Conceptualising a decolonial praxis for inducting new academics as postgraduate research supervisors in the Higher Education institutions of the Global South

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ABSTRACT

Historically, postgraduate supervision practices have been marginalised within the context of induction regimes as it is regarded as an extension of academic staff's roles. This has led to poor induction agendas that caters for supervisors' development, often forcing them to rely on their own supervisory experiences. Current supervision practices are rooted in Western approaches of knowledge creation, which suggest epistemic power imbalances and colonial legacies. This article advocates for a shift towards a decolonial praxis through conceptualising research supervision practices that are grounded in the lived realities of Higher Education Institutions in the Global South. It draws on decolonial theory and epistemic justice principles to foster socially just research supervision. This approach foregrounds supervision as a collaborative effort that give voice to indigenous epistemologies, critical reflexivity and collective learning. The article aims to transform research supervision by adopting a decolonial approach to address power imbalances and colonial legacies. The framework positions guidelines for Higher Education Institutions in support of inducting new academics as postgraduate research supervisors and contributes to the discourse on decolonial academic development while addressing an underrepresented aspect of academic induction.

Keywords: Decolonial research praxis, decolonial research supervision, postgraduate research supervision, transformative research supervision

INTRODUCTION

The traditional induction of academic staff at universities follows a structured, procedural approach to integrate new academic personnel into the university context. The purpose of induction practices is centred around, and rests on institutional processes, resources and expectations. Induction approaches have historically been guided by a multifaceted strategy

that comprise information sessions, mentoring, and networking engagement to support new academics in the university context as they prepare for teaching roles and administrative responsibilities. Sutherland (2018) asserts this and highlights that academic development should broaden its focus to include all aspects of the academic role, inclusive of research, service, administration, and leadership.

Ndebele (2013) suggests that information sessions are designed to provide new academic staff with essential information about the university's policies, procedures, and resources. Mathieson (2011) asserts that to understand the strategic objectives of the university, new academics to familiarise themselves with institutional policies, procedures, and compliance requirements whilst aligning with their personal teaching philosophies with departmental and institutional goals. These sessions are further characteristic of institutional teaching practices, administrative duties and procedures, and support services. Moreover, mentoring forms a critical component of induction programmes at university where experiences members of faculty, guide and support new colleagues through the initial stages at the university (Sánchez-Tarazaga et al 2022).

Mentorship further supports teaching practices as it allows new academics to navigate the university teaching and learning environment, and to develop teaching skills for the university classroom. Matope and Baleni (2023) maintain that a focus on teaching and learning, curriculum and developing are crucial aspects of new academics' induction to support pedagogical skills training for effective teaching practices, especially in instances where faculty members may lack formal training in these domains. New academic staff are introduced to colleagues across departments, faculties and disciplines, to create a sense of community and belonging where sharing of experiences and best practices are facilitated (Ndebele 2013). This further supports institutional culture, and promotes engagement and retention, and comprise the values, beliefs, and practices unique to each university's academic environment (Pedraja-Rejas Rodríguez-Ponce and Labraña 2022). Induction processes and procedures however fall short of supervision as pedagogy and identity formation of new academics.

This is a multifaceted process that is yet to be explored fully in academic literature globally, and in particular the Global South. Cuenca (2010) argues that supervision as a pedagogy should be interactive and tailored to specific learning environments of supervisees. This approach demands supervisors to demonstrate care, thoughtfulness, and tact which allows them to address the contextual needs of student teachers (Cuenca 2010). Considering the concept of a pedagogy of supervision, Fataar (2014) explains that supervisors should leverage relational engagement with students to enhance their knowledgeability and intellectual

contributions which is important during induction practices of new academics. Postgraduate supervision is a core function of new academic staff and requires attention towards the development of future researchers and professionals. It directly affects the quality and effectiveness of postgraduate training programmes.

Postgraduate supervisors render academic guidance and skills development to postgraduate students as a key responsibility through the identification of feasible research topics, development of study protocols and overseeing research processes to ensure completion of projects (Katowa-Mukwato 2023). Postgraduate supervision further involves preparing students for future professional roles as research and related skills are transferred to students (van Rensburg, Mayers and Roets 2016). It is important that induction agendas reflect supervision as a core component to support academics to possess expertise and commitment to guide students through the complexities of research, which include methodology, writing, and critical thinking (Oguntibeju 2024). Postgraduate supervision practices are characteristic of ethical dimensions, relational aspects, and epistemic works. It does not only require the transfer of knowledge and skills but afford students with opportunities to develop their intellectual identity and integrity. The process of postgraduate supervision further consists of complex properties that encapsulates personal, cultural, and academic factors that influence the student researcher's development as scholar.

Supervisors are responsible for guiding students to maintain the integrity of research, while ensuring that their completed work adheres to established ethical standards (Hirsh Adler and Izarra Vielma 2024). Hamid et al (2025) explain that this will require supervisors to navigate boundaries of researchable work, and to ensure that supervision practices do not exploit, or disadvantage students. Productive supervisory relationships are built on mutual respect, trust, and open communication (Fataar 2014; van Rensburg et al 2016) and involves relation engagement which necessitates an understanding of students' personal and cultural background which may foreground and influence their preferred learning and research processes. Supervision practices are inherently epistemic as it involves the integration of students into academic communities and supporting them to navigate the epistemological challenges of their research through accessing theoretical and analytical tools (Fataar 2014; Pillay 2024; Bitzer 2011). It also features the students' development of their scholarly voice, and their ability to engage critically with existing knowledge and contribute original insights to their field.

New academics are often tasked with supervision duties without formal induction, which present with significant challenges for both supervisor and supervisee. A primary concern

according to Pather (2022) and Amundsen and McAlpine 2011) is that new academic supervisors rely heavily on their own experiences as students, or informal mentoring from colleagues, to support and guide postgraduate students through the research process. Amundsen and McAlpine 2011) maintains that given the multifaceted role of supervision, induction programmes should consider skills in mentorship, conflict resolution, and academic guidance. Supervisors are often required to alternate, and balance between high teaching loads, parallel to their supervision duties, which can lead to stress and a reliance on trial-and-error (Motshoane 2023).

Research supervision in the Global South is deeply rooted in colonial legacies, power asymmetries and epistemic hierarchies. Colonial legacies for example, are characterised by master-apprentice dynamics, which not only demonstrate the hierarchical nature of supervision, but can further perpetuate epistemic injustice as it can marginalise non-Western knowledge systems while reinforcing the dominance of Western epistemologies (Dineen, Thelen and Santucci 2024; Frick 2022). Gunasekara (2020) and Flint et al (2022) add that these power asymmetries often result in the Global South being relegated to a subordinate role in knowledge production in comparison to the Global North. This article seeks to fill a notable gap in current knowledge by focusing on the induction practices of new academics as postgraduate supervisors in the Higher Education Institutions of the Global South. The article further argues for the conceptualisation of a decolonial praxis for inducting new academics as postgraduate research supervisors in the Global South.

This conceptual article considers the current and existing literature of traditional academic induction process which marginalizes postgraduate supervision within specific academic contexts. It views postgraduate research supervision as an epistemic, ethical and pedagogical practice, and draws on decolonial theory and epistemic justice as a conceptual foundation for inducting new academics as postgraduate supervisors. The article provisions a conceptual framework to induct new supervisors and concludes with considerations of the practicality of the proposed four principles especially in Higher Education Institutions in South Africa, and the Global South.

ACADEMIC INDUCTION AND THE MARGINALISATION OF POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

Higher Education Institutions are responsible for the induction of new academics to ensure their alignment with the institutions' process and procedures. Institutions adopt their own methodology and devise their focus to induct new staff. This is guided by models of induction which are either competency-based, performative, or compliance driven, which showcase the dominant frameworks used to induct academic staff. Institutions of higher learning employ competency-based induction models to develop specific skills and abilities that are deemed necessary for academic staff to perform effectively in their roles. ChaaCha (2024) explain that these modules include pedagogical skills, personal efficiency and organisational competencies to enable academic staff to effectively navigate the Higher Education environment.

Ngoc and Duong (2025) add that institutions that implement these frameworks, align staff development with the institution's strategic objectives through the utilisation of job analysis and competency dictionaries to guide recruitment and training. To maintain the quality and competitiveness of Higher Education Institutions, Kryštof and Adamec (2025) suggest that a unified and sustainable system with regularly updated competency models is implemented. Performative models are centred around institutional and staff members' performance outcomes, which are linked to development initiatives to effectively measure objectives and strategic goals. To ensure that academic staff meet institutional standards and protocols, compliance-driven models are implemented which emphasise adherence to institutional policies and regulatory requirements.

Trowler and Knight (1999) claim that induction processes are navigated by organisational socialisation theories which emphasise the importance of staff alignment with institutional culture and expectations. Institutions of Higher Learning are, in addition to the direction of induction models, influenced by neoliberal factors. These include audit cultures, productivity, and throughput within the university structures. Đuković (2019) explain that neoliberalism reshaped Higher Education through the marketing of rationality and economic growth which has led to universities being commercialised and privatised. Martin-Sardesai et al (2024) adds that some universities have adopted these practices that support commercial agendas and performance metrics.

To ensure that universities enforce accountability and performance measurements, audit cultures are implemented which often robs staff from academic freedom and creativity. This transforms the Higher Education environment into bureaucracy as teaching, learning, and research are measured against standardised models (Gair, Hager and Herzog 2021; Parker,

Guthrie and Martin-Sardesai 2024). Olssen and Peters (2005) also indicate that neoliberal policies increase pressure on academic staff, to ensure quantifiable outputs which often lead to an overemphasis on quantity over quality in teaching, learning, and research practices. This unfortunately forces a culture where academics are compelled to engage in work activities, as Galuppo, Ripamonti and Lozza (2024) outline, as pointless but necessary for compliance and to meet audit requirements. The research supervision process is often characterised by learning by doing, as it assumes competence and invisible labour. The intersection of these aspects is important towards developing effective and competent supervisors while ensuring favourable research outputs.

Maistry (2017) explains that novice supervisors often engage in learning research supervising by doing which involves simultaneous research practice engagement and student teaching, guidance and mentorship. This two-fold role can be risky as novice supervisors are tasked to carefully maintain a balance between obtaining personal research skills, while guiding students through the research process. It must however be noted that experiential learning and reflection is crucial for supervision competence development which enables supervisors to effectively integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application (Szecsödy 2012).

Lee (2007) warns that an implicit assumption exists that supervisors possess the necessary competence to guide postgraduate students during, and through the research process. This could lead to challenges pertaining to early-career research who may lack formal research supervision training. In addition, Lee (2007) also points out that supervision is compounded by demands such as adapting to fast-paced changes in knowledge and meeting expectations of funding bodies and employers. Research supervision possesses invisible labour that often goes unnoticed. Reid (2021) asserts that these are more prevalent among female academics where efforts such as mentorship and emotional support are undervalued and unrecognised. These aspects are important to ensure student success but disproportionately burden faculty members (Reid 2021).

Postgraduate research supervisors supervise as they were previously supervised. This suggests an overreliance on personal lived experiences and confirms the learning by doing and doing by learning approach. This approach confirms the existence and implementation of traditional supervision models that reflect Eurocentric norms that only prioritise Western epistemologies and methodologies (Mupawose and Ojo 2023). This approach further marginalises non-Western perspectives and knowledge systems, unique to the South African university context. Mupawose and Ojo (2023) adds that given this context, a decolonial feminist approach is necessary to indigenise supervision practices in the Global South. It is not

uncommon that supervisory relationships showcase power dynamics where supervisors hold authority over supervisees. This leads to oppressive dynamics that, according to Bartlett and Mercer (2000), replicate patriarchal and familiar power structures.

Manathinga (2007) also warns that although mentoring is required to support students during supervision, it can still mask underlying power dynamics which perpetuate normalisation as it maintains hierarchical structures. We are reminded that traditional supervision models frame postgraduate students in a deficit manner. This suggests a lack of knowledge or skills, rather than embracing potential in contributions (Wood and Louw 2018).

This further highlights the power dynamics between supervisors and supervisees, where supervisors act in a master-role and dominate supervisory relationships (Wood and Louw 2018). Students are intentionally positioned as novices under the guidance of expert supervisors, which in turn limits their agency and autonomy which reflects the hierarchical nature of the supervision (Ahmadi and Weisi 2024). These limitations of current research induction and research supervision practices, desperately call for a conceptual rethinking and transformation to redress supervision practices within academic induction initiatives.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SUPERVISION AS EPISTEMIC, ETHICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS

There is often a tendency to view postgraduate research supervision as merely a technical/administrative process which involves guiding students through the research process. Such a view masks the deeper aspects of research supervision including, political, intellectual and relational. Of late there has been a recognition that postgraduate supervision is complex epistemic, ethical and pedagogical praxis. Postgraduate research supervision is a key site where knowledge is contested, produced and legitimised, where power is reinforced or challenged and where identities are forged. This section proceeds from the premise that supervision is not merely a technical/administrative process but a dynamic process which involves the co-construction of knowledge, negotiation of power, authority, and scholarly subjectivities and predispositions within a broader historical, colonial and structural knowledge hierarchies.

Postgraduate supervision is best understood as relational and dialogical practice rooted in socio-political, institutional and disciplinary contexts (Lee 2007). This view importantly sidesteps from the one-directional knowledge transfer from the supervisor to the supervisee, expert to novice. The view proffered above recognises that supervision is a collaborative engagement between the supervisor(s) and student. The collaboration involves critical dialogue, intellectual mentorship and emotional support. This, however, does not mean there is one

approach to supervision. Lee (2007) identifies several approaches to supervision which include the famous functional (skills-based), enculturation (where students are socialised into disciplinary norms), critical thinking, emancipation, and relational development. What these approaches show is that supervision extends beyond merely producing a dissertation or thesis to inducting students into knowledge and practice communities.

Supervision is in an important sense epistemic, given its preoccupation with knowledge production and validation. In this sense, supervisors play a crucial role in guiding students through the research process e.g., developing researchable research questions, choosing appropriate methodologies and making sense of findings, thus influencing what is considered legitimate knowledge in a given discipline (Manathunga 2007). Noteworthy, epistemic dimensions are not neutral; they are influenced by theoretical leanings, dominant paradigms and methodological preferences. Given their positions, supervisors tend to serve as gatekeepers of knowledge in their discipline and influence the perspectives that are either marginalised or privileged (Manickam 2020). Given this, research supervision act as a site where epistemological assumptions are challenged and reproduced.

Related to the epistemic nature of research supervision are ethical dimensions. Given that supervisors wield institutional authority, expertise and evaluative power over students, the postgraduate supervisory relationship is characterised by power asymmetries (Grant 2005). Such power asymmetries bring ethical concerns relating but not limited to dependency, autonomy, and academic freedom to the fore. In this context, ethical supervision calls for reflexivity by supervisors to be mindful of their positionality and how such has a bearing on the intellectual development of the students they supervise. To be ethical, students' voices should be respected, and their intellectual contributions should be valued. This also relates to who should be the first or second author. Further, supervisors should be mindful of whose knowledges are considered legitimate. Often, Western epistemologies take centre stage while local knowledge systems occupy the peripheries (are marginalised) (Connell 2007). Supervisors can either reinforce these knowledge hierarchies or challenge them by either upholding the status quo or supporting students to incorporate a variety of epistemologies.

Another important dimension to supervision is pedagogical. Supervision involves teaching and learning for an extended period between supervisors and students. Supervisors as experienced researchers facilitate critical thinking, careful engagement with literature and how to contribute to literature. The process shapes students' academic identities which transform them from mere consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge (Barnes and Austin 2009). This process enables students to negotiate their roles as emerging scholars.

The formation of academic identify is aligned to enculturation and socialisation into their disciplinary communities. Yet, given that the process is unidirectional, both supervisors and students shape such academic identity. While supervisors introduce students to the practices, expectations and academic conduct of the discipline, students bring perspectives and experiences which are helpful in enriching and challenging norms of a discipline. Thus, fit-for-purpose supervision is reciprocal and helps develop students who are confident and hold independent voices. As mentioned earlier, due to power asymmetries, it is imperative to have open communication, transparency, and mutual respect to mitigate the harmful effects of unequal power between the parties (Grant 2005).

Power and knowledge dynamics are closely linked to colonial, historical and structural legacies. Higher Education Institutions, in the Global South, tend to operate within the frameworks shaped by colonial histories where Western knowledge was privileged over local/indigenous knowledges (Connell 2007). If care is not taken, students may feel the need to align themselves to the dominant paradigms. To be effective, there is need for a decolonised supervision practice which unearths, examines and challenges these knowledge hierarchies in ways that create diverse ways of knowing. Supervision then, plays an important role in social justice and epistemic equity. If done correctly, it involves creating an inclusive and equitable academic environment where knowledges, languages and taken for granted practices are challenged.

What is apparent from the discussion above is that postgraduate research supervision is not a mere administrative process. Rather, it is a complex epistemic, ethical and pedagogical praxis. Both supervisors and students shape the research process in a way that can be enriching or limiting. A rethinking of supervision of praxis can help create a more inclusive, equitable and transformative approach to supervision.

POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION: A DECOLONIAL THEORY AND EPISTEMIC JUSTICE LENS

Research (the quest for knowledge production) and supervision (guiding postgraduate students in producing knowledge) must be responsive, authentic and inclusive. That said, questions that should be asked are: for whom should the research and supervision be responsive, authentic, and inclusive? Put differently, who determines what counts as responsive, authentic, and inclusive? What yardstick is used in such determinations? These questions are especially important considering the imperatives of decolonisation, cognitive and epistemic justice.

What is decolonisation and cognitive and epistemic justice in universities? Calls for decolonisation, cognitive and epistemic justice in universities is necessitated by the marginalisation of certain knowledges, voices and theories due to, among others, unequal power dynamics. The unequal power dynamics include the coloniality of power (that is, who controls the resources, the research agenda, and knowledge that is prioritised), the coloniality of knowledge (an epistemological colonisation resulting in Euro-North American-centric dominance) and coloniality of being (which refers to the legitimised inferiority of another episteme) (Olusanya, Mallewa and Ogbo 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014 and Shiffman 2014).

Universities have played (and arguably still play) a key role as "ideological apparatuses," which produce value and social legitimacy; examples include propagating imperial values and justifying the "superiority" and "domination" of the West in the colonial world (Cloete 2020). Although contemporary universities claim a non-ideological status, as Cloete (2020) argues, "the formation and diffusion of ideology is still a fundamental role of universities." That said, the university can also contribute to citizenship and state formation. As Batson (2020) noted in the insightful piece titled "Universities should lead the fight to preserve humanity", Higher Education must "do social good" and this should include preparing students for the world and equipping them to tackle real-life problems.

Cognitive justice "recognises the right of different forms of knowledge to co-exist" and that "plurality needs to go beyond tolerance or liberalism to an active recognition of the need for diversity" of the ideas of a given time (Visvanathan 2011). Thus, there is need to consider what counts as knowledge. Whose knowledges are eliminated and whose are considered? Sometimes, knowledges are hierarchised – resulting in some knowledges being considered more authentic and valid than others (Visvanathan 2011). To address this, research, and supervision should have a "a dialogue of knowledges," which requires decolonisation and a democracy of knowledges (Visvanathan 2011:6) where different knowledges can flourish.

Decolonial Theory is an intellectual and political project which interrogates enduring legacies of colonialism in present-day structures such as knowledge, being and power. Central to the decolonial theory is exposing and dismantling what Mignolo (2009) calls "coloniality of knowledge." For Mignolo (2009), colonialism was not merely about territorial conquest but imposing Western knowledge as superior, to all others, rational and universal. Resultantly, epistemic dominance continues to shape research methodologies, academic disciplines and knowledge practices and invariably marginalising indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems. In this context, decolonial theory calls for "epistemic disobedience" seized with delinking from dominant paradigms and making room for epistemic plurality.

Relatedly, Mbembe (2016) argues for the "decolonisation of the university" in Africa where colonial legacies remain entrenched. Mbembe (2016, 32) argues that institutional cultures, research practices, the curricula mirror Eurocentric biases, thus limiting broader possibilities of knowledge production. In South Africa, Heleta (2016) equally critiques such Eurocentrism and epistemic violence that marginalise African and other knowledges. To appreciate decolonisation discussions, there is a need to understand the difference between colonialism and coloniality. Whereas colonialism refers to a historical system of political and economic domination by European powers over colonised territories, coloniality refers to the enduring patterns of power, knowledge and social relations that persist after the formal demise of the colonial rule (Mignolo 2009).

Epistemic justice is a concept developed by Miranda Fricker (2007) which is useful in analysing the persistence colonial hierarchies in curricula, supervisory practices and research agendas. Epistemic justice concerns itself with fairness in the recognition and distribution of knowledge; this includes the voices, knowledges and contributions that are heard, valued and legitimised. Fricker (2007, 9-29) distinguishes between two forms of epistemic injustice namely, testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Whereas testimonial injustice happens when the credibility of a speaker is unjustly undermined owing to prejudice, hermeneutical injustice occurs when individuals are unable to make sense of their experiences due to gaps in collective interpretive resources. These forms of epistemic injustice are evident in postgraduate supervision practices.

Examples of epistemic injustice include supervisors privileging Western methodologies and theories and marginalising other epistemologies. Such practices may dismiss indigenous knowledge systems as irrational and lacking rigour and validity. Yet doing so perpetuates the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge systems. This is in line with what Mignolo (2009) regards as the ongoing operation of coloniality in academic institutions. Language also features prominently in this dynamic. Given the dominance of English in the global academic landscape, it functions as a gatekeeping tool. Non-native English speakers who struggle to articulate complex ideas in academic discourse may be misconstrued as lacking intellectual capabilities. This may then lead to testimonial injustice where their contributions are not valued, and hermeneutical injustice where their ways of knowledge are insufficiently captured in dominant linguistic frameworks (Fricker 2007, 147–175). Thus, language is not a neutral medium but a power site of power which can shape knowledge production and validation.

To apply epistemic justice to supervision practices, there is a need for a critical and reflexive approach. Supervisors need to understand their role as gatekeepers of disciplinary

knowledge and consciously create inclusive and equitable research environments. This involves valuing diverse epistemologies, encourage students to explore alternative methodologies and supporting critical engagement with dominant paradigms. Further, this requires attention to authorship, voice, legitimacy and ensuring that students are recognised as co-producers of knowledge rather than mere passive recipients. This is not an easy endeavour given the imbalances that exist in research in general. In a recent study on how Global Health Research (GHR) actors conceptualise inclusion in response to decolonisation calls, Ewuoso and Chiwarawara (2026, 4) note "five key intertwining areas where GHR imbalances visibly manifested: intersecting gender-based and race-based inequalities, inequitable participation in knowledge production, inequitable GHR partnerships, unfair GHR funding allocation and non-diverse publication landscape." These imbalances have a bearing on who produces knowledge as well as the knowledge produced and validated.

Given the role of supervision in inducting new academics, these realities can affect supervision practices. Supervision practices that do not deal with coloniality risk perpetuating existing hierarchies that privilege Eurocentric dominance. However, if done well in line with decolonial, cognitive, and epistemic justice principles, supervision can be a transformative space.

This article adopted a conceptual-theoretical approach to examine how postgraduate supervisor induction practices might be reimagined through a decolonial praxis. It critically engages with scholarly text comprising academic induction, postgraduate supervision, decoloniality, epistemic justice and Higher Education in the Global South. The literature was selected given its relevance to the marginalisation of postgraduate supervision within conventional induction practices. The conceptual synthesis of the literature clearly highlights four interconnected principles that formed the foundation of the framework as provisioned in this article. The conceptual framework is not provisioned as an empirically driven model but instead serves as a theoretical basis to inform supervision praxis in the Global South.

CONCEPTUALISING A DECOLONIAL PRAXIS FOR POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

Towards a decolonial practice of inducting postgraduate supervisors

Against the backdrop of the preceding discussions, this section advances a conceptual framework for a decolonial praxis in the induction of postgraduate supervisors. It is not enough to critique Eurocentrism, coloniality, cognitive and epistemic injustice in dominant supervisory models without proffering what an alternative, transformative practice would look like. In this

section, we ask: How can a decolonial praxis be conceptualised for inducting new academics as postgraduate supervisors in the Global South? To effectively respond to this question, we propose a principled framework for inducting supervisors that is contextually grounded, epistemically inclusive, reflexive and collectively oriented. The intention of this praxis is not to merely reform practices but to reconfigure the epistemic and ethical foundations upon which they rest.

Decolonial praxis, as Mignolo (2009) and Mbembe (2016) argue, involves a shift from critique to action involving a delinking from colonial epistemologies and fostering alternative modes of knowledge. We take this challenge to propose such a praxis in the context of research supervision. We opine that in postgraduate research supervision, this entails a rethink of how supervisors are inducted into their roles, moving away from technicist and universalised models towards approaches that are attentive to context, power and epistemic diversity. This, however, raises the question of what theoretical and practical principles can guide transformative supervision practices within such a decolonial praxis. In response, we propose four principles that provide a conceptual foundation for a decolonial approach to inducting postgraduate supervisors in the Global South (Figure 1).

Postgraduate supervision within the Higher Education landscape in South Africa, continue to reflect practices of marginalisation, colonialism, apartheid and is further exacerbated by local challenges inclusive of unequal access, resources provision and study opportunities. Supervisors face postgraduate cohorts who are characteristic of indifferences in educational levels, linguistic ability, socio-economic status and epistemic experiences. Given this multilayer complexity, supervisors cannot effectively support postgraduate students with generic models that does not adequately respond to institutional and local histories.

Principle 1: Contextualised induction in the Global South

A decolonial praxis begins with acknowledging that supervision is embedded within a particular context influenced by historical, socio-political and institutional dynamics. In the Global South, and in South Africa in particular, Higher Education Institutions are shaped by colonial and apartheid legacies whose influence continue to affect academic practices and knowledge practices. In recognition of this, Heleta (2016) argues that the endurance of Eurocentrism in South African universities reflects deeper structural inequalities that must be addressed through deliberate transformation efforts. While this is important, we also caution viewing the Global South and South Africa only through the lens of colonial and apartheid

legacies. This calls for a relook at the pre-colonial and pre-apartheid practices, as the history of the Global South and South Africa predates colonialism.

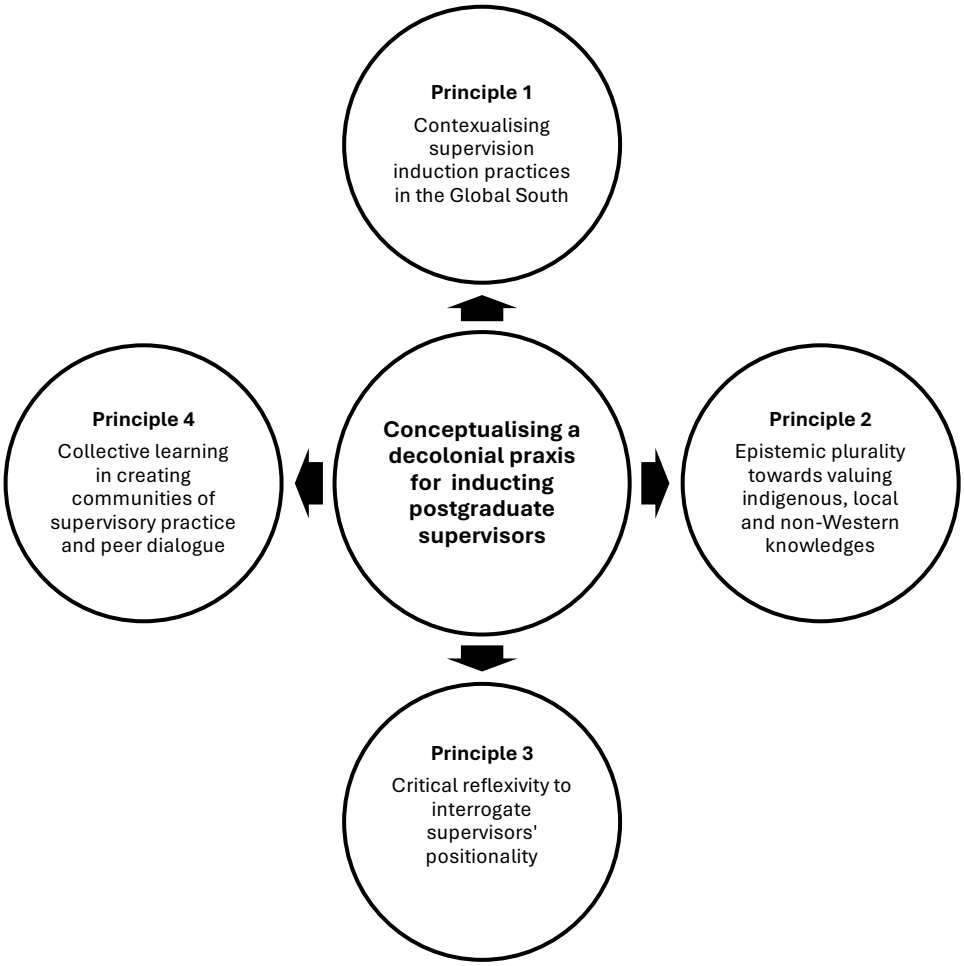

Figure 1: The guiding principles underpinning the conceptualisation of a decolonial praxis for inducting postgraduate supervisors in universities of the Global South (Authors' compilation)

As such, inducting postgraduate supervisors must be a *contextualised* process that engages these realities. As opposed to adopting generic, imported models of supervision, institutions need to develop induction programmes that are contextually relevant to the local conditions including linguistic diversity, resource constraints and socio-economic backgrounds of students. Supervisors should be encouraged to situate their practices within the specificities of the institutional histories and recognise how such histories shape opportunities and constraints.

Further, contextualised induction requires grounding supervision within community needs and local research priorities. To do so, supervisors need to see knowledge production not merely as an abstract universal endeavour, to understanding it as a socially embedded and politically situated practice. Thus, supervisors should be trained to support research that addresses pressing local issues, engages with communities and contributes towards social transformation.

To strengthen principle 1, we provision an example for practical implementation of the framework and suggest that new supervisors, instead of engaging with induction practices that are generic in nature during academic orientations, interact and peruse institutional policies pertaining to postgraduate supervision practices, postgraduate student profiles, disciplinary contexts and local postgraduate students lived realities.

Principle 2: Epistemic plurality

The second core principle of decolonial praxis is the commitment to *epistemic plurality*. Given the dominance of Western knowledge and the marginalisation of others, there is a need to recognise and value diverse forms of knowledge, including indigenous, local and non-Western epistemologies. This is in line with what Mignolo (2009, 161) emphasises that decoloniality requires "epistemic disobedience" that challenges the dominance of Western knowledge systems and opens space for alternative ways of knowing.

In the context of supervisor induction, this principle would require a rethink of the methodological hierarchies evident in supervision that privilege certain research approaches over others. For instance, positivist and quantitative methodologies are often viewed as more scientific and rigorous over qualitative, participatory, and indigenous methods, which are viewed as less legitimate. A decolonial praxis challenges such views and affirms the contribution of multiple methodologies. Supervisors, thus, need to be trained to support students to select methodologies that are in line with their research questions rather than what disciplinary dictates. This includes being able to draw on eclectic approaches that draw on multiple epistemic traditions. Further to this, issues of language need to be considered. A decolonial approach needs to encourage the use of multiple languages and value linguistic diversity. In practice, this includes supporting students to conduct research in their home language or include local concepts and terminologies.

In support of principle 2, we suggest that induction agendas consider expanding traditional examination practices of postgraduate research works. This approach would adopt and include opportunities where different knowledge traditions and methodological approaches that are situated in local contexts, are included in examinations.

Principle 3: Critical reflexivity

Critical reflexivity stands as the third principle to a decolonial praxis. Here, supervisors need to be encouraged to consider their own positionality, assumptions and practices and acknowledge that they are shaped by broader structures of power and knowledge. Fricker's (2007)

observation in her work on epistemic injustice is noteworthy. She notes that individuals often participate – consciously or unconsciously in systems that marginalise certain perspectives and voices. As such, in postgraduate supervision, it is imperative to examine how a supervisor's disciplinary training, cultural background, and institutional location bears on supervisory practices. Supervisors should thus ask uncomfortable questions about the knowledges they privilege, marginalise; methodologies they consider legitimate, and how their assumptions inform how they guide students. Such questions can unearth subtle biases and ways coloniality operate in mundane academic practices.

Critical reflexivity thus entails unlearning and relearning. Supervisors who have been trained in Eurocentric frameworks may reproduce such approaches in their supervision. A decolonial praxis requires the humility and willingness to question, and where necessary, unlearn toxic inherited praxis. This is not an easy exercise though as this involves moving away from the "familiar" to the "unfamiliar." To be effective, induction practices should necessarily provide space for reflection, where supervisors engage in critical dialogue about their experiences, assumptions and challenges. Useful resources include workshops, facilitated discussions and reflective journals that promote and encourage ongoing self-examination. Such reflexivity may encourage more inclusive and equitable practice.

To effectively apply principle 3 in practice, we suggest that new postgraduate research supervisors are tasked to engage in reflective activities under the guidance of senior and tenured supervisors. These reflective activities would serve as a diagnostic baseline for new supervisors to understand their own assumptions regarding legitimate knowledge creation and systems, the profile of a successful postgraduate student and to further employ appropriate, context sensitive, and locally grounded supervisory practices.

Principle 4: Collective learning and communities of practice

The final principle of a decolonial praxis is *collective learning*. Whereas traditional models of supervisor tend to focus on individual competence and technical skills in isolation, supervision is relational and situated within broader academic communities. As such, a decolonial approach recognises and values fostering "communities of practice" where supervisors learn from each other and engage in collaborative knowledge production.

The strength of peer learning lies in the enabling space it creates for peer dialogue, mentorship and shared reflection. Institutions should not view supervision as a solitary exercise, but a collaborative one which brings supervisors from different disciplines and career stages together. This has the potential to promote democratic forms of knowledge exchange. Further,

such communities of practice help supervisors share strategies, and experiment with diverse tactics and consider diverse ways to address common challenges. It also provides opportunities for mutual support, accountability, and a culture of continuous learning and improvement. In addition, collective learning helps challenge individualistic and competitive models of academia. It foregrounds relationality, shared responsibility and solidarity in knowledge production. Peer dialogue can help supervisors reflect on their practices and contribute to a more inclusive academic environment.

Principle 4 can only be successful if common, and context specific supervision challenges are collectively discussed. We suggest that new postgraduate supervisors engage in peer-dialogue group sessions to strengthen their abilities, and mentoring circles where senior and tenured supervisors provide support and guidance in this regard.

RESEARCHERS' POSITIONALITY

The conceptualisation of the framework is informed by the authors' positionality within the South African Higher Education context. The authors are not positioning the framework to drive decolonial praxis as universal, or a detachment, but situate the framework within the interpretation of current and emerging literature which is clearly shaped by our interactions with institutional historical and socio-cultural realities through postgraduate supervision practices. This positioning foregrounds the need to consider local contexts, power dynamics and epistemic plurality when considering induction programmes for postgraduate supervisors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC INDUCTION PRAXIS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Induction programmes serve a key role to improve professional development of new academics in the university teaching and learning environment (Rodríguez Torres et al 2020). These programmes support with new roles, teaching capabilities and integrating into institutional cultures. The induction of new academics in Higher Education roles requires careful planning as academics enter institutions with different backgrounds, varying levels of experiences, roles and responsibilities. It is advisable to refrain from existing models and tailor make induction processes for individual development to support academics in diverse career pathways (Adam 2022).

New academics should be afforded the opportunity to reflect on their own agency and positionality within specific university contexts to fully understand the structural opportunities and constraints they may face (Mathieson 2011). Departmental and larger institutional cultural awareness is also important to support creative engagement and alignment of new academics

with their personal teaching philosophies that align with institutional goals (Mathieson 2011). Mentoring provides another layer of support with new academics as induction programmes alone cannot solely provide support catering to all institutional aspects.

Knight and Trowler (1999) argue that mentorship is intertwined with departmental cultures which necessitates departmental support beyond induction programmes. To further support mentorship, new academics and tenured staff should engage in relational support to learn from each other. In adopting such an approach, it can assist in capturing the experiences of new faculty members and integrating them fully into the institution's framework (López Velásquez et al 2016). Chitanand (2018) and Rodríguez Torres et al (2020) add that this is necessary to sustain transformative educational practices to improve professional performance of academic staff. In response to this, Fisher and Gemmell (2017) suggest that a staged approach is considered to build experience over time which proves to more viable for academic staff.

Supervisors are further tasked to ensure that maintaining academic integrity across disciplines is established (Löfström 2024), and further that ethical awareness is fostered through discussions concerning ethical practices (Haven 2025). This can further be maintained through addressing ethical challenges that may arise during supervision interactions and relationships, by implementing strategies to manage these effectively (Rogers 2024).

CONCLUSION

This article considered the conceptualisation of a decolonial praxis towards inducting new academics as postgraduate supervisors at Institutions of Higher Learning in the Global South. It is evident from the theoretical positioning, that postgraduate supervision is characterised and historically propelled by marginalisation. This direction, more often than not, necessitated new supervisors to rely on personal experience, and navigate through trial-and-error phases, without appropriate, guided support structures. Postgraduate research supervision practices continue to be centred on Western epistemologies, which allow for colonial legacies to continue to exit, which further exacerbate imbalances between supervision powers. This unfortunately creates a bigger divide towards the marginalisation of indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems. This article draws on decolonial theory and epistemic justice principles to foreground four key principles to first, and foremost, transform, and further to guide the induction of postgraduate supervisors in the Global South. These principles which comprise contextualised induction, epistemic plurality, critical reflexivity, and collective learning, collectively encompass the complexities pertaining to postgraduate supervision practices, and the onboarding of new supervisors, which showcase in response, the lived realities of the Global South.

The proposed four-principal framework contributes to a broader discourse on decolonial thought, and offer institutions of Higher Learning with practical, executable guidelines for inducting new academics as postgraduate research supervisors by embracing an approach that is socially just, epistemically inclusive, and collectively oriented. This framework further contests Eurocentric models of supervision and challenge Higher Education Institutions to create platforms and opportunities that welcome diverse epistemologies, languages and ways of knowing.

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