Introduction

Education is not an alienated activity which happens through institutional forms of schooling and structured classrooms only. To understand education through a holistic approach, one has to think beyond these formal ways of schooling and classrooms. In this sense, education is a relative process which involves various aspects including power, knowledge, ways of living, curriculum, and engagement with the self and outside. Power dynamics play an important role in determining what to educate, how to educate and whom to educate. The authority that provides education, which could be the state or any other agency, has a significant role in defining and moulding the rationality of “educating”.

When we talk about modern educational philosophy and institutions, the important question to ask is who has defined and moulded this system of “modern education”. Who has the control over defining it? Who are the people excluded from that power structure’s rationality and worldview? Engaging with such questions will lead us to the concept of “modernity” itself, which developed in the Western world from 16th century onwards. The “White men” who developed modern rationality have left their legacy in all fields including education. The Eurocentric educational system has been oppressive towards other cultures, those of Blacks, indigenous peoples, women, and Asians. The current education system, institutional forms such as schools and universities, classroom testing methods, and so on have developed and expanded through the oppressive colonisation of “Others” by the Western world.

This paper starts by critically analysing the Cartesian philosophy of Rene Descartes, which is considered as one of the foundational epistemic sources of modern rationality and worldview. It makes an argument for the necessity

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of thinking beyond this Eurocentric rationality, which is deeply rooted in all educational systems in the world. The paper next deals with the question of freedom from this oppressive European educational model. Here, it proposes the idea of “trans modernity” developed by Enrique Dussel to think beyond all forms of modern epistemic structures in our educational platforms. Finally, the paper tries to put forward Franz Fanon’s idea of decoloniality as one of the best forms of transmodernity to celebrate the knowledge traditions of the “Others”, which have been suppressed by White racist men. The paper also tries to search for new decolonial pedagogic possibilities from the thoughts of Franz Fanon that are basically anti-Cartesian and transmodern.

**Cartesian Philosophy: A Critique**

Ramon Grosfoguel (2013) in his work argues that the canon of thought in all the disciplines of social sciences and humanities in westernised universities are based on the knowledge produced by few men from five countries of Western Europe (Italy, France, England, Germany and USA). The knowledge these men produced achieved such an epistemic privilege over the rest of the world. The authority of knowledge has centred among them and has created an epistemic inferiority among other parts of the world. What we celebrate as “modern philosophy” and “modern rationality” has a major role in creating the Eurocentric superiority over others. To answer the question of how this “epistemic power” centred in certain Western countries is considered as “universal” and is accepted in the modern education system, we have to check the foundational theories of modern philosophy itself. Since Cartesian philosophy has a legacy in the contemporary world in defining modern rationality and epistemology, the epistemic superiority of the West can be understood from this.

Modern philosophy is believed to have been founded by Rene Descartes. Descartes` famous quote “I think, therefore I am” paved a new way of defining the world by challenging the authority of Christianity in knowledge creation since the time of the Roman Empire (Descartes 2013). The new foundation of knowledge produced by Cartesian philosophy replaced “God” with “I” as the authority over knowledge structures. For Descartes, “I” can produce knowledge irrespective of any time or space. Descartes` philosophy is largely based on two arguments: one ontological and the other epistemological. These form the main conditions for creating an authority of knowledge production through “I”, which is equivalent to God. The main concepts under both these arguments are:
• Ontological Dualism: Descartes claimed that mind and body are two separate substances and the mind cannot be controlled or determined by the body. By this Descartes put the human mind as the superior power over everything and argued that it can produce any knowledge that is universal, in the sense not produced by any particular conditions.

• Method of Solipsism: This is an epistemological claim by Descartes about how “I” produces knowledge. According to him, it is through the method of solipsism, in other words, by communicating with oneself or one’s own mind. So knowledge production can happen through an internal monologue of the subject himself (Herring 1996; Descartes 2013; Grosfoguel 2013).

Cartesian philosophy is mainly rooted in these two arguments and it is highly influential in Western projects of knowledge production till now. But the whole idea of this ego politics of knowledge which put “I” as the producer of knowledge will fail if we find the two arguments to be false. So the question is, can the mind only produce knowledge without the influence of the body or the geographical and cultural area where the body is situated? If yes, then the idea of Descartes might be right. Here Grosfoguel (2013) asks, what would happen if human subjects produce knowledge dialogically, that is, in social relations with other human beings? If this is the case, then we cannot argue that the mind is undetermined and uncontrolled, and accept that it is situated in some socio-temporal backgrounds.

But even now Eurocentric notions of knowledge and Westernised universities are carrying forward the legacy of Cartesian philosophy for validating science and knowledge productions. The notions of “unbiased” and “universal” knowledge actually comes from the same Cartesian rationality that rejects knowledge claims situated in body politics.

Enrique Dussel (2008) criticises the historical quote of Descartes “I think, therefore I am” by arguing that:

Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” is preceded by 150 years of “I conquer, therefore, I am”. Cartesian philosophy is coming from the perspective of someone who thinks of himself as the centre of the world because he has already conquered the world. He is the Imperial Being.

So what is universal and authentic in modern epistemology is developed by this “I”, which is synonymous with the White man who colonises other worlds. Ramon Grosfoguel strengthens his arguments by pointing to the four genocides or epistemicides (extermination of knowledge and ways of knowing)
that led to the formation of the racist/sexist “I”. The four epistemicides that happened in the 16th century under White men are:

1. against Muslims and Jews in the conquest of Al-Andalus (Old Spain) in the name of purity of blood;
2. against indigenous people, first in America and then in Asia;
3. against African people, with captive trade and their enslavement in the Americas; and
4. against women who practised and transmitted knowledge in Europe and were burned alive for being witches.

The canon of world systems of knowledge that developed after 1492 internalised this Eurocentric authoritative knowledge and modern rationality across systems including education. Even the “rational” ideas put forward by Immanuel Kant in late 18th century were also basically rooted in this same racist idea without urging for any transformation (Herring 1996). So, here, we have to think about the epistemic base of the “Others” excluded from this Eurocentric canon. In this scenario, the concept of “transmodernity” put forward by Enrique Dussel has relevance and significance.

Transmodernity: A New Lens to Decolonise the Eurocentric Epistemology

Enrique Dussel’s historical and philosophical work on Cartesian philosophy and the conquest of the Americas proposed the new concept of “transmodernity” to think and go beyond Eurocentric modernity. Many critical philosophies from the viewpoints of Muslims, Jews, Blacks and women have emerged for decolonising knowledge and power. Dussel believed that most of these projects are again trapped in the internalised Eurocentric epistemic stances, which is why they could not create a strong cultural and knowledge tradition outside the Eurocentric world. But the transmodern world dreams about a world where many worlds are possible (Tamdgidi 2013).

The idea of “transmodern” proposes to create diverse epistemological platforms against the monopolised world order of the West. By gathering diversified epistemic stances, it redefines the “universal” meaning articulated by the West on human rights, rationality, knowledge, economy, liberation, women rights, and so on. According to the idea of transmodern, there should not be any “universal” definition for anything—definitions will differ according to the subjects and geopolitical differences. So it basically transforms the Cartesian idea of “universalism” into “pluriversalism” and the
idea of zero space and time into embodied realities of body politics and spacio-temporality.

The idea of modernity by Dussel is totally different from the idea of postmodernity. When Dussel (2008) speaks of *Trans-modernity*, he refers to a global project seeking to transcend European/North American modernity. Unlike postmodernism that goes back to the Eurocentric canon for the transformation of modernity, transmodernity looks for a global platform to bring all the oppressed voices together. It is against the universal concept of modernity, which has meant “one defines for the rest”, and proposes a new pluriversal world where “the many define for the many” (Tamdgidi 2013).

**Franz Fanon: Transmodern Decoloniality and Pedagogic Possibilities**

Enrique Dussel’s transmodernity is a proposed project, and how to implement it is a major question to be answered. At this point, we are reading the Algerian freedom fighter Franz Fanon as a transmodem decolonial thinker who rejected the rational idea of Eurocentric modernity by asserting the lived experiences of geopolitically embodied subjects. Fanon could not directly propose any “critical pedagogic content” or transformation of Westernised education, but his idea of decolonising the mind and body of the oppressed people has larger possibilities in the transmodem project.

Fanon strongly argued for getting out of Western hegemony by forming a new thought process, which is free from the racist West. He argues that Europe has lost her sense of humanity, and that now the oppressed must find something different; the imitation of Europe has to cease and a new direction needs to be sought (Fanon 1963).

How can we find a new direction which is antithetical to the Eurocentric legacy of knowledge? How can we implement it in our daily classroom process? We ought to instil pedagogic practices that subvert the dominant Eurocentric paradigms or rupture historical “master narratives” instilled through colonial will.

According to Fanon, liberation from this colonial legacy can only happen through decolonisation. There are many anti-colonial philosophers who talk about overcoming epistemic violence through liberation. But Fanon rejects the full liberation of body and mind without decolonising it first (Dei 2010). This means that while political liberation can happen by opposing the colonisers politically, the larger structures that have ruled over centuries
would continue to be there in the everyday life of the oppressed even after they are politically liberated.

To decolonise, Fanon suggests that we need “to extricate ourselves” (Dei and Simmons 2010). According to Fanon, each generation has to extricate itself out of its relative obscurity so that it may discover its mission (Fanon 1963). So the colonised people have to critically think about their own intellectual, political, spiritual and mental behaviour, and have to understand whether it is rooted in their own geopolitical surroundings or in the Eurocentric colonial knowledge tradition. In a pedagogic context, how can a new-generation learner realise this? Here, the role of the past history of their own struggles against the colonisers has to be included in the curriculum. For Fanon, the colonisers control the psyche of the oppressed, transforming the oppression into a normalised everyday process. Understanding one’s self-identity by realising the past is a good way to breakdown this normality of oppression. So learning one’s own geopolitical history and the struggle of one’s forefathers will bring a sense of subjective identity and knowledge, which is completely different from the Eurocentric rationality.

Fanon teaches us that colonialism and oppression damage the human psyche by internalising racism. A critical pedagogy of Fanon will have to focus on the basic questions of oppression, exploitation and alienation (Dei 2010). To understand collective oppression, one has to know first about the alienation of the self. Fanon connected alienation of the self to collective oppression. How can we reflect on power dynamics and oppression in an educational set-up? Simpson argues that

Educational change is about power and dominance. It is about who controls our learning institutions. It is about how issues of staff representation are [un]addressed, and how the representation of knowledge in curriculum and texts is understood and responded to. It is about how we utilise knowledge and power to challenge or maintain Eurocentric/Euro-American dominance. (Simpson 2006)

Critical analysis of the dominant knowledge, diverse spaces for children to think and question themselves and others, open spaces for different dialogic engagements inside the classroom, and so on, will help children to assert their own political identity and understand collective identity and its overlaps with self identity.

Fanon’s decolonial project of education can enable students to realise how power works in both visible and invisible ways. Power structures are insidious, systemic, cultural, emotional and symbolic. Fanon acknowledges
the double sidedness of power and shows how it works through social structures and social relations. We cannot see the coloniser and the colonised as distinct but as connected in power relations (Dei and Simmons 2010). Understanding invisible structures of power will help the students locate the spaces where oppression takes place and dismantle the social structures that impose oppression in an insidious way. Contemporary education must involve genuine dialogue and critical discourses in everyday conversations about power to understand if linkages with ethnicities, cultures, histories and spaces. This can assist learners in their schooling engagement to promote liberation and decolonisation.

One of the main ideas of transmodernity is to provide the space for pluralistic views from diverse contexts. Unlike colonial rationality, decolonialism focuses on lived experiences and geopolitical contexts as the major source of knowledge. Fanon seeks refinement of the concepts of “Blackness” and “Whiteness”, which have merely developed from a colonial rationality. In his chapter “Fact of Blackness” in the acclaimed work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Fanon points to the importance of “embodied knowing”. He asks us to redefine the idea of “Blackness” that has been defined from the context of white supremacy (ibid.). Knowledge traditions that developed from “anti-Black” contexts are a significant part of the Eurocentric education system. To counter these anti-contextual fallacies, decolonial pedagogy has to encourage “embodied knowing”, which is developed from one`s own lived experiences and geopolitical scenario. Anti-racist and anti-sexist knowledge traditions should be linked with the cultural context of the learners.

One critique of Fanon has projected him as a sympathiser of violence. But the concept of violence has to be understood differently in the contexts of the “oppressor” and “oppressed”. If the coloniser is using violence to dehumanise the colonised, the counter-violence of an oppressor is to resist that dehumanisation process. According to Fanon, colonisation makes the colonised internalise a sense of inferiority through violence, getting dehumanised in the process. Counter-violence is necessary in achieving decolonisation and regaining a sense of pride and humanity. Fanon emphasised that:

Decolonisation (fighting against colonialism) can only be understood as a historical process that ultimately culminates in changing the social order. It is an initial violent encounter of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies (Fanon 1963).
The same violence of dehumanisation can be seen in Eurocentric notions of curriculum and textbooks, which portray Blackness as an inferior colour and Whiteness as a superior one. Fanon`s idea of decolonialism shows a way to counter-question such knowledge forms and protest against these. Usually, oppression and alienation happening to the oppressed classes in school contexts are normalised and silenced. But decolonial pedagogy suggests the need to break that silence and shout against that oppression through the organisation of certain identities together. It is not a call for bloodshed or taking up arms but for coming out of “inferior minds” and asking for the right to be a human. Unless there is a social concern of counter-violence in students` minds, the same oppression will continue in different insidious ways through institutional structures.

The ultimate aim of decolonising is the search for true humanism. Since the concept of humanism itself is defined by White male supremacy, redefining it and finding true meaning for each subject is the sole objective behind Fanonian critical pedagogy. For Fanon, the search is about “Indigenizing (Africanizing) the West (European)” (Fanon 1988), that is, humanising the West through the pursuit of interconnections, mutual interdependence and respect for shared/basic values of humanness. For him, the coloniser`s denial of the humanity of the colonised subject is a denial of the coloniser`s own humanity. Colonialism is also in an interlocking relation given the ways in which it is produced and reproduced at the material, psychological and discursive levels. So the agency of “humanising” or “knowledge production” is not attributed to external forces but to the internal self itself. If education can give this self-agency to individuals to define themselves, produce knowledge and express their identities without any colonial influence, then the process of decolonisation can meet its needs. But as this agency has been centred in external powers, oppression will continue in various forms including visible and invisible ways.

Conclusion
Cartesian philosophy, Immanuel Kant and Alexander von Humboldt`s Eurocentred modern racist/sextist epistemic projects, and the four major epistemicides that happened in the 16th century, formed the foundational basis of modern epistemology and knowledge production. This created a wide range of exclusions of “Others” by emphasising the superiority of White men through colonisation. Modern rationality developed through the ego politics of Descartes and structured the education system into a “universal” form, which actually rejected all other indigenous contexts of plural forms.
The colonial legacy of Eurocentric rationality is widely normalised in our current educational institutions in various forms. To think beyond this Eurocentric modernity, it is necessary to make education more equitable and diversified. The theories that emerged to challenge the concept of modernity, including postmodernism and postcolonialism, were actually relying upon the same Eurocentric texts and rationality to find solutions. The project of decolonisation actually rejects all the discourses that have developed through Eurocentric epistemic narrations by emphasising provincialisation and indigenisation of knowledge and rationality.

“Transmodernity”, an idea developed by Enrique Dussel, pushes forward the decolonial project in a more effective manner. It replaces the Eurocentric “universal” form of epistemic structure into a “pluriversal” form, where the authority of knowledge production shifts from White men to the hands of the real people who are engaging with it. This paper started with a critique of Cartesian rationality, moved on to the concept of transmodernity and then looked at the ideas and empirical experience of a decolonial thinker who served his thoughts and writings towards the decolonial agenda. Liberation from colonisation involves more than just changes in political power—it requires long-term changes in all structures of society. Franz Fanon has proposed one of the sharpest ideologies of decolonisation. The Fanonian decolonial project has a wide range of implications even now. Decolonial projects including “transmodernity” fundamentally require decolonising knowledge production and reorienting the new generation towards it.

The role of education starting from school to universities is crucial to the decolonial project. The pedagogies used in many erstwhile colonies still have a colonial legacy. The implications of Fanon’s idea of decolonising the psyche of natives, the need for counter-violence against the violence of colonisers, the emphasis on native culture and history, questioning the mainstream stereotypes developed by colonisers including the perceptions of “Blackness” and “Whiteness”, all these have wide implications for indigenous education seeking approaches to teaching–learning and schooling. These can go a long way in promoting decolonisation and leading to a re-centring of indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.
References


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