

UJ to compile manual to guide decolonisation of curriculum

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Through dialogue and later the publication of a book in the form of a manual, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) is planning to decolonise its curriculum and make it more Pan-African.



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The dialogue, which began on Friday, 16 June 2017, is being hosted by the university's newly established Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation in collaboration with partners from across the continent.

According to Professor Adekeye Adebajo, director at the Institute for Pan African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) at UJ, the release of the book is targeted for 2018.

"The scholarly debates are meant to help put together a book that will steer efforts in decolonising education. The inclusion of such additional thought will strike a balance between Western and African content.

"In essence, the Pan-African Pantheon is a book that will consist of the philosophy of 35 thinkers. The idea is to include

African and Diaspora thinkers in the curriculum. This is not to scrap UJ's current curriculum but to be in contestation with a Eurocentric syllabus," said Adebajo.

Professor Barney Pitjana, former vice-chancellor of UJ, made a presentation in reflection of Steve Biko's philosophical thinking.

"Black consciousness and black solidarity are potent tools of liberation in the education system. Biko sought to encourage people to become their own messiahs," said Pitjana.

Pitjana stressed the importance of black people making their ideas immortal by being the authors of their experiences and not depending on their white counterparts to tell their narratives.

Professor Adele Jinadu from Babcock University in Nigeria reflected on Frantz Fanon's ideology of the liberation of black people's psychology.

Fanon was an American psychiatrist who famously said that, "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it." In this instance, this generation is tasked with the decolonisation of the education system in African countries, Jinadu said.

According to Professor Shose Kessi, the works of Angela Davis could be of great contribution, in that education must be approached through the lenses of feminism.

"Political rights of women have always been in the forefront of the oppression of black people," said Kessi. In other words, by dismantling gender inequality, education can be transformed.

During her 2016 Steve Biko lecture at UNISA, Davis said that if the government reshuffled its priorities, free university education would be possible. However, students should not receive it on a silver platter, but work for it.

These were among the many submissions made during the conversation, and contributors echoed the sentiment that this mission towards transformation was inspired by the rise of student activism.

Topics ranged from reparations, the rise and fall of Pan-Africanism, pioneers of Pan-Africanism, politicians and activists, historians, economists, sociologists, the literati, and musical activists.

The likes of UJ Vice-chancellor, Professor Ihron Rensburg, Vice-chancellor of the university of the West Indies Hilary Beckles, veteran journalist Lee Daniel, Professor Vusi Gumede of the University Of South Africa, and professor Mashupye Maserumule of Tswane University of Technology contributed to the discussions.

The conference saw presentations on the intellectual contributions of historical and contemporary figures such as Pixley ka Seme, Chimamanda Adichie, Maya Angelou, Kwame Nkrumah, Robert Sobukwe, Thabo Mbeki, Malcolm X, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, Miriam Makeba, and Bob Marley, among many others.

Source: The Times