HAS THE AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IGNORED AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE? WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR ITS INCLUSION?

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ABSTRACT: The education system in Africa has been quite conflicting. This is because, we have been juggling between the English system of education and the French system which totally ignores the indigenous educational system that was in existence before colonialism. This article further examines how European system of Education ignores African indigenous heritage knowledge by citing practical examples on ancient African orthographies and mathematics. Thus the article come up with that unless Africa designs its own curriculum for education system by customizing with African traditions and values 'Epistemicide' will continue to plague African generations.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, synergy, colonialism, pedagogy, Afrocentrism

Le Système Éducatif Africain a-t-il ignoré Les Connaissances Africaines? Quelles Recommandations Avez-Vous Pour Son İnclusion?

RÉSUMÉ: Le système éducatif en Afrique est assez conflictuel. En effet, nous jonglons entre le système éducatif anglais et le système français qui ignore totalement le système éducatif indigène qui existait avant le colonialisme. Cet article examine plus en détail comment le système européen d'éducation ignore les connaissances du patrimoine indigène africain en citant des exemples pratiques sur les anciennes orthographes et mathématique africaines. Ainsi, l'article arrive à moins que l'Afrique ne conçoive son propre programme d'études pour le système éducatif en l'adaptant aux traditions et aux valeurs africaines, «l'épistémicide» continuera de tourmenter les générations africaines.

Mots-clés: Connaissances Indigènes, synergie, colonialisme, pédagogie, Afrocentrisme

Introduction

It has been stated that very few educated Africans are even aware of the fact that they are also in cultural bondage as all educated Africans are still cultural captives of the West (Mazrui, 1978, p. 13). In addition to that, "When you say someone is an educated African, you mean that he is conscious of his people's problems, that he knows his culture well enough to be able to discriminate between its drawbacks and its advantages, that he can take the land his people have, the livestock his people keep, the wisdom that his elders teach, and the customs that his people follow, and, integrating all these with his western knowledge and techniques, help to construct progressive African communities"(Julius Gikonyo wa Kiano, 1952). Moreover, "It is better that we face the problems of Africa as Africa. For our history of being pushed around is African history and our strength to stop this is an African strength." (Julia Stewart, 1972) as well as in a sort of wake-up-call to the African, had this to say: 'Guard the national soul of your race and never be tempted to despise your past. Therein it believe lies the sure hope that your sons and daughters will one day make their own original contributions to knowledge and progress"(Rattray,1927), "and traditional education integrated character-building, intellectual training, manual activities, and physical education. The content included all of the activities, rituals, and skills required to sustain the culture and life of the family and community' (Woolman, 2001, p. 31).

With the above-stated citation, it can be stated that no study of the history of education in Africa is complete or meaningful without adequate knowledge of the traditional or indigenous educational system prevalent in Africa prior to the introduction of Islam and Christianity. It is sad to note that Eurocentric writers believe that no education or civilization existed in Africa before the arrival of the Europeans. Thus, this perspective calls for critical discourse regarding the utility of African education, the placement of indigenous African theoretical and philosophical ideas at the Center of African educational policy

formation; the resurrection of African epistemology, and the institution of a corrective critical theory of African education and knowledge.

To enhance this claim, some examples of this perspective are revealed in the work of George J. Sefa Dei (1994) and Elleni Tedla (1995). Dei, in his elucidation of Afrocentricity and pedagogy, suggests that the examination of Afrocentricity is instinctively an alternative way of knowing the world. Thus an "…investigation and understanding of phenomena from a perspective grounded in African-centered values…that calls for…" the validation of African experiences and histories, as well as a critique of the continued exclusion and marginalization of African knowledge systems, educational texts, mainstream academic knowledge, and scholarship (Dei, 1994, pp. 3-5).

African Indigenous Knowledge Roots

In the Second Session of the Permanent Forum in 2003, many indigenous representatives discussed common education issues, including poor retention and attainment and graduation rates throughout the compulsory and noncompulsory years of schooling. Many also discussed overt and systemic racism and marginalization as root causes of educational underachievement faced by indigenous young people. Some representatives emphasized the link between access to and success in early childhood education and ongoing success in later schooling and life. Indigenous communities face many challenges in education. We live in a world that is increasingly multicultural, and the traditional understanding of the content of curricula and ways of teaching, even for those states that are organized on the assumption that they are culturally homogenous (Rodolfo Stavenhagen, 2015). Furthermore, indigenous people and minorities are largely ignored in most countries in both the design of curricula and the organization of teaching. In fact, in many countries, the basic principles of multilingual and multicultural education as established by UNESCO have been barely implemented. Indigenous cultural heritage involves a holistic approach, where traditions and knowledge are embodied in songs, stories, and designs as well as in the land and the environment – the intangible interlinked with the tangible.

For Indigenous people, sacred sites and intangible cultural heritage are intimately woven together and cannot be easily separated. These allow us to balance development with our environment, which we have occupied since time immemorial. This knowledge indeed forms the central pillars of our culture, pillars that also sustain the Earth. Deviation from this knowledge has grave consequences for the world and for humankind. Through this system, we have seen that oral traditional sources in Africa provide better sources of information than archeological findings as they have been passed on from one generation to the other, but this has been ignored per time in the continent.

Ancient Orthographies

History has often maintained that the Egyptian and Sumerian system introduced writing to mankind. This connotes that the writing system of the African continent is ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, as well as the Meroitic language, which was spoken in Meroë and Sudan during the Meroitic period. These were found to be in the old Nubian as an ancient variety of Nubian, used from the 8th to the 15th century.

Şekil 1. Egyptian hieroglyphs, obtained from Google Image

Moreover, another important orthography was the Ge'ez script which is an abugida that was developed in Ethiopia. It must be noted that the Amharic language is one of the most indigenous languages that has its own Alphabet, which adds some uniqueness to it.

Name	IPA	ä / æ	u / u:	i / i:	a / a:	e / e:	ə / ə	o / o:	wa / wa	yä / jæ
hoy	h	ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ	ሗ	
läwe	l	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ	ሏ	
ḥäwt	ḥ	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ	ሗ	
may	m	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ	ሟ	ፙ
säwt	ś	ሠ	ሡ	ሢ	ሣ	ሤ	ሥ	ሦ	ሧ	
re's	r	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሬ	ር	ሮ	ሯ	ፘ
śat	ś	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ	ሷ	
ḳaf	ḳ	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ	ቈ	
bet	b	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ	ቧ	
täwe	t	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቴ	ት	ቶ	ቷ	
ḫarm	ḫ	ኀ	ኁ	ኂ	ኃ	ኄ	ኅ	ኆ		
nähas	n	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ	ኗ	
'älf	ʾ	አ	ኡ	ኢ	ኣ	ኤ	እ	ኦ	ኧ	

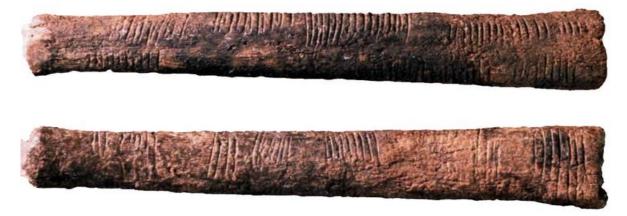*Şekil 2.* Ethiopian Geez Alphabet, obtained from Google image

Ancient mathematics

Historically, Africa is known to have one of the earliest systems of calculations. The oldest mathematical games in the world originated in African regions located to the south of the Sahara such as Gebeta. This is further supported by the oldest mathematical artifact, the Lebombo bone, which dates back to more than 35,000 years ago. It was found on the Lebombo Mountains near Swaziland (Wikipedia Source). Moreover, digital computer systems originated from ancient African cultural practices such as Ethiopia's ancient and advanced system of mathematics which has the same sophisticated system that modern computers use today. Furthermore, many African cattle and sheep herders recognize their herd through facial and pattern recognition.

Şekil 3. Gebeta, African Mathematical Game (google image)

Şekil 4. The oldest mathematical artifact, the Lebombo bone (google image)

The development of geometrical thinking started in early African history as hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa learned to track animals by getting to know the shape of their poop to learn which animal passed by, how long ago, if it was hungry or not, etc. Cowrie shells were a popular form of currency across Africa. Geometry and symmetry in repeated patterns can be seen throughout the area in the south of the Sahara, in forms of artistic designs on houses, gourd, baskets, pipes, and other everyday items. Throughout the area in the south of the Sahara, all adult members of a community had the mathematical understanding, design sense, and construction skills to build his/her own house (Wikipedia Source).

Colonialism and Exclusion of African Indigenous Heritage Knowledge

Africa has rich and diverse forms of heritage, indigenous knowledge, and practices that support social innovation and sustainable development. Such aspects can be seen in different sectors such as medicine, innovation, science, technology, governance, and leadership. According to the studies of UNESCO, (n.d) the contribution of Africa for the development of science and technology can be seen on the Yoruba botanical vocabulary, which has considerable pharmacological significance. Furthermore, Africans made essential contributions in architecture, which can be exemplified on the construction of mosque and churches in Ethiopia. Africa also had a strong foundation in governance and organized leadership. According to Noyoo (2014), economic surplus production stimulus state formation that again sustains leadership and modern governance structures in ancient Africa. Ghana, Mali, Egypt, Kingdom of Buganda, the empires of Ashanti, and Benin are some of the best examples in ancient African leadership and governance practices. Some of these grand civilizations were in advance, technically and socially, of their European counterparts.

The dynamism and perspectives of the African Heritage Indigenous Knowledge System operate on two knotted levels. The first one is the empirical level which can be seen into the natural sphere (ecology, biodiversity, soil, agriculture, medicinal and pharmaceutical); the technological and architectural sphere (the crafts such as metallurgy, textiles, basketry, food processing, and building); the socio-cultural aspects of life (social welfare, governance, conflict resolutions, music, art). The second aspect is the cognitive level. African Indigenous Knowledge has its own structures and forms to understand and conceptualize theories and perceptions of both nature and culture, which has its own foundations of philosophy (Hoppers, 2005).

According to Dondolo, (2005, p. 115). African Heritage Knowledge has passed through generations that are in a holistic approach, yet fragmentary. It is also community-based, unwritten but preserved in the oral tradition and the collective memory, informed by customs, practices, rituals, proverbs, oral stories. Furthermore, African heritage knowledge emphasizes the importance of a harmonious interrelationship and interdependence of all phenomena, be it biological, physical, social, cultural, or spiritual (Hoppers, 2005: 4). African heritage knowledge also embodied ethical standards, standards of responsibility, transmission, and a system of rules and practices (Ibid).

However, such African indigenous knowledge systems were hijacked by European imperialism and subjugation of the African Continent. Colonialism impacted all aspects of life in the global south, including the epistemological systems. In the colonial rule, there was an imposed need for the members of the colonies to acquire a new form of education in order to meet the needs of the colonial production structures (Nel, 2006). The colonial powers used brutal policies and devious methods to subjugate the African people in order to acquire full control over their lands and resources. These policies and methods included consistent inferiorization of indigenous cultures, and concerted efforts to erase existing systems of knowledge and were replaced by Western-driven belief and knowledge systems. Colonialism affected African indigenous knowledge through western education, christianization, and degeneration of relatively self-sufficient economies into dependent consumers (Eyong, 2007, s. 131). The colonial design succeeded to produce the economic and knowledge imbalances essential for the growth and domination of European capitalism and imperialism. European colonialism not only exclude African indigenous knowledge systems but also designed perpetual dependence in terms of financing and researching African past.

Mechanisms of Excluding African Indigenous Knowledge

Neglecting African Epistemology

The colonialism mentality and notion of forming hierarchies and processes of racialization are supported by modernist epistemology and the centering of western epistemic perspectives with the exclusion of African epistemology (Kerr, 2014). Researches show that Africa has tremendous roots in epistemology and philosophy with a unique way of apprehending external object or reality. Airoboman and Asekhauno (2012) identified Senghor's philosophy of epistemological anthropology in his philosophy of Negritude and the theory of African mode of knowing; A Ghanaian philosopher Wiredu's also, advances two epistemological theses from the Akan linguistic point of view. Furthermore, St. Augustine attacked and refuted skepticism in his "Contra Academicos" which are some indicators of African epistemology roots.

However, African epistemology and philosophy have immense contributions for academia, and modern thoughts although the African educational system and curriculum have ignored such contributions. It also favored westernization, and colonial education dominates African academics. In line with this Kerr (2014) (in Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 214) argued that Western modernist view of knowledge is able to dominate the search and advancement of knowledge by cloaked as western education is universal knowledge and present itself as the god-like view of truth. It basically shaped the perspective of the most advanced and superior nonwestern education.

Inferiorization of African being

Perpetuating of colonialism was insured by inferiorization of the African being. The colonizers basically denied the African indigenous people not only to enjoy their culture but also regarded them as inferior and backward. This also implies that Africans were treated as they do not have philosophy and epistemology (Masaka, 2016). Controlling the minds and thinking of African elites and the African population is another manifestation of neocolonialism in Africa. In this regard, using advanced western Media to influence the society and shape an agenda that favors western culture and life as superior to Africans, providing scholarships and educational systems which are shaped not in the way that benefit Africa, expanding western films and mechanisms of influence are some of them. In support of this, Walter Rodney (1972, p. 284) How Europe underdeveloped Africa clearly explained.

> "Through influence of western films, books and education syllabus where films books and education Syllabus where by the curriculum is developed by the agent of colonialists masters that it is European based to big extent Little is about the people concern"

In the social aspect of neocolonialism, the general belief on the westerners is controlling the minds and hearts of the people so that they will surrender themselves without any doubt. This again further led to the exclusion of African indigenous philosophy, epistemology, and heritage from the African curriculum in the education sphere

Draining Human Capital

The drain of highly educated Africans to western nations is not a new phenomenon. However, the magnitude and intensity increase at an alarming rate to the extent that it highly affects African higher

educations and education systems at large. Dr. Lalla Ben Barka (Deputy Executive-Secretary, ECA) once said that "African governments have a great responsibility to ensure that brains remain in the continent; otherwise, in 25 years' time, Africa will be empty of brains." The drain and loss of human capital leave African higher education system without the expertise necessary to support education and research. For example, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)(nd), Africa has already lost one-third of its human capital and has been losing its skilled personnel at an increasing rate, with an estimated 20,000 professionals leaving the continent annually since 1990. This is manpower trained by African capital but serves and works for western industries, research institutions, and higher education while Africa is suffering from a lack of skilled labor.

Decolonizing African Education Systems

Scholars used the term 'Epistemicide' to refer to the deliberate eradication of the existing knowledge and aborting the possible cultivation of new knowledge. In this regard, what exactly happened during colonialism was the destruction of African philosophies, ideas, creativity, and knowledge as backward, traditional, and irrelevant. The consequence was replacing the western style of education and curriculum on the African continent. Such a project of domination, according to (Progler, 1999) continued after colonialism had gone many years back in the economic, educational, and political domains. In most cases, African educational institutions dissemination and production of academic knowledge simply reflects the western hegemony. The provisions of intellectual exchange are distinctly unequal, as the African Studies in Europe also constitute a marginal part of the academy while the European epistemology remains central in African Studies (Zeleza, 2006). Alleged ethnicization and methodological issues of African Educational System affect African academics (Horsthemke, 2004, p. 31). The passive response of universities and research institutions in Africa helped the hegemony of colonial, and now western knowledge systems are entrenching itself deep in Africa with all the ravages of the contemporary knowledge imperialism and the capitalist globalization (Zeleza, 2006, p. 196).

The narration for decolonizing the African education system is basically mean the incorporation of local indigenous knowledge, language, and skills to the African education curriculum to understand African problems. According to (Adebisi, 2016) some attempts were made to reform post-colonial education. For example, in Tanzania, Nyerere introduced a Freire-inspired farm-school system. Similarly, in 1995, South Africa included indigenous knowledge in its redesign of the curriculum. Introducing inclusive education was also attempted and supported by UNESCO. However, such reforms were not long-lived due to the fact that difficulty in balancing globalization and with African traditions.

Hope and nightmare for Restoration of African Indigenous Knowledge

The Afro-Pessimistic View

The European colonialist establishment found it difficult to believe that a group of people raped and devastated by them could own the ancestry of letters and civilization that they shared. They believe as many do to this day, that Africans essentially have no history before the arrival of white people. Hugh Trevor Roper (1967) put it aptly when he said undergraduate students towards the turn of the century, seduced by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demanded that they should be taught the history of black Africa. He insisted that perhaps this demand could only be met in the future when there would be some African history to teach. He argues that at the time, there was none or very little African history to teach. Hegel (1964) also weighed into this discourse when he claimed that Africans are zoo-bound as they lacked philosophy, which is mankind's greatest intellectual achievement.

Nwala (1993) lends further weight to the discussion by saying African intellectuals began to reject and deny their own cultural and intellectual achievements. He says it was African scholars who were affected by Eurocentric education or who had not been exposed to the rich cultural history of Africa that denied the existence of African philosophy during the "Great Debate" of the seventies and eighties

Europe is also guilty of intellectual theft in Africa. African achievements of the Nubian culture were considered as European. Nwala (1993) noted that African achievements in science and philosophy were considered as European achievements. Thus, we read about such African philosophers like St. Augustine, Origen, Philo, Plotinus and Porphyry as a part of Western intellectual tradition and achievement. The great achievements of Egyptian thought were largely considered as European achievements. It is

under this context that European perspectives triumphed over those of Africans. Hence, what is today referred to as colonial mentality took sway, and Africans continued denying and rejecting their intellectual and cultural prowess.

The Afro-Optimistic View

The Afro-Optimistic view evolved in response to the Afro-Pessimistic view. Onyewuenyi (1993) indicates that the Afrocentric movement is a series of activities leaded by African and African-American scholars and educators and directed towards achieving the particular end of ensuring that the African heritage and culture, its history and contribution to world civilization and scholarship are reflected in the curricula on every level of academic instruction. Advocates of Afrocentrism demand a reconstruction and rewriting of the whole panorama of human history in its account of the origin of mankind, the origin of philosophy, science, medicine, agriculture architecture etc.

Asante (1991), a radical Afrocentrist, voiced his fulfillment when declared that African people, for over 300 years, have lived on the intellectual terms of Europeans. The African perspective has finally come to an end, he said. Accordingly, he sees Eurocentrism as a complete dislocation, self-alienation, disorientation, and misinformation of the Afro-Americans. As an ideology that arose as a reaction against Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism perceives authentic development as that should be grown and bred in Africa. It seems to advise Africans to boycott all the "boycottables" of Eurocentrism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Generally, it is clear that by the end of the 1960s, almost all African nations had got independence. However, the western values, the system of governance and policies that were being applied and inculcated in the continent without customizing African traditions, values, and understanding which still go on. These are the accounts of the legacy of colonialism where colonial masters still established Colonial permanent client-patron relationship that existed and still exists in some cases between ex-colonial powers and the ruling elitist governments. Similarly, western influence has been observed with the eradicating and neglecting of African traditional values, cultures and most importantly, indigenous knowledge. Unless Africa designs its own curriculum for education system by customizing African traditions and values 'Epistemicide' will continue to plague African generations.

Africans should not accept the view that Africa is never developed, undevelopable, and actually a special case for developmental studies. This is because history is replete with epochs when Africa called the shots in civilization. Thus seen, there should be a total overhaul in the curriculum of education in Africa from Nursery to Tertiary levels to enable future Africans to learn how to drag a harder bargain. By this, we insist on a developmental status or position that is capable of placing Africa on an equal round table with other developed continents of the world. In an unprecedented manner, Africa has arrived at the dinner table in a fashion that is irreversible.

- Africa should develop a new pedagogy of development to include austerity, hard work, rationality, universality, objectivity, and internalize them.
- De-Racialize African Educational Systems: There are few success stories in South Africa (Azania) such as the Rhodes Must Fall movement and recognizable assimilation of black academics and senior administrators culminating in the appointment of Prof. Mamoggethi Phakeng as the first black female Vice-Chancellor of the highest-ranked African University the University of Cape Town.
- Africa should continue nurturing flourishing decoloniality literature and World View seen through African eyes like the University of South Africa (UNISA) Centre for Latin American Studies Witwatersrand University's African Centre for the Study of the United States.
- African knowledge of generation institutions should promote Innovative thinking as it provides the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities
- There must be an evaluation of the effectiveness of Conventional Science and Indigenous Knowledge.
- Facilitating the broad assimilation of disadvantaged African students in the continent's best institutions of learning. (A good example for a call for such a dispensation is the Fees Must Fall Movement in South Africa in which university students in 2015 resisted a fee increase and instead called for free quality education).

- Teach local languages and instill a sense of self-consciousness and cultural identity as well as Promote Dissemination of Indigenous Knowledge across cultures. Facilitate the broad assimilation of disadvantaged African students in the continent's best institutions of learning.
- Teach Language and Instill a Sense of Self-Consciousness and Cultural Identity andinclusion into our Curriculum
- Promote dissemination of indigenous knowledge across cultures and cultural dimension of development

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