

Est.
1841

YORK
ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY

Madondo, Nkosinathi and Meredith,
Margaret ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4541-3821> (2024) Rural Students and Science in South Africa: Curricular Justice, Epistemic Justice and Epistemic Freedom. In: BERA Conference 2024, 8-12th September, University of Manchester. (Unpublished)

Downloaded from: <https://ray.yorks.ac.uk/id/eprint/10992/>

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form. Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms governing individual outputs. [Institutional Repository Policy Statement](#)

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at ray@yorks.ac.uk

Rural Students and Science in South Africa: Curricular Justice, Epistemic Justice and Epistemic Freedom

Nkosinathi Madondo

(Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa)

Margaret Meredith

(York St John University, UK)

Two questions

1. How can we conceptualise epistemic justice in higher education?
2. How might academics work in practice towards knowledge justice in their curriculum and teaching?

1. Conceptualising epistemic justice



Social justice - recognition of equal difference

Epistemic injustice

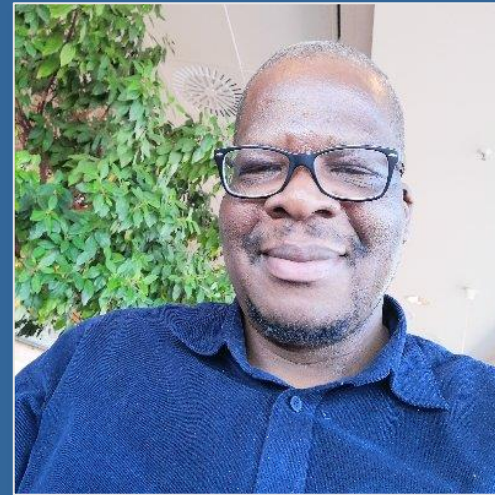
*People wronged in their
capacity as knowers*

Miranda Fricker



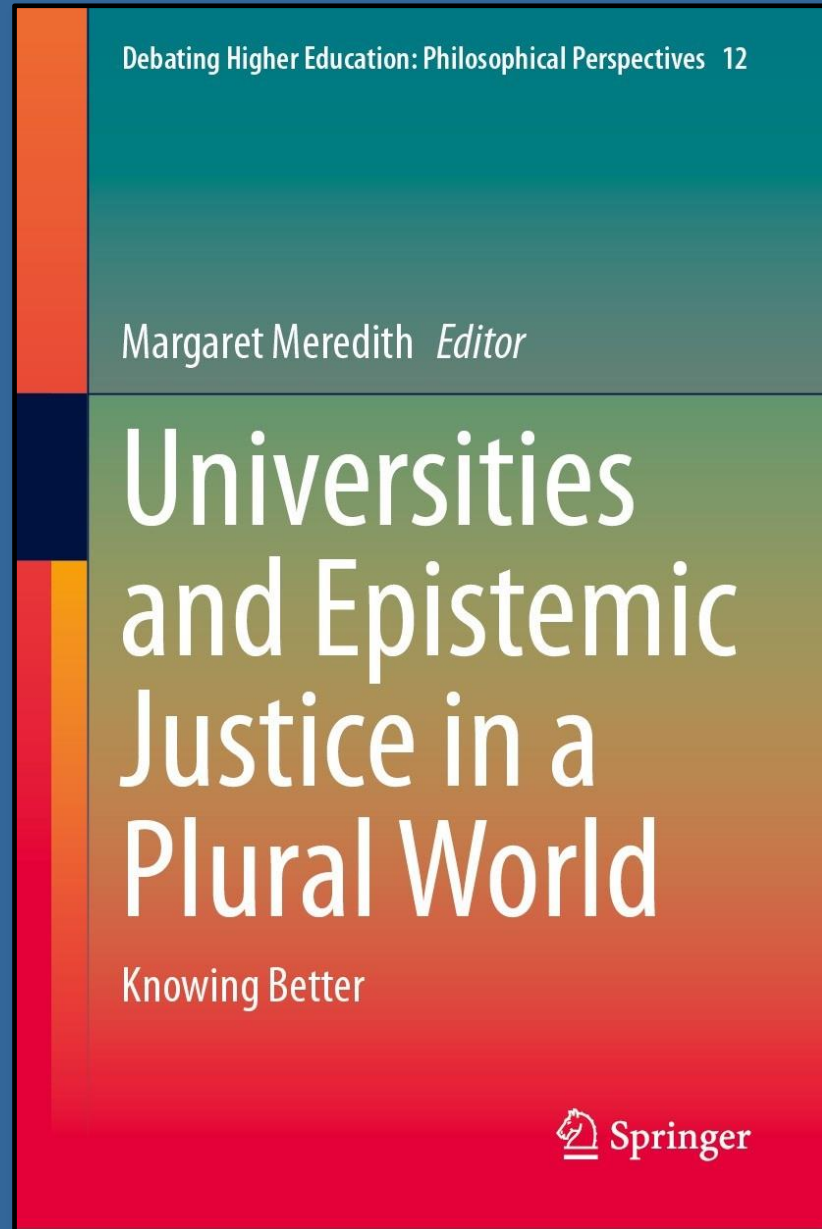
*Systems of knowledge are part
of systems of power*

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni



Epistemic justice

1. Epistemic power is challenged.
2. People are recognised in their capacity as knowers.



3. Equal difference

(Meredith, 2024)

Rural Students and Science in South Africa:
Curricular Justice, Epistemic Justice and Epistemic Freedom

Nkosinathi Madondo

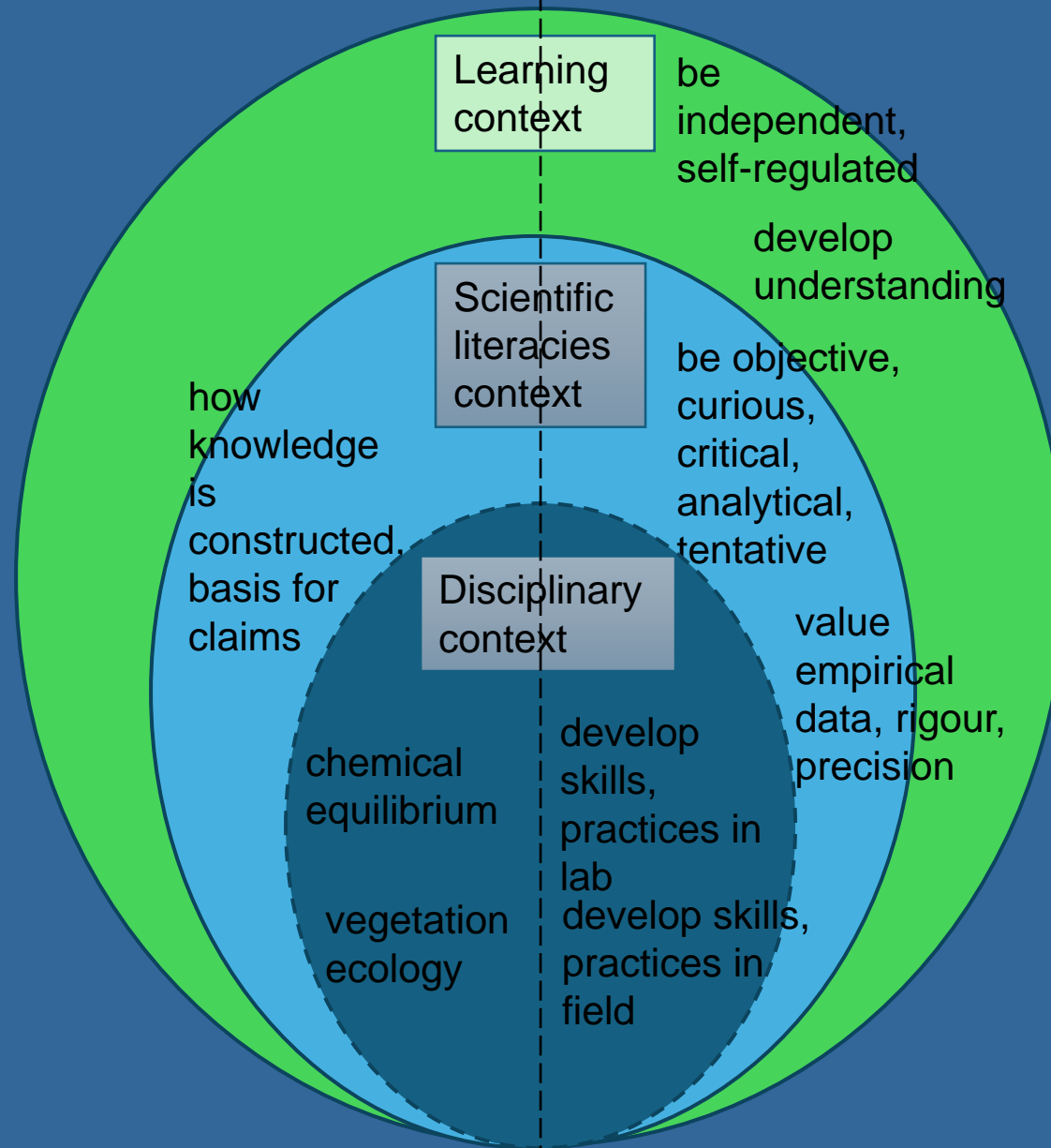
(Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa)

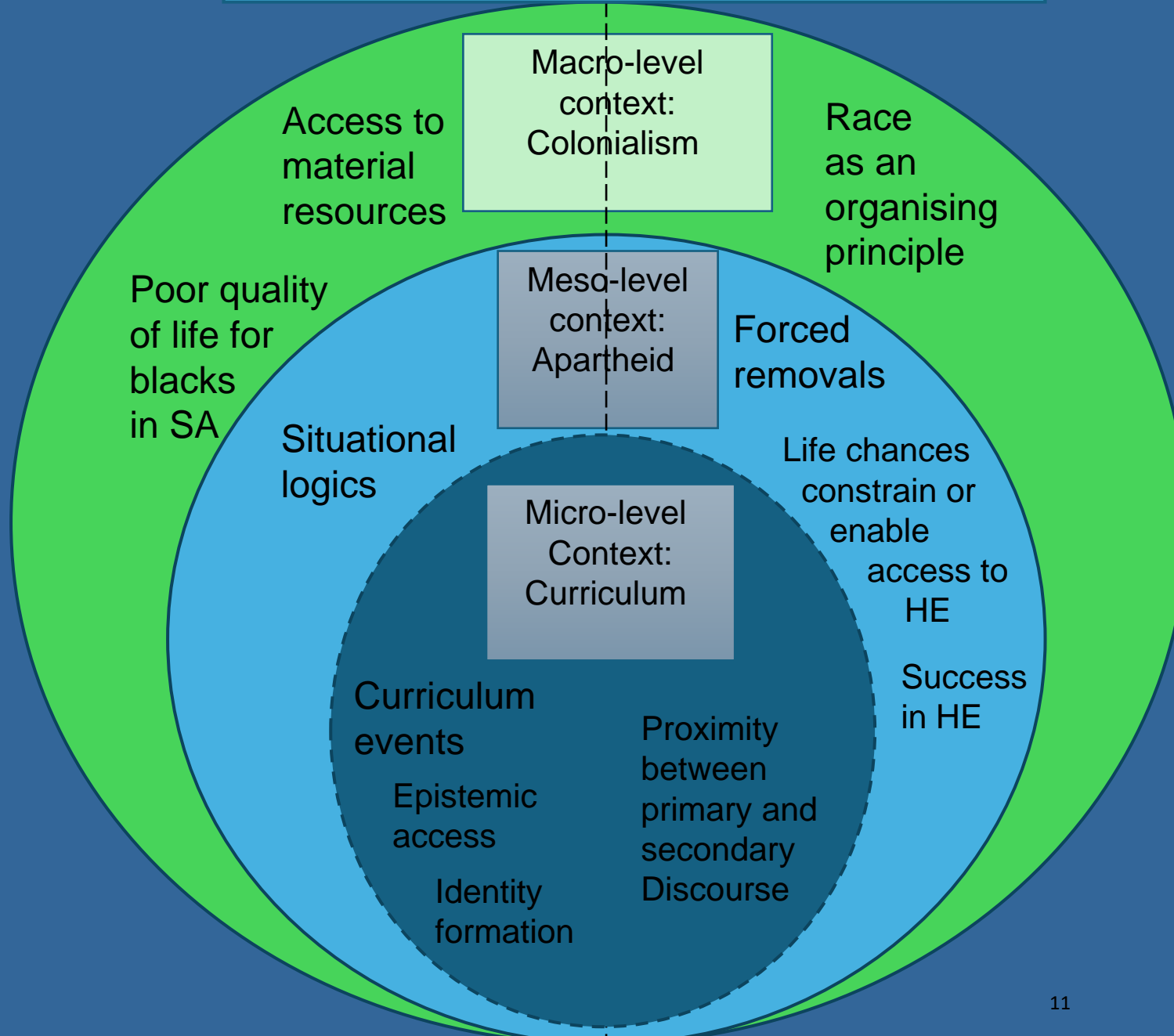
Coloniality must not be confused with colonialism. It survived the end of direct colonialism. In post colonies it continues to affect the lives of people, long after direct colonialism and administrative apartheid have been dethroned.

What, therefore, needs to be understood is not just the “not yet uhuru” postcolonial experience, but the invisible vampirism of technologies of imperialism and colonial matrices of power that continue to exist in the minds, lives, languages, dreams, imaginations, and epistemologies of modern subjects in Africa and the entire Global South.

(Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

What is **legitimated** in science curricula?
(Ellery, 2016; Maton, 2014b)





Misrecognition of difference

- Rurality – emerged from Apartheid
- Structural matter – a political displacement
- Primary Discourse and Secondary Discourse (Gee, 2012)

How did I address these issues?

- Development of scientific concepts from students' perspectives.
- Business meeting – Diagnostic assessment – assessment for learning before assessment of learning (Mgqwashu, 2019a).
- Improved participation (Fraser, 2008; 2009) and conceptualization of abstract concepts.

Findings

- *There is little interaction in the lectures at university because of the language of communication. Sometimes you don't get the terminology, but when things are expressed in your language that's when you understand better.*
- *When it is your first time attending class, you are afraid of asking questions because you think your peers will laugh at you, as you not confident enough when speaking English.*
- *When you are herding cows, you'll find that a young boy who has not learned to count yet will learn to associate the patterns of the cows [...] (Student focus group discussions, cited in Madondo, 2020).*

Lessons learned and way forward

- Reconceptualisation of curriculum events – not just a selection of topics
- Not designed by curriculum angels in heaven (Connell, 2009)

Concluding remarks

- University space – profoundly political, historical, social and cultural, including teaching and learning (and science teaching and learning, and learning and teaching) (Madondo, 2024).
- Can no longer be assumed to be ‘neutral’.

References

- Connell, R. (1992). Citizenship, social justice and curriculum. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 2(2), 133-46.
- Ellery, K. (2016). *Epistemological access in a science foundation course: A social realist perspective*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Grahamstown, South Africa: Rhodes University.
- Fataar, A. (2018). From the shadows to the university's epistemic centre: Engaging the (mis)recognition struggles of students at the post-apartheid university. In *Higher Education Close Up 2018*. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town.
- Fraser, N. (2008). Reframing Justice in. Globalizing World. In K. Olson (ed.), *Adding Insult to Injury: Nancy Fraser Debates her Critics*. London: Verso: 273-291.
- Fraser, N. (2009). *Scales of justice: Reimagining political space in a globalizing world*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Gee, J. P. (2012). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourse, 4th ed.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

References (cont).

- Maton, K. (2014b). *Knowledge and knowers: Towards a realist sociology of education*. Routledge
- Madondo, N. E. (2021). Curricular change for social justice: Teaching science by drawing on students' lived rural home experiences in higher education. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning (CriSTaL)*, 9(2), 19–38.
- Madondo, N. E. (2021). Rural Students and Science: Curricular Justice, Epistemic Justice and Epistemic Freedom. In Meredith, M. (Ed.) (2024) *Universities and epistemic justice in a plural world: Knowing better*, Springer, 81-94.
- Meredith, M. (Ed.) (2024). *Universities and epistemic justice in a plural world: Knowing better*, Springer.
- Mgqwashu, E.M. (2019a). Education for public good in the age of coloniality: Implications for pedagogy. *Journal of Decolonising Disciplines*, 1(1), 64-81.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2013). *Empire, global coloniality and African subjectivity*. New York: Berghahn Books.