

Unmasking Occupation based Community Development: Decolonial perspectives

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Access to quality education: decolonial epistemological perspective

South African students have mobilised to draw attention to the ways in which the social inequalities prevalent in society have persisted within the national education system^[1]. While these critiques have emanated from higher education institutions, there is wide recognition that an improvement in the quality of basic education is needed.

Decoloniality as "a particular kind of critical intellectual theory as well as political project"^[3] has revealed that this situation is not merely an issue of strengthening the pipeline to improve access to higher education. It has drawn attention to the ways in which coloniality of knowledge, being and power maintains asymmetric power relations and social inequalities^[2]. This is reflected in the deep inequalities in educational achievement, with attendance at an education institution dropping from 98% for youth aged 14 to 23% for youth aged between 20-24^[3].

Contrasting Coloniality, Colonialism and Decoloniality^[4]

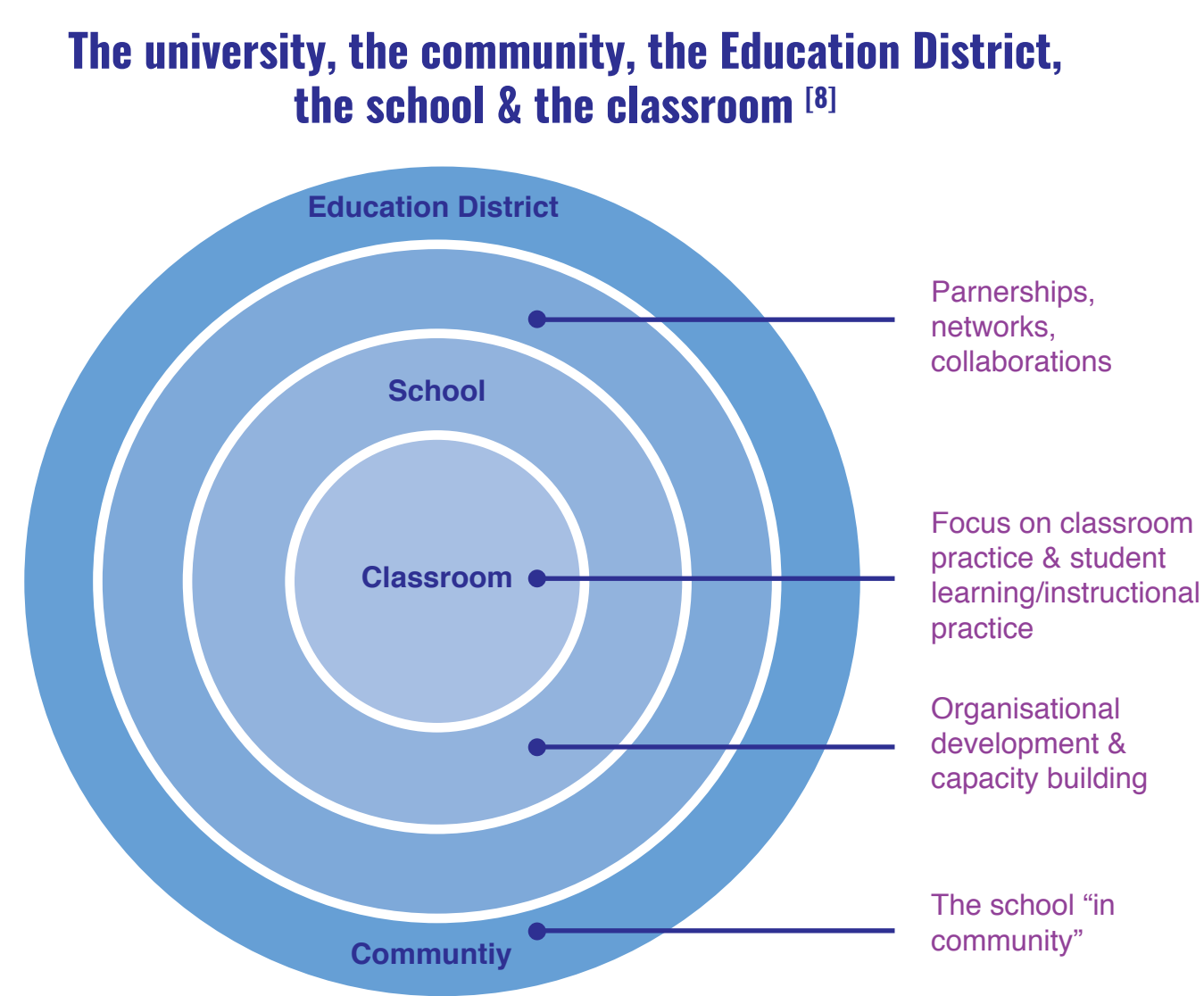
Coloniality	Colonialism	Decoloniality
Coloniality refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism.	Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire.	Decoloniality seeks to disentangle ex-colonised parts of the world from coloniality ^[20] .

Occupation based Community Development Framework

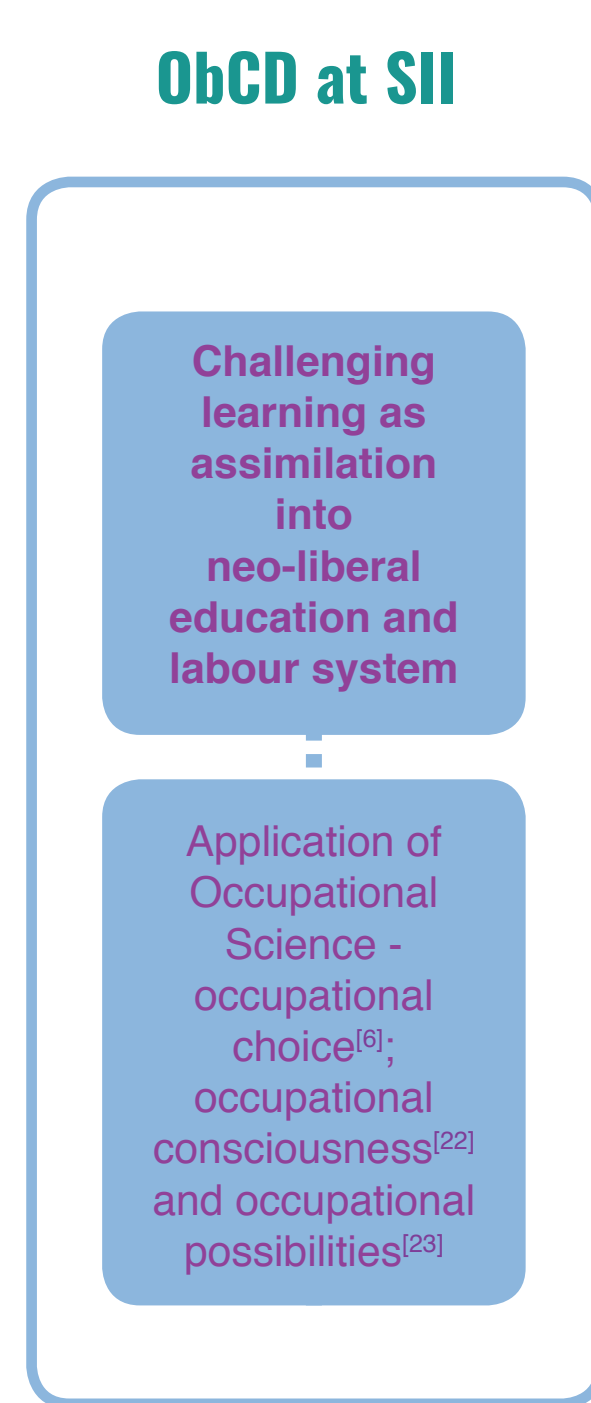
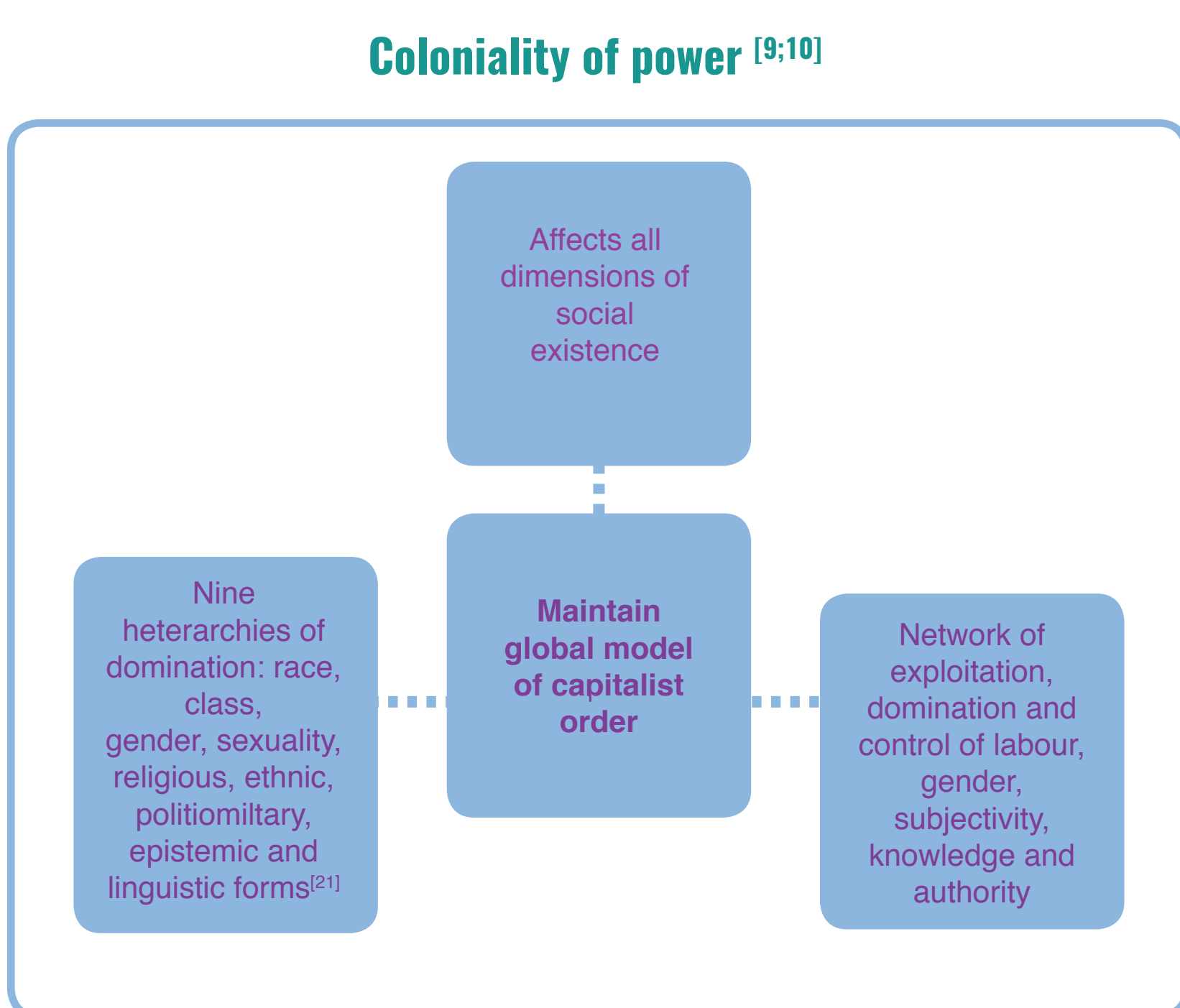
- Foregrounds forming relationships and creating shared meaning through deep engagement – listening, observing, asking critical questions^[5].
- Occupations are viewed as transactional, recognising that performing occupations in context may reproduce patterns of being and doing in communities^[6].
- Through historicising experiences, occupations may reproduce coloniality and inter-generational patterns of teaching and learning in schools.
- ObCD provides a basis for ways of thinking, doing and reflecting on HOW to address coloniality reflected in participation in occupations in context.

The University of Cape Town Schools Improvement Initiative (SII)

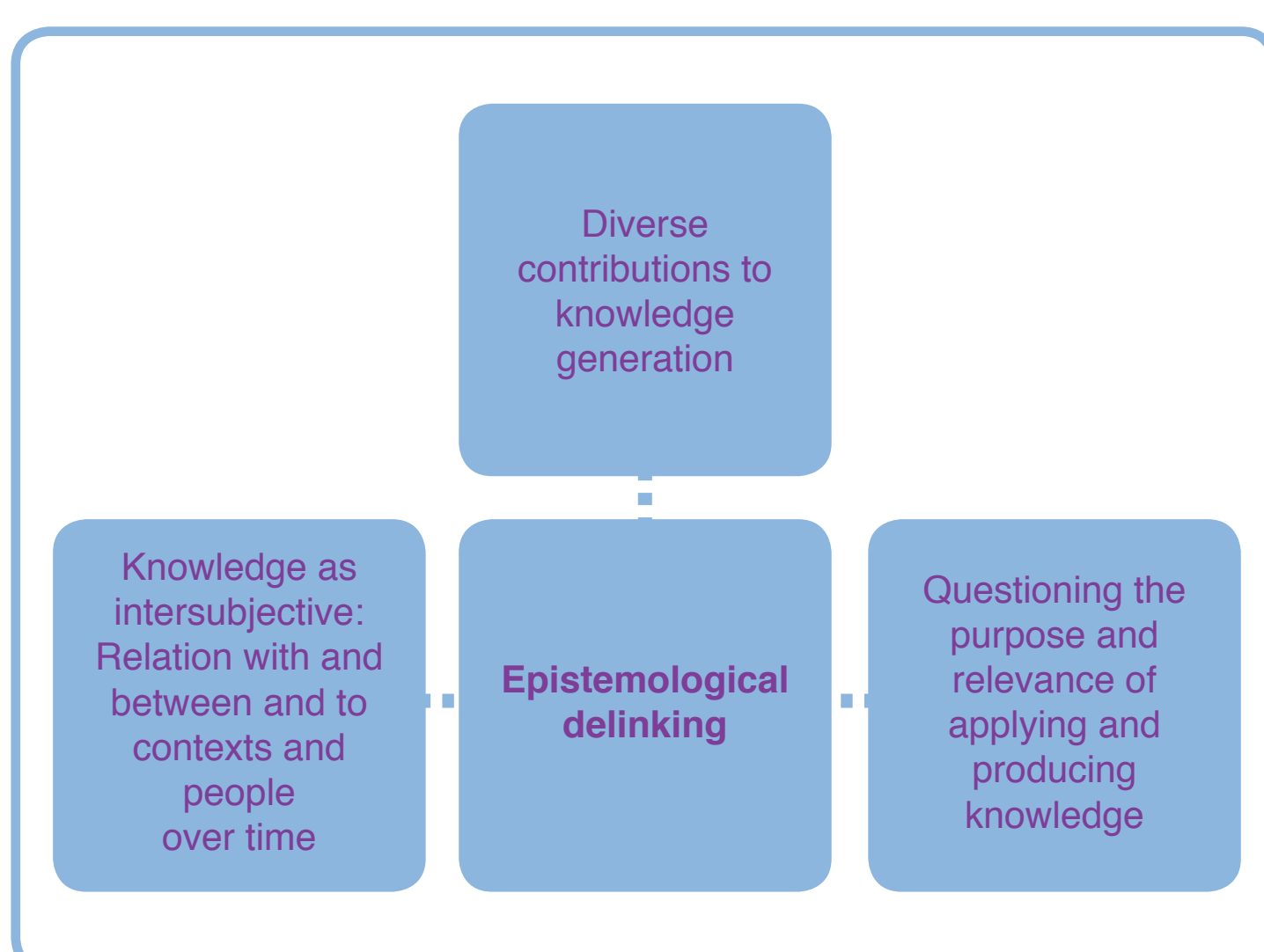
- Emerged in 2013 as a university response to the concerns about the quality of basic education.
- Involves a university-school partnership with the objective of whole school development for systemic school improvement.
- Involves partnering with key stakeholders such as 20 partner schools, the district management and provincial education department and stakeholders in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa^[7].
- Interdisciplinary collaboration within the institution and partnerships with a group of schools in Khayelitsha enables critical engagement.



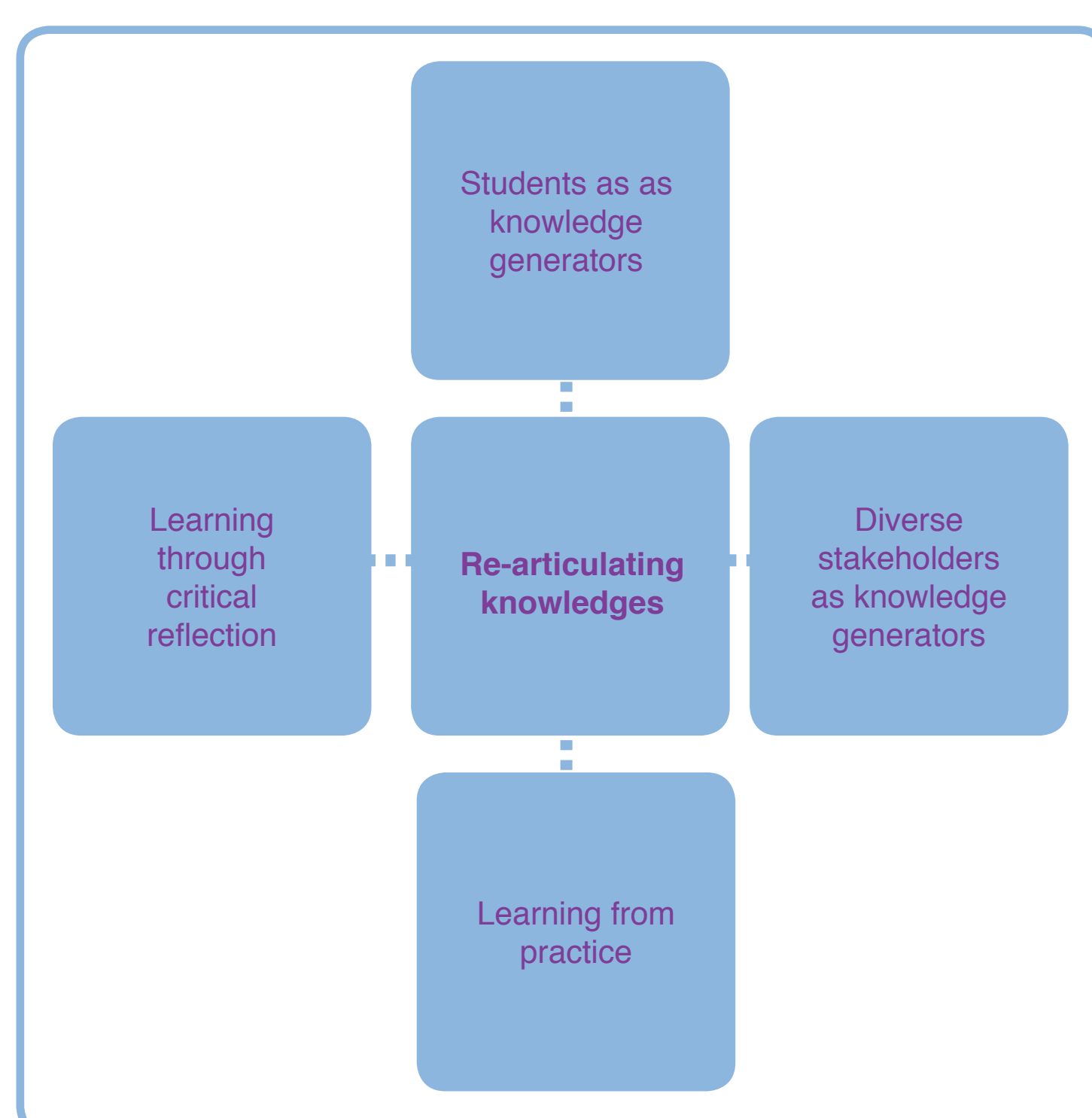
Decolonial perspective: coloniality of power



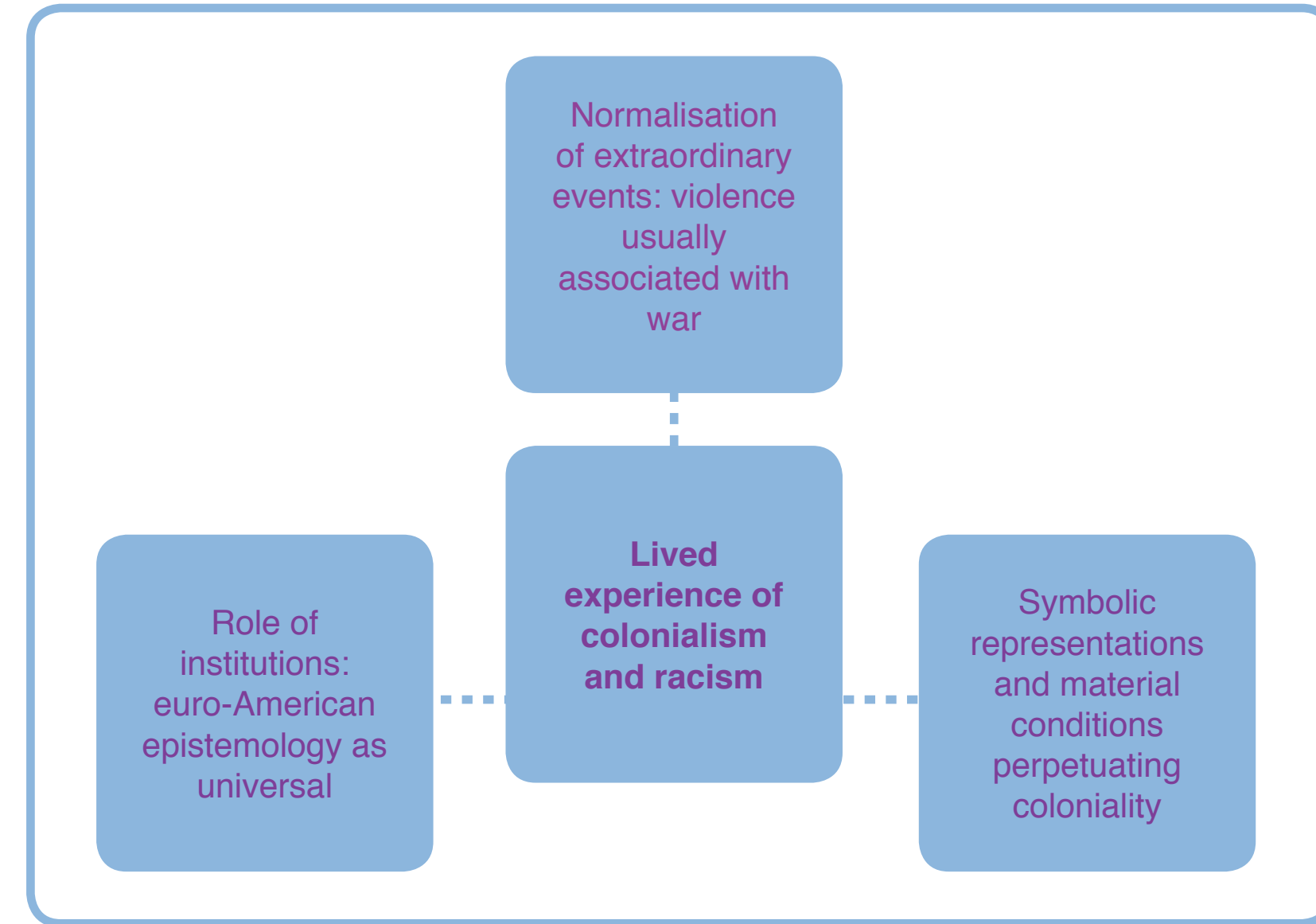
Coloniality of knowledge [9]



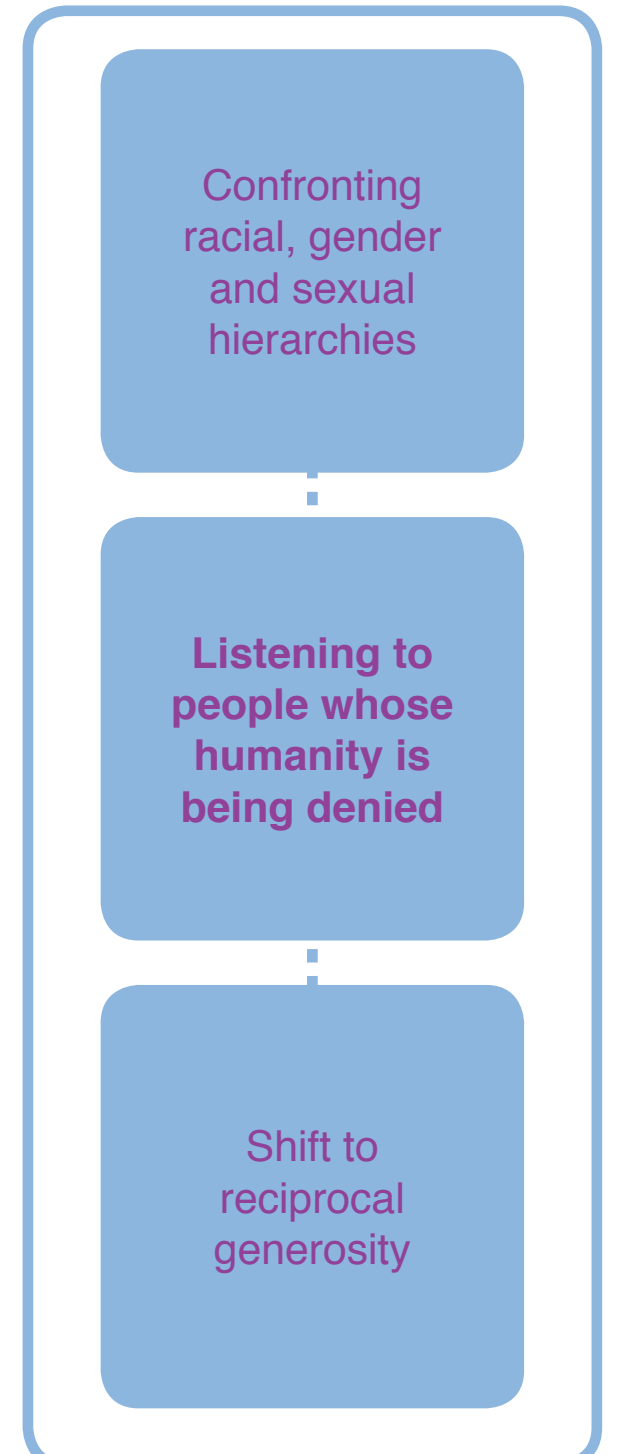
ObCD at SII



Coloniality of being [9]



ObCD at SII



Partnerships at the SII

- Partnerships refers to reciprocity and collaboration – and the development of mutually beneficial relationships^[11] to strengthen capacity across both the university and the school.
- Requires that the university extends beyond its traditional knowledge base into different, as yet untested areas of expertise.
- Partnership model adopted represents deeper, longer-term, collaborative engagements to create mutually beneficial programmes that bring value to all.
- Creating opportunities for interdisciplinary service learning that cuts across teaching and research^[12] and promotes community development^[13] enables higher education institutions to contribute in relevant ways to society^[14].

Interdisciplinarity in the SII

- Aspires to move scholarship and action beyond disciplinary boundaries towards a view of knowledge and action as a discursive response: disciplines work towards developing a conceptual synthesis^[15].
- Allows new knowledge and understanding to be produced in context.
- Professions of occupational therapy (OT) and speech and language therapy (SLT) work together at partner schools to conceptualise and enact the university-school partnership.
- SLT and OT students are placed at the same partner schools, lending opportunity to draw from each other's theoretical and practice knowledge.
- SLT clinical educators draw on ObCD framework to guide practice.

Learning as an occupation

- A transactional perspective of occupation takes account of the many varied people and activities, that interact with one another in multiple, complex ways, forming the situations where daily participation is produced^[17,18].
- Learning: comprised of multiple and varied activities and shaped by contextual influences^[19].
- Recognising the invisible influence of coloniality as a power structure on learning.
- Awareness of coloniality reflected in the education system, sociopolitical and historical conditions influencing multiple processes and outcomes of occupational choice on a daily basis^[6].

Conclusion

Decolonial perspectives may shape principles of knowledge generation, recognising how this is influenced by power and the coloniality of being. Concepts developed in the ObCD^[16] framework and Occupational Science has informed practice across disciplines.

Occupation based community development and decolonial perspectives offers a theoretical lens that may strengthen the mechanisms for addressing social inequality and promoting social inclusion.

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