need for teachers and learners to develop a critical awareness of, as well as to explore, alternative knowledge paradigms. Developing a Freirean *conscientização* is an essential aspect of critical GCE but does not mean excising curriculum content for the sake of decolonization. Being conscious involves developing a critical awareness and a way to appreciate one's culture, history, language, and identity. All of these elements emerged from our participants' and their learners' responses to, and discussions during, the defamiliarization activity.

Second, critical GCE should consistently cultivate ubuntu, a value system we see as helping preservice teachers and their future learners become aware of the need to disrupt individualism in their learning environment and in their communities. While learning about African knowledge can be seen as necessary and desirable, the need for students and learners to engage in the practical aspects of ubuntu can, in the context of African/South African GCE, be seen as equally desirable. We envisage learners coming to value the diverse

nature of others and not defining themselves as individuals detached from and not responsible for society/others. This leads to an accountability and openness toward others. Seeing oneself as part of the problem can lead to developing in oneself the need to transform problems through plausible, agreed-upon solutions as part of a community. Thus, through critical engagement with their teachers and peers, learners begin to transcend neoliberal notions of simply serving the market, and develop a broader sense of those values linked to responsible and ethical decision-making. These moral qualities develop through ubuntu if individuals listen with empathy to others' lived experiences.

Third, defamiliarization offers ways for learners to [re]learn engagement with others, and for teachers to be aware of the silences in the curriculum, which marginalizes learners and reproduces hierarchical classroom power relations. Thus, we argue for unlearning traditional pedagogical practices through defamiliarization, for teachers being able to explore alternatives to traditional teaching styles, and for learners being encouraged to value tolerance and respect for others' opinions. We see a pedagogical practice that balances the familiar with the unfamiliar, invoking informed, in-depth, and creative capacities to reimagine an African curriculum.

In conclusion, in terms of limitations to this study, the extent to which the current school curriculum maintains elements of soft GCE, and how this relates to or could articulate critical GCE, is not included. Further studies may explore ways in which the schools and teacher education curricula in other developing countries in Africa are, or are not, advancing critical GCE. A similar study may explore current critical GCE approaches being employed in schools in the Global South, including how they compare to those in the Global North. Given the study's small sample size, further research may consider a large-scale comparative study of ways other universities in developing countries in the Global South are using a GCE curriculum to prepare preservice teachers for the school context, and to what extent such a curriculum could or should develop critical thinking.

While we consider this study to be a novel one, we do not see it as decisive in the advancement of decoloniality. This article is intended to contribute to establishing a basis for a process of curriculum renewal that focuses on critical GCE through an alternative pedagogy—one we propose is contextually relevant to addressing the complex challenges we face in the South African educational context and in the global environment.

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