

Teaching Latin to law students in the midst of the decolonisation of the university curriculum



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Since 2015, the higher education sector in South Africa has been marked by protests and debates around inter alia tuition fees, language and the decolonisation of the university curriculum. Universities have increasingly been urged to present their efforts to decolonise their curricula. This begs the question whether it is possible to justify the teaching of a classic language, such as Latin, which is characterised by Eurocentrism, slavery and colonial conquests, within a climate where there is an urgency to move away from a colonised worldview. The teaching of Latin to law students particularly complicates this situation, as law is a discipline that emphasises rights, equality and social justice. The author sought to present an understanding of decolonisation that can be reconciled with critical teaching of Latin to law students. The methodology was twofold and consisted, firstly, of a literature review to present a description of the background to the decolonisation debate and the relevance of Latin to the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) curriculum. Secondly, the author elaborated on the use of texts from the *Oxford Latin Course* in a decolonised Latin classroom by reflecting on her own experience as a Latin student and a lecturer of law. This contribution found that Latin remains relevant for law students within a decolonised curriculum, where Latin lecturers are cognisant of social justice and contextualise the content of the module.

Keywords: Decolonisation; Latin; Bachelor of Laws curriculum; LLB; social justice; legal education.

Introduction

Since the 2015 #Feesmustfall and #Rhodesmustfall protests, the decolonisation of the higher education curriculum has been placed on the agenda of many South African universities. Students lamented the fact that the university curriculum displayed Eurocentric epistemological viewpoints that was not relevant to African and South African students. This led to feelings of injustice and displacement among students (Costandius et al. 2018:68–69). Various authors are of the opinion that, despite the intention of the transformation of the higher education curriculum, efforts to achieve this transformation post-1994 have been insignificant (Heleta 2016:48; Padayachee, Matimolane & Ganas 2018:289).

Since 2015, academics from various disciplines have conducted research on methods to decolonise their curricula (see e.g. Barnes & Siswana 2018; Methula 2017; Molope & Mekoa 2018; Ruggunan 2016; Sedat & Suffla 2017). A subject, such as Latin, faces specific challenges when it comes to decolonisation. Firstly, it is a classical language that is largely unspoken, and no new sources are being published in classical Latin. Furthermore, the content of the texts often takes place within patriarchal, violent and oppressive settings, as slavery, colonisation (in a broad sense) and patriarchy were at the order of the day in the Roman period. In the general movement to decolonise the university curriculum, an attempt has been made to move away from Western-centred knowledge, which has resulted in problematic issues regarding the content to be taught and the pedagogical capacities of lecturers teaching the decolonised curriculum. How does one pursue decoloniality in a subject, such as Latin, which is based on Eurocentric sources, epistemologies and worldviews? A large number of first-year students studying Latin are law students. The teaching of Latin to law students particularly complicates this situation, as law is a discipline that emphasises rights, equality and social justice. Furthermore, many lecturers are willing but unequipped to approach teaching from a perspective of decoloniality (Costandius et al. 2018:73).

The aim of this article is to present an understanding of decolonisation that can be reconciled with critical teaching of Latin to law students. In this article, the author reflects on how Latin as a subject can be utilised in a decolonised curriculum. The methodology here is twofold. Firstly, a description of the background to decolonisation and a discussion on the relevance of Latin to the

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Bachelor of Laws (LLB) curriculum are presented. Secondly, by drawing on texts from the *Oxford Latin Course* textbook (Balme & Morwood 1996), the author reflects on how Latin can be taught, based on her own learning experience as a Latin student and a lecturer of law. The rest of the article is presented as follows: a brief exposition of concepts used in the decolonisation debate; a critical evaluation of the background to decolonisation; followed by concrete examples of the use of Latin texts within the law classroom in order to illustrate the (possible) value of such texts within a decolonised curriculum. This contribution is intended to initiate discourse around the instruction of Latin to law students in a decolonised curriculum.

Background to the decolonisation debate

A renewed debate on decolonisation has been ongoing in South Africa since 2015. It is important to emphasise 'renewed', as it is not the first time that scholars have argued for the decolonisation of curricula and knowledge systems. Chaka, Lephalala and Ngesi (2017:208–209), for example state that scholars have been writing about decolonisation as far back as the 1960s. The South African writer, Steve Biko, has already engaged in the concept of decolonisation in his seminal work, *I write what I like* (1978). Writers have been engaging with these topics also within Africa, including inter alia Frantz Fanon in *Black skins, white masks* (1967) and *The wretched of the earth* (1963). As alluded to above, it seems that such writings have not resulted in much change in the university curriculum since then.

The decolonisation of the South African higher education curriculum was placed on the agenda of the 2015 #Feesmustfall and #Rhodesmustfall campaigns. While the campaign was largely about the exorbitant fees of higher education, it also included the removal of colonial symbols and the decolonisation of the university curriculum (Le Grange 2016:1–2). The student movement resulted in the removal of several colonial symbols, such as the Rhodes monument, from campuses. However, decoloniality is about more than the removal of statues. The demands made by the student movement were not expressly about what a decolonised curriculum would look like. This section delves into various questions that the decolonisation debate evokes and considers scholarly work on the topic to get a nuanced understanding of what decolonisation of the curriculum might entail.

The first question that comes to mind is why there is a need for decolonisation when South Africa is not a colony anymore. Why are we speaking of decolonisation when South Africa has not been under colonial rule since 1962? In order to answer this question, a brief look at the nature of colonialism is needed. Colonialism was centred around the (false) belief that Europeans needed to civilise Africans. The aim of colonial conquests was not only exploitation, but also to teach Africans the European way of life, which was believed to be the more civilised way (Heleta 2016:2;

Mudimbe 1985:181). Europe was regarded as the centre of the world in the colonial period. This Eurocentric vision was also reflected in the education system. The colonial project of westernisation was thus deeply embedded in the colonial education systems. European universities were set up to be symbols and disseminators of European civilisation in the colonies (Heleta 2016:2; Pietsch 2013). During Apartheid, this system continued, only with more emphasis on the differences among racial groups. Up until today, South African universities are still very much westernised institutions. To Mbembe (2015:9), an institution is westernised when it is based on a Eurocentric epistemic canon. Mbembe (2015:9–10) explains that a Eurocentric epistemic canon is one that does not recognise other bodies of knowledge or epistemic traditions.

With reference to Maldonado-Torres, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015:487) makes an important distinction between decolonisation and decoloniality. Colonisation refers to the fact that one country is under the administration and power of another country (Maldonado-Torres 2007:243). The political and economic power of one country thus rests with another country (Maldonado-Torres 2007:243; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:487). Coloniality, on the other hand, refers to the power relations that still exist and that are still being portrayed in the 'culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production', long after the colonisers have left (Maldonado-Torres 2007:243; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:487). Le Grange (2016) refers to a similar distinction, but calls it 'first- and second-generation colonialism'. He refers to Odora-Hoppers and Richards (2011:7), who state that first-generation colonialism refers to the conquering of physical spaces and bodies, and second-generation colonialism refers to conquering spaces that deal with disciplines and bodies of knowledge (Le Grange 2016:4). It thus seems that decolonisation refers to first-generation decolonisation, and decoloniality refers to second-generation decolonisation. In this article, the author will refer to 'decolonisation', but this term refers to second-generation decolonisation, or what Ndlovu-Gatsheni calls 'decoloniality'. Whether one chooses to call it 'decoloniality' or 'second-generation decolonisation', it deals with the same set of problems, which is that, despite the fact that South Africa was not under colonial rule anymore, at the beginning of the democratic dispensation, the university curriculum still reflected a colonised era. Heleta (2016:3) concurs with Mbembe (2015) and argues that even within the current South Africa, the university curriculum still is largely Eurocentric. For these reasons, discussions around decoloniality and a decolonised curriculum are relevant.

The second question that comes to mind is how universities should deal with the problem that a large part of the university curriculum remains Eurocentric. It seems that most authors propose that decoloniality does not entail removing anything remotely European from the curriculum. Heleta (2016:4) argues that South African universities should bring Africa and South Africa to the centre of the curriculum. The curriculum must thus be relevant to students studying at a South African university. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015:492)

stresses that decoloniality is not the same as a nationalist or Marxist school of thought. In other words, decoloniality does not replace Eurocentric knowledge with Afrocentric knowledge. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015:492) states that it is not just about the de-westernisation and de-Europeanisation, but about the de-hegemonisation and democratisation of knowledge. This means that westernisation cannot simply be replaced with Africanisation. It should be possible to critically discuss any body of thought. Le Grange (2016:6) states that the decolonisation of the curriculum involves 'a process of change that does not necessarily involve destroying Western knowledge but ... decentering it and deterritorializing it'.

A third question that arises in relation to decoloniality, is what the role of social justice should be in a decolonised curriculum. Above the point was made that decolonising the curriculum does not need to be the removal of all things European and Western, but it requires a decentering of that knowledge of sorts. Le Grange (2016:9) is of the opinion that a curriculum that is based on relationality rather than the Western Cartesian duality, which emphasises the 'arrogant I', is central to the decolonisation project. The point made by Le Grange relates to social justice, as it acknowledges that no person is an island and that students always remain a part of the societies in which they are situated. Heleta (2016:6) asks the question, 'Can those who don't care about the poor that protect them and clean up after them at the workplace educate students to become good, ethical and critical citizens and change agents?' Heleta is specifically referring to the role of lecturers and makes the important suggestion that a sense of social justice is something that should be fostered in lecturers themselves.

Mbembe (2015:9) also acknowledges the centrality of social justice to the decolonisation project. He states that colonialism cannot be portrayed or taught in a way that normalises the type of relations present in colonised or oppressive societies (Mbembe 2015:9). Therefore, if subject matter that contains oppressive content and the subjugation of certain bodies and beings is dealt with, according to Mbembe (2015:9), it cannot be left as if it were normal. There must at least be some sort of contextualisation and critique of such content. Mbembe (2015:12) furthermore refers to Fanon (1963), who states that the aim of decolonisation is to become more human by claiming self-ownership. Mbembe (2015) says the following:

When Fanon uses the term 'a new species of men', what does he have in mind? A new species of men is a new category of 'men' who are no longer limited or predetermined by their appearance, and whose essence coincides with their image – their image not as something separate from them; not as something that does not belong to them; but insofar as there is no gap between this image and the recognition of oneself, the property of oneself. (p. 14)

The author of this article is of the opinion that the point is essentially, namely that hegemonic epistemic traditions are violent and oppressive, as they portray a distorted view to (South) African learners and (South) African readers of themselves. A colonised curriculum thus does not allow learners to 'own themselves' (Fanon 1963). The injustice of a

colonised curriculum lies therein that there is a schism between the student and what he or she must study. Mbembe (2015:n.p.) explains that:

... decolonisation is the elimination of this gap between image and essence. It is about the 'restitution' of the essence to the image so that that which exists, can exist in itself and not in something other than itself, something distorted, clumsy, debased and unworthy.

Decoloniality requires that students engage in content from a colonial period and recognise injustices within that content. To this end, it is important that the lecturer has what Maserumule (2015) calls, 'the posture of decoloniality'.

The aim of this section has been, firstly, to establish what a decolonised curriculum would entail. From the discussion above it is apparent that a decolonised curriculum should be one that is relevant to the African and the South African context. Secondly, a decolonised curriculum does not need to remove Western knowledge from the curriculum but resists the notion that Western knowledge is superior to other forms of knowledge. Lastly, a decolonised curriculum places a high premium on social justice, meaning that it does not stay silent on issues of marginalisation and oppression. It also implies a transformation in the way in which lecturers teach Latin in a decolonised curriculum.

This leads to the discussion of the relevance of the subject, Latin, within a decolonised LLB curriculum.

The relevance of Latin in the LLB curriculum

The study of a one-year course in Latin had been a requirement for the admission as an advocate or attorney in South Africa by the *Admission of Advocates Act* (74 of 1964) (South Africa 1964). Latin had been required as a compulsory subject, as a large part of the South African common law was based on Roman-Dutch law, which consisted of numerous Latin texts. Even since the 1980s, arguments have been made that Latin does not have to be a compulsory module for admission as an attorney or an advocate. Already in 1988, the General Council of the Bar made the recommendation that Latin should be removed as a requirement for admission.

One of the main arguments made by the General Council of the Bar was that the length of the LLB limited access to education for many black South African students, because, prior to 1994, the LLB degree was a postgraduate degree that took six to seven years to obtain. Furthermore, the fact that students had to take courses in English, Afrikaans and Latin was believed to further hinder access to education for black students. Latin was regarded as one of the courses that the LLB curriculum could do without. Also, Latin was not offered at black primary and secondary schools, which disadvantaged black students. Eventually, *Admission of Advocates Act* (55 of 1994) (Republic of South Africa 1964, 1994) abolished Latin as an admission requirement. However, Latin is still being offered as an elective subject at many South African universities.

With the advent of the democratic dispensation in South Africa, the legal arena changed with implications for the teaching of law at higher education institutions. New legal sources, such as Fundamental Rights, had to be studied. It was also decided that the LLB curriculum would be changed from a six-year course to a seven-year course and then to a four-year course. With the change of the duration of the curriculum, it was incumbent on universities to sensibly choose modules that would form part of the LLB curriculum.

Before the decision was made that Latin would be abolished as a requirement to practise as an attorney or advocate, many opinions had been raised regarding the retention of Latin. Zimmerman (1986), particularly makes several arguments in favour of the retention of Latin as a prerequisite to admission as an attorney. Zimmerman argues that Latin is an important subject for all law students based on the following: firstly, he argues that Latin will assist students in terms of writing and also general language use; secondly, Latin will assist students to think logically and carefully; and thirdly, some understanding of Latin is needed for the study of Roman law (Zimmerman 1986:605).

Various authors have disagreed with Zimmerman's viewpoints (1986). Stewart Smith (1991), for example, debates the assumptions that Zimmerman (1986) makes about the inherent benefits of Latin. Firstly, she argues that Latin cannot be regarded as a superior language, as it has been proven that all languages have the ability to improve analytical functioning (Stewart Smith 1991:504). She is also of the opinion that Latin is at a disadvantage, because one does not hear the language and everything is based on what is written and read (Stewart Smith 1991:504–505). She doubts whether a one-year course would be able to equip a law student with the necessary expertise to read complex texts (Stewart Smith 1991:505). However, she argues that it should stay as an elective subject and states that 'it is not the *Gotterdammerung* of Latin which is at hand but an enlightened attitude to its value' (Stewart Smith 1991:507).

Boulle (1987) has also scrutinised the arguments presented by Zimmerman (1986). Boulle (1987:23) critiques the argument that a one-year course in Latin will enhance the study of Roman law. He questions the ability of a one-year course in Latin to do this, and the relevance of a subject, such as Latin, with the increase of statute law in South Africa (Boulle 1987:23). In addition, Boulle (1987:23) asks why the study of African languages is not being encouraged when African customary law is also a source of South African law. He argues that it may be better to focus on specific languages that are currently spoken, such as English and Afrikaans (Boulle 1987:23). Another issue for Boulle (1987:23) is what he calls the 'civilisation argument', namely that, that the study of Latin leads to a well-rounded student who is well versed in the norms and customs of a civilised Western culture. He is of the opinion that this argument is anachronistic, and that special attention should be paid to the current South African context (Boulle 1987:23). Boulle (1987:23) continues with the

next argument which he calls the 'standards argument' and which entails that Latin provides a rigorous standard against which law students can be measured. He is of the opinion that Latin does indeed have a rigorous standard, but that something is amiss if the only rigorous subject in a legal curriculum is Latin (Boulle 1987:25). His final recommendation is that Latin should be made an elective subject and more space should be made for the study of an indigenous language such as Afrikaans, Zulu or Xhosa (Boulle 1987:25).

Dirksen (2010) revisits the issue of teaching Latin to law students in the current South Africa. She is convinced that Latin holds many benefits for law students, but stresses that the aim of a one-year course in Latin for a law student today cannot be what it was 20 years ago. She argues that law students have a different set of needs, and that teaching aims and strategies should be changed accordingly (Dirksen 2010:124). She further argues that the focus should not be to translate complex Latin legal texts, but rather on the development of a student's language proficiency, analytical thought, general knowledge and cultural consciousness (Dirksen 2010:125).

One should pause here and evaluate the merits of the arguments for and against the retention of Latin. Firstly, does Latin indeed improve the reading and writing skills of students? If so, does it do so more than other languages? There seem to be many studies which indicate that Latin does indeed improve the academic performance of students in general and in English. A study conducted by Mavrogenes (1977) indicates that students who have received Latin instruction from Grade 4 through 6, have shown a marked improvement in their English grades. More recently, Holliday (2012), however, mentions that, even though general evidence exists that Latin instruction improves grammar and English vocabulary, there is no evidence to suggest that it is the only language that does so. In fact, she states that several studies have the conclusion that foreign language instruction, in general, improves grammar and vocabulary (Holliday 2012:10).

Secondly, does a one-year course in Latin equip students to read complex legal texts in Latin? The answer is an obvious 'no'. However, it can aid students with recognising certain concepts and understanding them better or remembering them easier. For example, a law student may know that the term *mancipatio*, a type of contract, refers to the transfer of goods, as *manu* means 'hand' and *capere* means 'take'. The evidence seems to indicate that there are many benefits that Latin holds for a law student, but not any evidence that one would not be able to have a law degree if one had not studied Latin.

Lastly, post-1994 South Africa has gained a new identity, which is being reflected in its legal system by inter alia the abolishment of racist laws and the adoption of a democratic constitution. This leads to the question of what relevance the study of Latin has in the LLB curriculum when a large part of

the South African legal system is not based on Roman-Dutch law anymore. The author must agree with Boule (1987) that the option should be available for students to study other indigenous languages, especially when African customary law forms part of South African law.

The aim is not to denigrate Latin or to discourage the study of Latin, but rather to reflect on one of the central points of a decolonised curriculum, which is to decentre Eurocentric knowledge and to specifically determine the relevance of Latin within the LLB curriculum. The idea that Latin is superior to other languages is a Eurocentric idea and is not supported by research. Despite the fact that it is not a compulsory module anymore and is not superior to other languages, it does not deny that a one-year course in Latin may yield benefits to a law student. The Latin grammatical rules students are taught in the first year can still be beneficial to them. Holliday (2012), for example, reports that it has been found that students' English language proficiency and performance have been improved by Latin, because it requires an understanding of grammatical concepts that are often the same in English. It will also be largely beneficial for a law student to learn about the Roman cultural background, which can subsequently stimulate debating on cultural issues in the African and South African contexts.

From the above discussion, it has been established that Latin can be a relevant elective module for law students, albeit not compulsory. As has already been mentioned above, most first-year Latin courses devote time to the studying of grammar and lessons on the cultural background of the Romans. Grammar is based on specific rules. The grammatical aspect of Latin does not present any challenges; however, the literature, prose and passages on the Roman cultural background create infinite opportunities in class for discussion within a decolonised curriculum.

In the next section, specific examples of what would be envisaged within a decolonised Latin classroom are discussed.

Latin within a decolonised curriculum

Most Latin courses make use of the *Oxford Latin Course* or the *Cambridge Latin Course*. For advanced Latin courses, students make use of the original texts. This does not need to be a problem, as it was mentioned earlier on by Le Grange (2016) that decolonisation does not entail the destruction of Western knowledge, but the decentring of it. It is therefore more important that the content should be taught from 'a posture of decoloniality'. Next, the author will highlight, with a few examples from the *Oxford Latin Course*, the possibilities and teachable moments that lie within the textbook.

The *Oxford Latin Course* is used as an example, as it is the prescribed textbook for first-year Latin students at the North-West University. The *Oxford Latin Course* is based on the life of Quintus Horatius Flaccus. Part I and Part II of the series

consist of elementary texts based on his life, which students must translate. Each chapter contains a section on cultural background, which affords various scopes to contextualise discussions based on the Roman cultural background.

Chapter 2 in the *Oxford Latin Course* addresses the theme of women in the Classical Roman period (Balme & Morwood 1996:15–17). This section of the chapter speaks of the laborious work that not only Quintus' mother, but most other Roman women had to do. In this section of Chapter 2, a picture of these women's lives being devoted to cleaning, preparing food and making clothes is presented. The text in the chapter creates the opportunity for Latin lecturers to have a broader and in-depth discussion of the role of women in the recent society. Women have been facing barriers in diverse societies and most certainly also within the South African society. This text on Roman women offers the possibility of a discussion on numerous issues that would be useful to a law student, such as the way in which marriages were concluded and the age of marriage. The text draws a comparison between the women in the Roman period and the women in the Victorian era. Here, the lecturer with the 'posture of decoloniality' has the perfect opportunity to introduce an example that specifically refers to women in Africa and South Africa.

Latin lecturers should also be attentive to the hidden curriculum and ideologies underlying texts. For example, a problematic piece in the chapter is the following quotation: 'The nuclear family was the norm, and most women found fulfilment in caring for their family. Nor was their work all dull' (Balme & Morwood 1996:16). This is a perfect example of a statement that can elicit rigorous debate on different cultural perspectives on the roles of women in society today. It is debatable whether all women felt fulfilled, particularly in a society where it was difficult to act outside a role that was assigned to one even before one's birth. This text undoubtedly offers ample opportunity for valuable discussions on the hegemonic gender roles of the Roman period, as well as the current South Africa.

The second example relates to 'Slavery and Freedmen', which are discussed in Chapter 3 of the *Oxford Latin Course*. Written from a British perspective, the text starts off by making the following reference (Balme & Morwood 1996):

... slavery is a terrible thing, but before we make too harsh judgments on the past, we should remember that it was not abolished in Britain until 1833 or in the USA until 1863. Up till the eighteenth century it was taken for granted. (p. 20)

First of all, the contextual reference to slavery is only made with regard to Britain and the United States of America. From a perspective of decoloniality, the topic of slavery is extremely vital and relevant, as slavery had been ongoing for a considerable period of time in Africa, and approximately 176 years in the Cape, South Africa (Müller 1982:1). Moreover, most of the slaves in Britain and America were imported from Africa. It is the Roman culture that is being studied and therefore a larger part of the discussion will naturally refer to

slaves in the Roman period. Although, as Mbembe (2015) warns above, in dealing with these types of texts, one cannot discuss oppressive relations as if these were normal and acceptable relations. For this reason, Latin lecturers should look critically at the relationships between slaves and owners. Many Latin texts refer to the 'good relationship' between slaves and owners, almost to assuage the fact that slavery existed and was an atrocious practice. Pierre de Vos (2001:n.p.), a professor of constitutional law, makes a similar point in a more informal manner:

When I did my LLB degree many years ago, we still had to study Latin, which, alas, was not my strong point. Why we had to study Latin (and Roman Law, for that matter), I could never understand. As I pointed out at the time, some of the texts with which we uncritically had to engage were extremely problematic as they referred to slaves – who were usually pouring wine for their masters or stealing the master's property (talk about cruel stereotyping). I mean, really, how shockingly bizarre that no lecturer ever pointed out that slavery was evil and why no one thought that we should rather discuss the fact that today a person who practiced slavery would be hauled before the International Criminal Court (which admittedly had not existed back then) for crimes against humanity.

De Vos (2011) makes a valid point that a Latin lecturer ought to point out the injustice inherent in slavery. Such a lecturer does not need a law degree to know that some practices are unjust, as a sense of justice is not dependent on a university degree. The question also arises whether De Vos might have seen his Latin instruction as useful if those topics had been discussed critically and from a perspective of decoloniality.

Religion is also presented as a theme within the *Oxford Latin Course*. Religion, whether monotheistic or polytheistic, remains a vital and important theme within the African and South African contexts. Latin lecturers can give examples of the influence that religion has on people's lives. For example, a comparison can be made to the current debates on the legalisation of marijuana and the Rastafarian community. Furthermore, it could lead to a significant discussion on religious practices or rules that are contrary to state rules or laws.

This section has only touched upon some of the topics and how they could be applied within a decolonised classroom. The examples of these and discussions that can take place are endless. The author is convinced that Latin, as an elective module, still has relevance within a decolonised LLB curriculum. The author agrees with Dirksen (2010) that there are a new aim and relevance to Latin for the law student. However, it is important that the lecturer has a 'posture of decoloniality'. Lecturers need to contextualise discussions and be vigilant as to how a text that is translated and discussed can be made relevant to the students in front of them. It is not simply a matter of discussing the background and culture, but the background and culture being discussed in a decentred, contextualised, relevant and socially just manner.

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to reflect on the teaching of Latin to law students within a decolonised curriculum. The discussion on decolonisation has revealed elements that are essential to the process of the decolonisation of a curriculum. A decolonised curriculum must have personal relevance to the students. The discussion around the relevance of Latin reveals that, even though there are not compelling reasons to make Latin a compulsory module for law students, it nevertheless has the possibility to be highly relevant as an elective module. The relevance lies in the fact that Latin has been proven to develop the essential vocabulary and grammar of students. These are important skills for any graduate and particularly for a law graduate. Furthermore, a decolonised curriculum does not require the destruction of all things Western. Having considered the value of Latin, a subject which is largely Eurocentric, the author is convinced that it need not be abolished; it should rather be contextualised within a South African setting.

Social justice is central to any decolonised curriculum. If Latin is to be relevant and taught in a decolonised manner, oppressive relations and marginalised people in society must be highlighted and contextualised. The author has indicated numerous ways in which this can be done with the background texts in the *Oxford Latin Course*.

Furthermore, this article indicates a need for critical awareness among Latin lecturers to transform their teaching approaches in a decolonised curriculum. Latin lecturers should also recognise the importance of internalising a sense of social justice. Although this article has given some idea of what can be done in a decolonised Latin classroom, there is still ample room for further research in this area. Future areas of research could include best practices of teaching Latin in a decolonised classroom.

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I declare that I have no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced me in writing this article.

Author contributions

I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

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This article followed all ethical standards for carrying out research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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