Decolonizing Higher Education in Norway: Critical Collaborative Autoethnographic Reflections on a University Pedagogy Course

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ABSTRACT

Globally, there is a trend in academic development to centralize the importance of decolonizing curriculum and pedagogical practice in higher education (HE). In Norway, despite internationalization, diversity and inclusion being highly regarded values in HE policy documents, efforts towards decolonial change and transformation of curriculum and pedagogical practice in HE seem to be largely ignored. Understanding university teacher education as a driver of institutional educational transformation, this article contributes to the effort of decolonizing HE in Norway. Utilizing critical collaborative autoethnographic methodology, we reflect on our own roles in our early attempts to decolonize a course on decolonization and pedagogical practice offered to teaching staff at a Norwegian university college. Taking our point of departure in decolonial theory and the concept of modernity/coloniality, we critically discuss and question the potency of our own roles—as two middle-aged white cis-men and one middle-aged cis-woman, all lecturers with expertise mainly in decolonial theories, decolonial learning and teaching practices, and critical whiteness and critical discourse analysis perspectives—in transforming the ways that Western epistemology prevail in our pedagogical practices. We also address the implications for university pedagogy courses with respect to future decolonizing efforts in HE in Norway.

Keywords: *modernity/coloniality; higher education; collaborative autoethnography; decolonization; pedagogical practice*

Introduction

Globally, there are increasing efforts in academia to centralize the importance of decolonizing curriculum and pedagogical practice in higher education institutions (HEI), where recent work carried out in South Africa, the US, Canada, the UK, and the Netherlands are but a few examples (e.g., Bhambra et al., 2018; Shahjahan

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et al., 2022; Tight, 2022; Zembylas, 2018). However in Norway, even though internationalization (Gunnes et al., 2017; Statistics Norway, 2023), diversity and inclusion are highly regarded values in higher education (HE) and legislation (e.g., the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, 2018; the Norwegian University and University Colleges Act, 2005), efforts towards decolonial change and transformation of curriculum and pedagogical practice in HE have been scarce and met with great resistance (cf. Eriksen, 2021; Høiskar, 2020). Important contributions specifically in the area of HE are the pedagogical toolkit of the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (2020) and the collaborative autoethnography by Eriksen et al. (2023), as well as, in a Nordic context, Velásquez Atehortúa (2020) and Suárez-Krabbe (2012), while within the wider field of education and academia in the Nordic countries there are recent works such as Eriksen and Svendsen (2020b), Dankertsen (2021) and Fjellheim (2020).

Historically, HEIs have had an important role in the grounding of Western systems of knowledge production and thus in the perpetuation of coloniality (Shahjahan et al., 2022). However in Norway, European colonial history is mainly considered something that Norway (and the wider Nordic region) is excepted from (e.g., Dankertsen, 2021; Eriksen & Svendsen, 2020a; Keskinen et al., 2009). Yet the Norwegian state is by no means exempt from the global logic of coloniality. Being a bearer of the colonial Western-modern knowledge tradition, a colonizer both internationally (e.g., Keskinen et al., 2009; Kjerland & Bertelsen, 2014) and domestically—of the Sámi and other colonized or minoritized peoples (i.e. most of the Norwegian national minorities)—and having a legacy of scientifically legitimized state racism through its Norwegianization policy (Minde, 2005; Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2023), coloniality is proven to be part of the Norwegian state's institutionalized national historical legacy. The recent report of the Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2023) actualizes Tuck and Yang's (2012) argument that decolonization is not a metaphor but is inseparable from the settler colonial logic. However, this national historical legacy is often obscured in both academic and public debates, contributing to a lack of knowledge about the historical and contemporary continuous colonization and racism in Norwegian society. Recent initiatives have shown the urgency of making Indigenous knowledge and knowledge of the Sámi visible in research and HE (Dankertsen, 2019, 2021; Eriksen, 2021; Fjellheim, 2020; Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund, 2020). Furthermore, Norwegian lecturers remain predominantly white/Western and there is a relative lack of teachers from minority groups in tenured positions and within fields such as educational science (Askvik & Drange, 2019; Thomas & Fylkesnes, forthcoming). A study by Thomas and Fylkesnes (forthcoming) confirms the lack of non-white authors in Norwegian curricula for teacher education. Internationalization of HEIs in Norway (Gunnes et al., 2017) and the increasingly heterogeneous student body (Statistics Norway, 2023) call for meeting students' demands to recognize epistemic diversity, not only for its own sake (cf. Gopal, 2021), but moreover to meet the decolonial

reparative demands of transformation and the inseparable aspects of cognitive and social justice, as well as academic soundness (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019; Santos, 2014).

Understanding university teacher education (henceforth "learning and teaching in higher education" (LTHE)) as a driver of educational transformation, this article contributes to a new body of research on decolonizing LTHE in Norway, in particular, and decolonizing Norwegian and other Scandinavian HEIs, more generally. Thus, the aim of this article is twofold: (1) to gain critical reflective insight into how our own initial work on the module in decolonizing LTHE itself could possibly have persisting aspects of colonialization; and (2) to initiate a transformation of the module in line with decolonial theory for the inspiration of scholarly colleagues in other HEIs. Taking critical collaborative autoethnographic methodology (Adams, 2017; Chang, 2016; Blalock & Akehi, 2018; Eriksen et al., 2023) and decolonial theory (e.g., Gopal, 2021; Mignolo, 2003; Santos, 2014) as our point of departure for reflecting on the syllabus of the newly developed module on decolonization and pedagogical practice for teaching staff at a Norwegian university college, we critically discuss and question the potency of our own roles—being two middle-aged white cis-men and one middle-aged cis-woman, all lecturers with expertise mainly in decolonial theories, decolonial learning and teaching practices, and critical whiteness and critical discourse analysis perspectives—in changing and transforming the ways that Western ontology and epistemology prevail in our pedagogical practices. We also address the implications for university pedagogy courses with respect to future decolonizing efforts in HEIs in Norway.

The article is structured as follows: First, we outline the Norwegian context of LTHE and briefly describe the university pedagogy module analyzed in the article. Second, we define and discuss decolonial theory related to HE with a point of departure in the concept of modernity/coloniality (Mignolo, 2003; Quijano, 1992), and we support our claim that decolonizing HE is relevant also in a Norwegian context. Third, we discuss critical collaborative autoethnography as our methodology and present the data and the steps we took to critically reflect upon the module syllabus. Fourth, we present the analysis and the findings of our discussion in light of decolonial theory. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings and point to how a LTHE course on decolonization at a Norwegian university college could possibly be translated into a larger process of decolonizing wider curriculum and pedagogical practice in HE, beyond our local context.

Context: University pedagogy in Norway and the local LTHE module

In Norway, as in many other European countries, educational training programs for academics have been offered since the 1960s. LTHE courses are directed towards teaching staff and typically comprise courses in university pedagogy, but may also include workshops, lectures, and other activities on related themes (Lycke & Handal, 2018). The purpose of LTHE courses is typically to enhance the quality of the education and qualify academic staff for their work as lecturers.

While academic development initiatives may take place on different levels of the organization, LTHE courses in Norway are often centralized, focused on ongoing professional development (supporting the process of change through reflection), and on individual practice (cf. Amundsen & Wilson, 2012; Trowler & Bamber, 2005). As such, academic development through LTHE courses can be seen as a two-step process, where individual change in the mind of the lecturer is supposed to lead to a change in the pedagogical practice, which may (or may not) produce enhanced student learning and a change in the students (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012; Trowler & Bamber, 2005).

In early 2023, two of the authors of this article, Fredrik and Jørgen, developed a module in two parts, entitled "Decolonization and Pedagogical Practice, Module I–II", with Module I ready for launch in autumn 2023 and Module II in spring 2024 at Østfold University College. The aim of the module was to offer pedagogical development for teaching staff, focusing particularly on introducing participants to decolonial theory and encouraging them to incorporate decolonizing pedagogies in their own LTHE practices. Importantly, the module is not part of the compulsory 15 ECTS credit qualification LTHE program for all new teaching staff at the institution (cf. Lycke & Handal, 2018; Trowler & Bamber, 2005), but is offered as an optional course open to academics in Norway. Each part of the module corresponds to a workload of 20 hours and is structured with one on-campus meeting and one webinar. While Module I focuses on the participants' meta-reflections on their own practice, Module II includes the implementation of a small development project intended to actually create decolonial pedagogical transformation in the participants' own pedagogical LTHE-related activities.

Decolonial theory and HE

Decolonization has different meanings for different people in different contexts (cf. Shahjahan et al., 2022). Zembylas (2018) points to how two common ideas of decolonization are about (1) the urge to resist Eurocentrism and acknowledge the contributions of colonized peoples, and (2) a moral imperative for righting the wrongs of colonial domination, including social justice for people affected by coloniality. The theoretical framework of this article takes its standpoint in Quijano's (cf. 1992) concept of modernity/coloniality, as further developed by Mignolo (cf. 2003). The Latin American concept of modernity/coloniality refers to 500 years of unequal power relations, starting with the colonization of the Americas, a process that is seen as inseparable from the formation of European modernity during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods and the existing capitalist world economy (cf. Maldonado-Torres, 2011). Even though colonialism officially ended with the political liberation of the former European colonies during the 19th and 20th centuries, coloniality—the underlying logic or matrix of power (Quijano, 1992)—is still defining the modern world (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2003). For Quijano (1992), coloniality is the shadowy side of modernity and its discourse on progress and civilization.

The center of the matrix of coloniality is race, racism, and racialization: the modern forms of domination, hierarchization, and the exploitation of some human beings for the benefit of other human beings (Quijano, 1992; Walsh, 2012). A central point concerning the concept of modernity/coloniality is that there is no general epistemology. On the contrary, the production of knowledge is geohistorically grounded in the colonial matrix of power, even if some knowledge has been presented as universal (i.e. Eurocentric rational knowledge) (Quijano, 1992)—as local histories imposed as global designs (Delgado & Romero, 2000; Mignolo, 2003). Based on this colonial worldview, the university is understood as a privileged site for the production of knowledge, with the power to decide what (or whose) knowledge counts as legitimate or not. Ever since the 16th century, the Western university has been complicit in "epistemicides"—the death of knowledge related to the extermination of subordinated cultures and social groups—of, for instance, Indigenous people, not only in the conquest and colonization of the Americas (Grosfoguel, 2013; Santos, 2012), but worldwide, including the Global North (cf. Minde, 2005).

For Zembylas (2018), decolonization means "challenging all forms of coloniality that still persist in HE and that are complicit in colonial oppression" (p. 3). As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019) argues, in line with Santos (2014) and the notion of "epistemologies of the South", the struggle of social justice is inseparable from the struggle of cognitive justice (decentering the colonial knowledge regimes and recognizing the knowledge production of the dominated) and epistemic diversity (opening up for a plurality of knowledges to co-exist). Cognitive justice can even be seen as a prerequisite for other forms of liberation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). In their review of global interdisciplinary literature on decolonizing HE curriculum and pedagogy, Shahjahan et al. (2022) discern four general ways of carrying out this endeavor: (1) critiquing and probing the positionality of knowledge in educational processes; (2) constructing an inclusive curriculum beyond dominating knowledge systems; (3) creating environments that foster relational teaching and learning; and (4) connecting HEIs with community and socio-political movements. Mindful of not wanting to reproduce the colonial logic of universality, Shahjahan et al. (2022) suggest avoiding "best practices" approaches to decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy, and recommend instead paying attention to the local contexts of diverse disciplinary, cultural, and geographic contexts.

As outlined in the introduction, Norway, as well as the rest of the Nordic states, is in no way peripheral to the colonial logic outlined above (e.g., Eriksen & Svendsen, 2020a; Suárez-Krabbe, 2012). Apart from having established small colonies overseas during the Denmark-Norway union, Norwegian companies participated with success in the profitable colonial trade (Kjerland & Bertelsen, 2014; Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund, 2020), which even brought wealth to a small town like Halden—currently home to one of the two campuses of Østfold University College—through its national monopoly, together with Bergen, on the sugar refinery business (Hove, 2017). Domestically, the policy of Norwegianization and its epistemicide of Indigenous and other minoritized groups' knowledge was at

the time viewed as a modernization project, something that highlights how modernity and coloniality are intimately entwined (Minde, 2005; Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund, 2020).

Tuck and Yang's (2012) reminder that decolonization is not a metaphor is useful for understanding the Sámi in their relation to the nation state (cf. Dankertsen, 2021; Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2023). From an Indigenous Studies perspective, Tuck and Yang (2012) highlight the dangers of an academic domestication of "decolonization" as it is used metaphorically to describe efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, and clarify how decolonization is not a metaphor of symbolic or rhetorical substance, but something that involves real, tangible anti-colonial political and social strategies and actions (cf. Simpson, 2004), such as the restoration of land, knowledge, and other properties to Indigenous peoples, as well as the dismantling of structures that perpetuate colonial dominance. In the light of the Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2023), Norwegian HEIs could have a role in fostering a reconciled society, embracing a multitude of voices and forms of expression within academic institutions to cultivate an environment that not only seeks knowledge but also values the diverse ways in which that knowledge can be shared, understood, and applied (Jørstad, 2023).

Methodology

In this study, we draw on critical collaborative autoethnography (Adams, 2017; Blalock & Akehi, 2018; Chang, 2016; Eriksen et al., 2023). This methodology allows us to be both researchers and researched, to self-reflect on our emotions, thoughts, and beliefs related to our personal experiences (Keleş, 2022) of decolonizing LTHE, and to enable metacognitive critical reflections of those experiences. Thus, the methodology can to a greater extent ensure a double research process (Delamont, 2009; Eriksen, 2020; Pillow, 2015; Țîștea, 2020), potentially leading to decolonial transformative LTHE practices in our work on the module (Blalock & Akehi, 2018). In the process of working with this methodology, we draw heavily on the framework of Andreotti et al. (2015) which describes four spaces of enunciation as a response to coloniality: (1) "everything is awesome" space; (2) soft-reform space; (3) radical-reform space; and (4) beyond-reform space. While the first space does not recognize decolonization as a desirable project and, thus, no decolonizing practices are needed, the "soft-reform space" suggests the increased and conditional inclusion into mainstream academia of previously underrepresented groups. The "radical-reform space", which recognizes epistemological dominance, calls for recognition, representation, and redistribution to empower marginalized groups with a voice and resources. The "beyond-reform space", which brings a recognition of ontological hegemony, demands a dismantling of the systematic violence of the shadowy side of modernity (Mignolo, 2003; Quijano, 1992) through subversive educational use of spaces and resources. In line with these perspectives, we critically reflected on the syllabus of the

newly designed LTHE module (Decolonization and Pedagogical Practice, Module I–II). Our aim was twofold yet interconnected. Firstly, we wanted to gain insight into how our own initial work on the module in decolonizing LTHE itself possibly had persisting aspects of colonization. Secondly, we wanted to initiate a decolonial transformation of the module, which, as stated before, is to be implemented in 2023–2024, from a soft-reform space to include a more radical-reform space (Andreotti et al., 2015), with (if possible) elements of beyond-reform space in it.

How we worked with the data

Centering our critical collaborative autoethnography on the syllabus of the module (see Appendix for an English translation), developed by Fredrik and Jørgen, Sandra was invited to interrogate and criticize the course description as a critical friend (Lauvås et al., 2016). As an academic in the related field of critical whiteness studies and critical discourse analysis, Sandra's role was to conduct a close critical reading of the module syllabus and pose critical questions to this text. Fredrik and Jørgen discussed Sandra's comments to the text and responded to the questions separately from Sandra but in the same document where Sandra initially posted her critical questions. The three authors then came together for several discussions about: (1) the questions and answers; (2) the process of individual and collective critical meta reflection; and (3) the feelings that the critical questions provoked in Fredrik and Jørgen, particularly when their "blindness" to their own colonizing ways were revealed by Sandra's questions (cf. Eriksen et al., 2023), as well as when Fredrik and/or Jørgen did not see eye to eye with Sandra's reflections. The discussions, which were all held in English, were then transcribed to a common document.

For the analysis of the data—one document containing the questions posted by Sandra to the module syllabus and Fredrik and Jørgen's answers, and a second document containing all authors' joint discussions—we applied a process of comparison of these documents and themed the data (Saldaña, 2015, pp. 14, 205) into what we found to be four main issues, regarding: (1) what a decolonization of LTHE means; (2) the motivation and rationale for why LTHE should be decolonized; (3) how to go about a decolonization of LTHE; and (4) what the role of language usage in decolonization is. In the next sections we present these findings.

Analysis

With the module on decolonizing LTHE, and in accordance with the decolonial theory outlined above, we want to challenge the participants to potentially modify their curricula, pedagogical practice and related activities, and work towards more cognitive justice (by decentering the existing colonial knowledge regimes and recognizing the knowledge production of the dominated) and more epistemic diversity (by opening up for a plurality of knowledges to co-exist). Our implicit invitation through the module is to encourage critical reflection on our positionality as educators and even

as individuals. When Fredrik and Jørgen initially crafted the module, they intended it to serve as a catalyst for change and personal transformation. The full extent of these ambitions may not have been wholly comprehended during the creation of the module syllabus within the institutional framework. Nonetheless, the module symbolizes a wish to instigate radical change (cf. Andreotti et al., 2015). We resolved to subject our module to the same stringent evaluation we would expect from our future participants.

The conversation between the authors, outlined in the following paragraphs and exemplified by quotes, demonstrated multiple topics simultaneously. It emphasized the diverse viewpoints within our group and the importance of constructively challenging one another to provoke more insightful responses. Jørgen confessed to feeling challenged by several questions, finding them irrelevant or overly theoretical, and at times detached from the purpose of communicating with peers. Meanwhile, Sandra pointed out a series of significant omissions that undermined the goal of initiating change.

In the following paragraphs, the quotes from the syllabus are written with indents only, while the quotes from the written conversation between the authors are written with indents and in italics.

What does it mean to decolonize LTHE?

One of the first points of discussion that came up was the meaning of decolonizing LTHE in the context of the new module:

> Syllabus: "Decolonization entails posing critical inquiries concerning the origins of knowledge and epistemological perspectives…"
>
> Sandra: Is this only what decolonialization is about – critical inquiries and asking questions (who is included/excluded)? What about actually changing these very points that the inquiries are addressed towards?
>
> Jørgen: Wholeheartedly agreed. This phrasing must be changed, for example in alignment with what summarizes the definitions that guide this article.
>
> Fredrik: Yes, if we argue with the theory, it is not only about critical reflection on epistemology, but also decentering colonial knowledge regimes and working towards epistemic diversity, i.e., transformation.

Recognizing the limitations of monocultural perspectives and hierarchies is crucial, as is disrupting these constraints to make room for a plurality of knowledges (Shahjahan et al., 2022). This means that the call in the syllabus for an *inquiry* is not sufficient, neither is simply "seeing the wrongs", as Sandra stated later in the conversation. In the conversations, Fredrik and Jørgen realized that there is a dualism at the heart of decolonization, recalling Zembylas' (2018) words about the need to resist Eurocentrism and recognize the knowledge contributions of colonized peoples, in combination with the moral imperative to correct the wrongs of colonial domination and call for social justice. In the view of "epistemologies of the South"

(cf. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019; Santos, 2014), the struggle for social justice is inseparable from the struggle for cognitive justice, which entails the decentralization of colonial knowledge regimes and the recognition of the knowledge production of the dominated. It also calls for epistemic diversity, opening a space for a plurality of knowledges to co-exist. Cognitive justice can thus be viewed as a precursor to other forms of liberation. Drawing on Gopal (2021), one way to do this could be to "relink" approaches to knowledge (cf. Mignolo, 2003) by opening new pathways to dialogue between different cultures and traditions, for example in the recorded interviews with Nordic decolonial scholars that we will use as part of the course material (see Appendix).

Why decolonize LTHE? The rationale for the module

Another central but overlooked aspect of the syllabus was the rationale for the module, which Sandra brought up early in the conversations:

> Syllabus: "…for those interested in incorporating decolonization into their pedagogical practice."
>
> Sandra: Generally, an unanswered question I have to this intro is: Why? What is your rationale for why anyone should be interested in incorporating decolonization into their pedagogical practice? I am thinking a rationale with respect to social/racial justice could work, diversity (what HEI advertise – they put "diversity" (melanin-rich persons) into our advert photos) yet fail to diversify […] our curriculum and pedagogical practice.

Why did we not address the question of why decolonize LTHE?, Fredrik and Jørgen asked themselves simultaneously when reading Sandra's comment. Sandra's wake-up call was followed up by Fredrik, who recognized that it is a fundamental question that needs to be addressed in the syllabus, as well as discussed with the participants.

Fredrik agreed with Sandra in that the question of diversity is central, but in a transformative sense. More heterogeneous student groups offer both challenges and possibilities for lecturers, Fredrik added, while minority students rightfully claim recognition and representation in line with the "Why is my curriculum white?" movement (cf. Bhambra et al., 2018; Gopal, 2021). Drawing on Gopal (2021), we may add that diversity is important for its own sake and, moreover, it is pedagogically and intellectually sound, because monocultures "do not produce good thinking and are in themselves a lethal form of unmarked narrow identity politics" (Gopal, 2021, p. 877). Finally, in line with Shahjahan et al. (2022), Gopal (2021) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019) and what has been discussed above, Fredrik argued that the role of the university in Norway's colonial past needs more attention. Fredrik reminded us of the moral imperative to right the wrongs of colonial domination and create an ethical stance in relation to social justice for people affected by coloniality (cf. Zembylas, 2018): in our context, the Sámi and other colonized or minoritized groups in Norway. All these arguments, we concluded, need to be discussed with the future

participants and communicated to those interested in taking the module with, as Sandra stressed, the actual inclusion of these into their LTHE pedagogical practices and related activities in decolonial transformative ways.

How to decolonize HE?

Under this heading, we grouped together various conversations on how to work on decolonization in the module and how to challenge the participants to deal with decolonizing curriculum and pedagogical practice. The term "awareness" and the focus on the individual turned out to be a pivotal point that challenged Jørgen's as well as Fredrik's positioning in relation to others:

> Syllabus: "…specifically, how we engage with our students and strive to heighten both our own and our students' awareness of knowledge, power, and the recognition of knowledge."
>
> Sandra: Awareness? What do you mean? Can one not be aware of injustice, yet decide to do nothing about it – as long as I benefit in this system, why should I care?
>
> Jørgen: This is a very fair point, and we might have dropped the ball on this one. Awareness in itself solves nothing. Racism is something that everyone is aware of, yet it continues to bury people every day. Increasing awareness cannot be perceived as the end goal of this module.

For this, we had to ask ourselves: Are we simply asking lecturers to be aware of injustices or do we rather want to motivate a move towards radical change (cf. Andreotti et al., 2015)? Reminding ourselves of the two-step process of academic development through LTHE courses, which may (or may not) lead to enhanced student learning and a change in the students (cf. Amundsen & Wilson, 2012; Trowler & Bamber, 2005), makes the question even more relevant. Before these conversations, Fredrik and Jørgen would be likely to claim the latter, yet Sandra had objections to that understanding, which caused Fredrik and Jørgen to rethink the module design. Sandra expressed skepticism towards the idea of increasing awareness of knowledge, power, and recognition without promoting anticolonial strategical actions against injustice (cf. Simpson, 2004). Sandra also highlighted the ineffectiveness of mere awareness in addressing issues like racism, implying that a decolonial pedagogical approach needs to be not only critical and interrogative but also reparative and transformative in line with the rationale of decolonial theorists (cf. Gopal, 2021) and the module itself. From an institutional point of view, this discussion relates to the widely held assumption in LTHE courses that the development of the reflective practitioner will automatically result in pedagogical change, when interventions on one level do not automatically have repercussions on another (Trowler & Bamber, 2005).

At another point in the discussion, Jørgen expressed comprehension of the argument surrounding the perceived lack of action associated with "awareness", yet did not entirely dismiss it. Going further, Jørgen asserted that disregarding it would be erroneous, because the way we discuss the world and categorize aspects such

as gender, ethnicities, and so forth influences actions within any given society or group. This underscores the notion that our conceptualizations play a role in shaping the world. Consequently, alterations in our conceptualizations can serve as potential agents of change. Adding to this point, Fredrik suggested that within the related field of critical pedagogy, awareness of social injustices often serves as a starting point (cf. Freire, 2021). To effect change regarding an injustice, one must first be aware of its existence. The discussion relates to Andreotti et al. (2015) and the framework of the four spaces of enunciation as a response to coloniality. Possibly, with the current syllabus we are recognizing epistemological hegemony, which is at the border between the soft-reform space and the radical-reform space.

Connected to the discussion on awareness is the question of the role of pedagogical practice and introspection. Sandra came up with the idea to change the title of the module:

Syllabus: Decolonization and Pedagogical Practice: Module I – Introduction and Introspection

Sandra: Would personally love it if it was entitled: Decolonizing Pedagogical Practices.

Jørgen: That is a good and action-oriented title.

Fredrik: I like it as well, it kind of urges the participants to transform their own practice.

Sandra questioned the "and" of the title and pointed out the central role of pedagogical practice in decolonizing HE. The three authors agreed on the implementation of the new title, which is more in line with the aspirations of the module. In another conversation, the authors also decided to change the wording of the syllabus under the heading of assessment, where emphasis will be on implementing changes in the participants' pedagogical practice rather than presenting a plan.

Syllabus: In-person campus meeting (Halden or Fredrikstad, approximately five-hour one day meeting): Topic: Decolonization – Introduction and Introspection

Sandra: What is the rationale for introspection (I do not find these perspectives so prominent in our decolonizing theory (am I right?), but I kind of think of it as a Western, Freudian even, concept.

Jørgen: The end goal of these modules is not to rid us of Western ways of knowing and concepts. So, there is nothing wrong with including a Western concept. The rationale, as I recall, was to use awareness (yikes!) as a detonator for action.

Sandra questioned the idea of introspection as a Western concept. Jørgen, followed by Fredrik, responded that decolonizing HEIs is not about erasing Western knowledge but rather challenging Western epistemic hegemony and opening up for a plurality of perspectives, as Mignolo states, "learning to think with, against and beyond the legacy of Western epistemology" (interviewed in Delgado & Romero, 2000, p. 31). Further on, Sandra proposed working more with the participants' positioning and

how it could go beyond their own selves and include how they, as educators (in positions of power), position racialized Others (in the sense of Said, 1978) though their curriculum, reading lists and pedagogical practices. Sandra also suggested dealing with Indigenous knowledges and utilizing the experience of shared knowledge practices (e.g., Balto & Østmo, 2012). This would be a decentering practice, Sandra explained, for the self-centeredness of white/Western academics performing a listening practice where they show that they take the Others' perspectives seriously into account. Considering their own roles during the conversations, Fredrik and Jørgen became even more convinced of the necessity to invite external lecturers to the module to cover different perspectives on decolonization from outside Western hegemonic epistemology, such as Indigenization (cf. Simpson, 2004), going beyond their own self-centeredness and practicing listening and sharing knowledges.

On the role of language

The question regarding whether we should use the term pedagogy for this module was raised early in the discussions. Sandra had issues with the term "pedagogy", due to its etymology, deriving from the Greek *paidagōgós*, a slave that brought children of the ruling classes to school (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), and suggested searching for a term from other forms of knowledges to replace it. Fredrik presented an alternative, namely "andragogy", which is also a Western concept, however. Jørgen replied that such a vocabulary indeed exists and mentioned the paradigm of Indigenous education that emphasizes the revitalization of Indigenous epistemology and the decolonization of education. Instead of using the term pedagogy as commonly understood in Western education, Indigenous knowledge systems often refer to their own traditional concepts and practices of teaching and learning (cf. Kuokkanen, 2000). The Network of Indigenous, Intercultural and Community Universities of Abya Yala (RUIICAY, 2019), for example, uses concepts such as Nurture and Cultivation of Wisdoms and Knowledges (CCRISAC), however they are not just about pedagogy but also what we would refer to as science.

Jørgen, however, articulated a certain hesitancy regarding the relevance of seeking a new term for pedagogy for the given module. The etymology of the term pedagogy is undeniably noteworthy, yet Jørgen emphasized the distance between the origin of the term and the practices promoted in today's education. Jørgen therefore questioned the significant impact of the term's slave connection on contemporary understandings. Viewing the module as primarily focused on implementing changes in LTHE practices, Jørgen also expressed doubt that the general teaching staff of the university college would be motivated to action by a renunciation of the term "pedagogy", particularly considering their potential lack of knowledge concerning its original meaning and the resistance it could meet in local academic cultures. Indeed, it may be relevant to ask to what extent they should be expected to connect on a personal level to concepts too foreign to their understanding of what they are doing

to what concepts are used to describe their practices. However, Fredrik and Jørgen acknowledged that it could, and perhaps should, be beneficial to incorporate other terminologies used to describe learning processes.

Discussion

In this article, we have discussed the initial process of decolonizing a LTHE module for teaching staff at a Norwegian university college. With a point of departure in decolonial theory and critical collaborative autoethnography, the aim of the article was to gain critical reflective insight into our own work on the module in decolonizing LTHE and how this possibly had persisting aspects of colonization, as well as to initiate a transformation of the module more in line with our decolonial aspirations.

Despite our ambitions for the module to challenge the participants to create pedagogical change and encourage critical reflection on our own colonial positionalities, the critical conversations between Sandra and the two authors responsible for the module (Fredrik and Jørgen) made clear how we, as white academics in Norway, are shaped within a Western tradition and how the institutional frames, local cultures, and disciplinary traditions may be limiting for changes within a radical-reform or beyond-reform space (cf. Andreotti et al., 2015). Two major lacunae in the current syllabus are the rationale for the module and a clear definition of what we mean by decolonizing HE in our local and national context. Besides, the focus on the predominantly white academic's awareness-raising and introspection needs to be complemented with relational perspectives and the practice of listening to silenced Others through invited lecturers, not least bringing in existing Indigenous Studies from a Sámi context (e.g. Dankertsen, 2019, 2021; Kuokkanen, 2000; Minde, 2005). Furthermore, recognizing how language-use matters in decolonizing attempts and how the conversations enabled Fredrik and Jørgen to initiate critical metacognitive self-reflections on terminology, such as the term "awareness", ensured not only a double research process (Delamont, 2009; Eriksen, 2020; Pillow, 2015; Țîștea, 2020), but also a LTHE pedagogical process, hopefully leading them towards more decolonial transformative LTHE practices (Blalock & Akehi, 2018), including vocabulary from other knowledge systems.

As the assignment of the second part of the module is to plan and implement a pedagogical change towards decolonization in the participants' own subjects, the article can potentially serve as an example of how such development work could initially be performed in practice. Thus, the results can be used to further develop the module and serve as inspiration for teaching staff in their attempts to decolonize HE through their own pedagogical practice and related activities. However, as Trowler and Bamber (2005) remind us, the individual teacher may have limited space to implement changes, as the departmental, disciplinary, and institutional contexts tend to constrain new practices. Not all academic development initiatives lead to learning that is subsequently reflected in teaching and student learning, because the process can be seen as "a dynamic interplay, among individual, disciplinary, and

organizational elements and mediated by the reflection on action" (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012, p. 110). Furthermore, the development process may result in different outcomes for different faculty members, something that we did not consider when planning the module (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012). The participants may act as precursors in their departments, but we acknowledge that a successful decolonial intervention would also need to be broader (for instance, by incorporating decolonial perspectives into the compulsory LTHE course for newly appointed teaching staff) and aimed at other levels beyond the individual lecturer (for example, as professional development workshops offered to departments, faculties, and institutions).

As a way of undoing coloniality, decolonizing HE means recognizing the constraints of monocultural perspectives and hierarchies in the discipline, constructing an inclusive curriculum beyond Western epistemic hegemony, and creating LTHE environments that encourage more relational pedagogical practices, both on the individual, the disciplinary and the institutional levels, as well as in collaboration with the local community. We argue, along with Gopal (2021), that posing "the right questions for each context is itself part of the work of intellectual decolonisation" (p. 881). Drawing on the distinction between inward and outward-facing strategies (Shahjahan et al., 2022), we suggest that decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy in a Norwegian HEI context will include processes of diversification (including a critical scrutiny of institutionalized Whiteness), and inward-facing Indigenization, that is, strategies targeting changes within HEIs, such as curricular and pedagogical shifts, and bringing in Indigenous knowledge systems.

Author declaration

Fredrik Olsson contributed to the conceptualization of the article, contributed to the investigation and formal analysis and had a lead role in the writing and editing of all parts of the manuscript, including theory development.

Sandra Fylkesnes initiated the idea of the article and its methodology, contributed to its conceptualization and methodological development, and took part in reviewing, critically commenting on, editing and writing all parts of the manuscript.

Jørgen Sørlie Yri contributed to the conceptualization of the formal analysis, participated in the investigation and in writing the analysis. Sørlie Yri initiated, and together with Olsson co-developed the module on decolonizing university pedagogy, which, influenced by Fylkesnes' critical comments, became the main focus of the article.

Author biographies

Fredrik Olsson is an Associate Professor in the Section for Teaching and Learning (PULS) at Østfold University College, where he works in academic development.

He has a PhD in Spanish and Latin American Literature from the University of Gothenburg and the University of Seville. His research interests are migration literature, Post- and Decolonial Studies, and teaching and learning in higher education.

Sandra Fylkesnes is an Associate Professor in pedagogy at Østfold University College, where she works in teacher education. She has a PhD in Educational Sciences for Teacher Education from OsloMet. Her research interests are concerned with how teacher education deals with issues related to social and racial justice, often drawing on methodologies inspired by critical theoretical perspectives on discourse, whiteness and policy.

Jørgen Sørlie Yri is an Associate Professor at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), and teaches Spanish at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He holds a PhD in History from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) (2022), with a focus on Dominican-Haitian relations as perceived by Dominican-Haitian borderland youth. Recent relevant collaborations include a three-year (ongoing) contract as a PhD supervisor, teacher, and co-administrator on a doctoral program shared between OsloMet and the Indigenous and intercultural universities of UAÍIN (Colombia) and URQACCAN (Nicaragua).

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APPENDIX A

Module Descriptions (I & II)

Decolonization entails posing critical inquiries concerning the origins of knowledge and epistemological perspectives and of what may potentially be left out within this understanding. Which voices are included and excluded in the disciplines we teach and research, and what are the implications of this? Consequently, this also pertains to our pedagogical practice, specifically how we engage with our students and strive to heighten both our own and our students' awareness of knowledge, power, and the recognition of knowledge. This form of awareness is a crucial tool for recognizing oppressive practices within ourselves and others. These two modules aim to discuss and demystify the concept of decolonization, facilitating participants' revision of aspects of their own teaching practices. The change may relate to a single subject or a portion of a subject that you personally teach. These modules serve as an introduction for those interested in incorporating decolonization into their pedagogical practice.

Keywords: decolonization, pedagogical practice, curriculum, and epistemology

Decolonization and Pedagogical Practice: Module I – Introduction and Introspection

Learning Outcomes Description

Upon completion of the module, it is expected that the participant:

- is familiar with and can account for the meaning of decolonization in higher education, including in a Scandinavian context;
- has knowledge of what decolonization means for their own positioning and pedagogical practice.

Learning Activities

The module is organized with one in-person gathering and one online meeting in the fall of 2023. In addition, preparations and intermediate work will consist of a combination of videos featuring interviews with relevant professionals and text.

- In-person campus meeting (Halden or Fredrikstad, approximately five-hour one day meeting). Topic: Decolonization – Introduction and Introspection.
- Webinar: Presentation of reflection notes and discussion.

Assessment

Participants are required to complete a reflection note and a plenary discussion, based on the theoretical framework of the course. This is to be submitted as a written note of one to two pages. It is also permissible to formulate the reflection in the form of a brief podcast episode, video, or other formats – it is up to the participant.

The formal requirement is that the participant reflects on themselves and their own pedagogical practice in light of a selected part of the course literature. This is to be completed and submitted before the concluding webinar, where participants' reflection notes will be presented and discussed in a plenary session.

The module will be assessed with the grade pass/fail, based on a comprehensive evaluation of the reflection note and the presentation at the concluding webinar.

Curriculum
The module has one mandatory text. In addition, students must choose at least one text from the list of optional literature (this can be replaced by a self-chosen text). Furthermore, a series of interviews created for this course are included and, in working on this module, students must incorporate at least one of these interviews.

Decolonization and Pedagogical Practice: Module II – Pedagogical Practice and Change
Learning Outcomes Description
Upon completion of the module, it is expected that the participant:

• can reflect on pedagogical challenges related to decolonization in higher education within a Scandinavian context;
• has knowledge of what decolonization means for their own pedagogical practice and can utilize this knowledge to investigate and implement changes in their pedagogical practice.

Learning Activities
The module is organized with an in-person gathering and a digital concluding meeting in the spring semester of 2024. In addition, preparations and intermediate work are included.

• In-person campus meeting (Halden or Fredrikstad, approximately five-hour one day meeting). Topic: Decolonization and Pedagogical Practice.
• Concluding webinar: Presentation and discussion of students' implemented or planned changes.

Assessment
Participants are required to plan and implement a change in their own subject, based on a framework from the course. The extent of this change is to be assessed and determined by the participant themselves. An oral presentation of the work is to be given at the final gathering. A brief report on what has been done and why must also be submitted before the last meeting. Length: 1 – 2 pages.

The module will be assessed with the grade pass/fail.

Curriculum

The curriculum for Module I and Module II is the same. The module has one mandatory text. In addition, students must choose at least one text from the list of optional literature (this can be replaced by a self-chosen text). A series of interviews created for this course are also included and, in working on this module, students must incorporate at least one of these interviews. This should assist in the execution of the course's final product, which is an implemented change in their own subject. More information about this can be found under the "Assessment" section in this description.