

Decolonisation and Downshift-Knowledge Reproduction in Africa

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Abstract

Colonialism established a system of racial oppression, both mentally and physically, by impeding pre-colonial African education, which was originally intended to reflect the realities of pre-colonial African societies. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this paper argues that before the colonial administration, Africans were already developed people with different educations for different age groups, making them functional and inclusive within the larger political sphere. Decolonisation only reflects a shift in political power and the withdrawal of colonialists from African territories, but it has not resulted in any fundamental shift in the mentality of political leaders and nation-building in the decolonised nations. Through the adoption of game theory, this paper argues that the education curriculum left behind by colonial governments was designed to make African nations economically and technologically dependent on developed nations. Such a pattern of education was not geared toward African technological development, but rather conditioned African nations to be consumers rather than producers, with the resulting loss of initiative among the Africans. The curriculum is insidious in terms of principles and implementation across all levels of educational institutions, slowly destroying the economies of African nations that were once ahead of European nations during the pre-colonial epoch. Game theory was adopted for the understanding of the complex dynamics of decolonisation and downshift in knowledge reproduction in Africa. Instead of accelerating the socio-economic development of decolonised African nations, the curriculum based on Western principles and ideas further subjugates African economies to imperialist influence and hegemony through the instrumentality of international financial institutions, which frequently dictate exploitative asymmetric relationships between the developed and developing African nations. African nations must therefore look inward for an African-oriented and culturally appropriate educational curriculum to meet the demand for socioeconomic advancement and growth.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Colonialism, Curriculum, Indigenous-education, Pedagogy, Africanisation.

Introduction

The decolonisation of Africa in the mid-twentieth century was a turning point in the history of the continent, culminating in a period of political independence and self-determination. Colonialism had caused unprecedented delays in the development of African nations, which were initially experiencing development that was tailored to their needs and cultural values. Africa had seen a prolonged reduction in knowledge throughout the colonial period which countered the native educational advancement. The consequences of have been far-reaching, hindering hindering Africa's progress in various domains. The consequences of colonialism on indigenous education in Africa have had a lasting impact on the continent's educational landscape and its ability to fully actualise its potential. To a greater extent, it undermined the indigenous knowledge systems which subsequently hindered the development and preservation of local knowledge, including traditional farming practices, medicine and environmental management.

African pre-colonial development patterns included not only political and socio-economic development but also educational advancement. Africans were exposed to the level of education that was appropriate for the physical, psychological, and spiritual development of the individual

and age group at each stage of development. The celebrated decolonisation of African nations, as well as the attendant western education legacies, have harmed the socio-economic development of colonised African nations. Decolonisation is viewed as a type of regime shift and a shift in power relationships between colonial powers and colonial nationalist movements seeking self-determination. Using descriptive qualitative approach, this paper reveals the extent to which colonialism had retarded the educational advancement of African indigenous education and the difficulty of attaining full decolonisation of the African educational system. It discusses the ways and manners in which the western powers exercise exploitative hegemony over Africans and thereby undermines the intellectual development of Africans.

Conceptual Clarification

The word 'decolonisation' was first used by Moritz Joseph Brown (1932) in his article "Imperialism" in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (Betts, 2012). Decolonisation had been given different meanings but all posited a convergence of political and regime change. Decolonisation has been described as a form of regime shift, a changing relationship between the colonising power and the colony (McLean & McMillan, 2003). Decolonisation is a process by which legally dependent territories obtained constitutional independence (Bismarck, 2012). Decolonisation is the process whereby colonial powers transferred institutional and legal control over their territories to indigenously based nation-states (Duara, 2004). Decolonisation is the process of undoing colonising practices.

Game theory is adopted as the theoretical framework due to its significance in explaining the complex dynamics of decolonisation and downshift-knowledge reproduction in Africa. The theory explains the utilisation game plan or strategy which includes all options for contingencies to achieve a predetermined objective. It entails the analysis of how decisions are made through the interactions of various parties considering the reactions of other parties. It utilises the various contingencies to advance the interest of a party against others to achieve the desired ends in terms of pay-offs. A game is any situation in which the outcomes are determined by the interactions between individuals (Varma, 1975). Game theory explains the exploitative asymmetric interactions that exist between the former colonial powers and their former colonies. The independence of the African nations was granted by the colonial powers reluctantly, but not without contingencies put in place for further colonisation through the unforeseen channels.

The pedagogy of Pre-colonial African Indigenous Education

The environment and social contents shaped African pre-colonial education. This was common practice in most African countries prior to the arrival of colonialism. The realities of pre-colonial African education matched the realities of African nations, resulting in personalities who fit well into society (Osaat & Asomeji, 2017). At the time, the learning process mirrored the pattern of work and activities in African societies (Rodney, 1976). The indigenous education emerged in response to necessities and utilities which are elusive in the pedagogy of western education. Though, there is the problem of uniformity of African pedagogy regarding the form of education that should be given to Africans out of the myriads of African native educations (Matasci, Jeronimo, & Dores, 2017). One outstanding goal of pre-colonial African education was to enhance the total development of the African child's intellect, physical, and morals (Ehinder, 1994).

Pre-colonial African education was designed to introduce the child to the community and instill in the child, certain moral values such as respect for elders and the constituted authorities at all levels (Osaat & Asomeji, 2017). Pre-colonial education also equipped Africans with vocational skills specifically to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour and dignity (Ehinder, 1994). The indigenous training activities immensely incorporated moral disciplines and thereby drastically

reduced social vices which now characterized modern societies in Africa. The pre-colonial educational systems produced well-grounded African children right from childhood to adulthood. The African indigenous education prioritises the functionality of the political and socio-economic activities of the African nations through the transmission of knowledge. African pre-colonial pedagogy was relegated by the colonial masters due to the oral and imitation methods of imparting knowledge to the learners (Osaat & Asomeji, 2017). However, African pre-colonial pedagogy has quality functionalism at the base of its philosophy and of relevance to the society in terms of impartation of knowledge practical skills, values, beliefs, traditions and cultural elements (Osaat & Asomeji, 2017). In this regard, African indigenous education focuses on social responsibility, job orientation, spiritual development, and inculcation of values that promote the functionality and involvement of individual in the socio-economic and political development of the African nations. According Kaya and Seleti (2013) African indigenous education promotes social cohesion by teaching the people the significance of community cooperation. Kaya and Seleti (2013) aver that the indigenous education of Africans incorporates problem-solving skills and creativity. The indigenous education has a pivotal role to play in the future of Africa if unhampered by the colonialism.

Devastating Effect of Colonialism on African Indigenous Education

Colonialism destroyed the indigenous system of education of African societies. It disrupted the full realisation of the African nation's construction in the realm of knowledge and ideas production in Africa at large (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Antithetical to African indigenous education, the western education introduced by colonialists, eroded the educational realities of Africans and in place of it imposed a racially, exploitative, oppressive, and patriarchal system. The early forms of western education received by Africans were significantly influenced by European missionaries. The primary intention of the Missionaries was to propagate and Christianise the natives (Fafunwa, 1974). The missionary education and training were limited to a mere servitude learning system. Such forms of education were to make the missionaries effective in their new roles in the colonial administration and were not designed in any way to develop Africans but to subjugate them mentally, physically, and emotionally as puppets to the missionaries and colonial powers.

The colonial education ignited anathema which compromised and truncated African development in terms of socio-economic and political realities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Western education serves as a mechanism for advancing the interests of the colonialists in the areas of economic prosperity and attendant impoverishment of the African nations. Education was seen by the colonial powers as a strategy in the colonisation of vast areas of the world (Enslin, 2021). Western education dismantled the African system of education and in its place, introduced a system that aims at perpetuating exploitation and domination of the colonial nations. Unfortunately, African intellectuals that ought to have rejected such a move, embraced western education and adapted it vaguely to suit themselves and the caprices of the emerged African leaders. Western education alienated the Africans from cultural values on the platter of a highly organized capitalist society under the dead weight of uniformity (Varma, 1975).

The colonial education posited native education as a useless form of education (Matasci, Dores, & Jeronimo, 2020). The native education that was condemned by the colonialists was a matter of necessity and utility for the Africans. Due to the perceived inferiority of the native education and indigenous languages, the indigenous educational system was abandoned because of the methods of its delivery which was informal and replaced with western education which is delivered through the formal school system (Osaat & Asomeji, 2017). . This enables the colonial powers to perpetuate their grips on the independent African nations which have mentally refused to be decolonised.

The Concept of Elusive Decolonisation and Downshift Knowledge Reproduction

Decolonisation entails a process of achieving regime change from colonial power to self-government by the indigenous people. It refers to granting of independence to the colonies to enable them to govern themselves in accordance with their beliefs and principles. The waves of independence spread across Africa with the majority of African nations hopeful for development and considered themselves as partners in progress with their former colonial masters. After the independence, the reality, therefore, is that the caliber of indigenous rulers in Africa succeeding the colonial administration has been unable to steer clear of dangers of neocolonialism and sustained imperialism (Alalade, 2003).

The failure of African nations and their universities to promote scientific and technical development based on African orientations further promotes the interests of their former colonial masters. The curriculum of university education bestowed on the Africans as colonial legacy was actually designed to perpetuate the developed nations exploitative activities and hegemony. The curriculum conditioned the African intellectuals to believe that Africans are technologically backward while the Africans were once developed people with advanced technology. According to Rodney (1976), before the advent of colonial rule, Africa was ahead of the European nations. He further postulated that African societies had different education for different age groups which made them functional and inclusive (Rodney, 1976).

The colonial education tactically reduced African intellectuals and academics into mere 'hunters and gatherers' who only assist western scholars in the collection of empirical data that were formulated to theories for the purpose of African development (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Decolonisation did not produce a new world dominated by new African and humanist values of liberty, social justice, and equality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). It was this apparent situation that made the concept of decolonisation a false experience in Africa and created a flourished ground for neocolonialism and elusive independence. Consequently, knowledge production by the intellectuals and academics in Africa became western dependent and paradoxically, neocolonial Africa inadvertently characterised postcolonial Africa. This militates against the rush for nation-building and knowledge production in the contexts of Africanisation. Once again, Africans and African leaders found themselves entangled and entrapped within the webs of colonial tutelage and academic hegemony.

African nations had continued to be indebted to the Western World due to the asymmetric power imbalances that grew out of the ignorance of African nations. The inability of African nations to insulate themselves and embark on decolonisation mentally and intellectually further aggravated their economic conditions and put them at the mercies of the former colonialists. The fundamental issue is that the structures of inherited colonial education were based on European values which were alien to the African cultural values (Kaya & Seleti, 2013). The lack of relevance of western education has continued to mesmerize African socio-economic and technological advancement. The indigenous knowledge should be granted dominant status while western education to be considered as an alternative.

Conclusion

The western education has been responsible for the retrogradation of African nations. For the Africans to free themselves from the shackles and manacles of western supremacy there should be the construction of African oriented curriculum across all levels of education. African scholars and intellectuals must work towards developing the continent by looking inward to develop an educational pedagogy and framework for knowledge production suitable for the needed development. The African scholars and intellectuals should look inward and develop a curriculum

in the African contexts that promote indigenous education. The African philosophical ideas and knowledge should be widely embraced across African countries due to the propensity of indigenous education to exponentially develop the nations. The attainment of full and real decolonisation is possible if all African intellectuals can devise a means of developing African knowledge and carve it into an academic field utilising the indigenous concepts. The research and intellectual efforts in African institutions support neocolonialism and economic exploitation and condition Africans as mere consumers rather than producers. This is due to the fact that African academic and research institutions have neglected the aspects of African education that can meet African needs.

The findings would be of immense benefit to scholars who are interested in the assessment of African indigenous education and the basis of its philosophy. Besides, the study would be useful in promoting African indigenous education which is more appropriate in African-oriented values and development.

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