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## Recentring the Philosophical Foundations of Knowledge: The Case of Africa With a Special Focus on the Global Role of Teachers

*The historical and actual marginalizations of African thought systems and knowledge constructions have been expansively responsible for the effectiveness of the dominant educational and governance systems imposed on Africa. The idea as well as the practice of these realities would conform to what Said (1993), Fanon (1967, 1968), and Memmi (1991) have called the cultural and psychosocial colonizations of both the physical and mental spaces of the conquered. The reality also speaks about the role of Europe's most important thinkers such as Kant, Hobbes, and Voltaire, who all directly or indirectly paved the way for the projects of "de-philosophization" and "de-epistemologization" that still affect people's lives. With the emergence of new cosmopolitanisms now creating highly multicultural societies in especially the so-called liberal democracies of the West, new contexts have also emerged of what one might counterintuitively call the "multiculturalization of knowledge marginalizations." Thus there is an urgent need to aim for knowledge and learning multicentricities that both theoretically and pragmatically rewrite the learning trajectories of both the old colonized space and the new, still alienating multicultural classrooms. This article engages the historical and actual problematizations of the case and suggests some ideas for better possibilities that could enhance the schooling lives of current globally located learners.*

*La marginalisation historique et actuelle des systèmes de pensée et des constructions des connaissances africaines a été largement responsable de l'efficacité des systèmes d'éducation et de gouvernance dominants imposés à l'Afrique. En théorie et en pratique, ces réalités se conformeraient à ce que Saïd (1993), Fanon (1967, 1968) et Memmi (1991) ont nommé les colonisations culturelles et psychosociales des espaces physiques et mentaux des conquies. La réalité évoque également le rôle des plus grands penseurs européens comme Kant, Hobbes et Voltaire qui, tous, ont préparé le terrain, directement ou indirectement, aux projets de «déphilosophisation» et «déépistémologisation» dont l'influence sur la vie des gens se fait encore sentir. L'émergence de nouveaux cosmopolitismes créant des sociétés hautement multiculturelles, surtout dans les prétendues démocraties libérales de l'Occident, de nouveaux contextes de ce qu'on pourrait appeler, de façon contre-intuitive, la «multiculturalisation des marginalisations des connaissances» ont également vu le jour. Un besoin urgent existe donc pour la multicentricité des connaissances et de l'apprentissage pour réécrire, théoriquement et pragmatiquement, les trajectoires d'apprentissage tant de l'ancien espace colonisé que des nouvelles salles de classe multiculturelles toujours aliénantes. Cet article discute de la problématique historique et actuelle du cas, et propose quelques possibilités pour rehausser la vie scolaire des apprenants actuels partout sur la planète.*

### Introduction

The role of education in the development of societies is by and large an agreed-on perspective that might be universally claimed (Abdi & Guo, 2008).

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In current configurations of life, the systems of education we have are mainly the result of global interactions that were instigated by European colonialism that started in the Americas with the fateful voyages of Christopher Columbus and his hordes of Spanish conquistadores, later followed by the full expansion of the project into Africa, Asia, Oceania, and other parts of the world. Clearly before this story started, there were Indigenous knowledge systems that characterized the educational realities of these societies. In the African case, as Nyerere (1968, 1974), Rodney (1982), and Semali (1999) have pointed out, these Indigenous systems were important for the development of the communities that designed them and used them for the sustainable improvement of the people concerned. The main factor in these comments is that the cultural and linguistic categories of traditional education were the construction blocks that created and sustained these types of learning, and these were based on a reality that was capable of achieving practical schemes of well-being that would benefit the needs and expectations of the people.

In terms of the measurable effectiveness of these traditional education systems, they were contextually as effective as anything that was invented after them. Interestingly, this is not the current dominant story when we talk about traditional educational and knowledge systems in the context of today's learning arrangements. And what we know about the case is not an accidental happenstance; we did not all somehow become enamored of current European systems of learning and assume that everything before this was ineffective, unorganized, and unfit for the social development objectives of people. In fact from the European perspective, globally impactful events such as these are hardly accidental. They are planned and implemented with rigorous programming and long-term intentions and are more often than otherwise implemented for clear cost-benefit platforms that advance the projects of the encounter between contexts, cultures, and life systems. Again, as Nyerere (1968), Rodney (1982), and Abdi (2006) noted, the colonial project was determined to achieve the two important and parallel schemes of first demeaning and decommissioning the instructional and learning values of traditional African education, and then destroying the platforms of development that it was achieving for the people. This is related to the heavily underresearched tempo-cultural trajectories of colonialism.

#### *The Colonial Project and its Multilocational Effect*

As I have informally discussed in various forums, the colonial project is first and foremost psychological. In initial contacts with the African people, a sense of European superiority, sometimes through gifts and related novelties and later complemented by the impressive display of technological mechanisms, was established. Here an intervening question could be, Why did Africans buy into the falsehood of this racist superiority? There should be, of course, a few possible responses to this important and historically inclusive question. But a central response could be the fundamental difference in the general onto-existentialities of Africans and Europeans. Whereas Africans firmly believe in and adhere to the unqualified humanization of all peoples regardless of their background, cultural attachments, linguistic intersections, and observable physical characteristics, Europeans during the spread of colonialism came from a continent where economic exigencies were to supersede everything else. As

Césaire (1972) so cogently noted, the expansive fateful contact between the two peoples took place when the captains of emerging industrial conglomerates in Europe were heavily influencing public policy and national programs, with the profit principle greatly influencing European life. This was complemented by the fact that colonialism was driven by economic crisis in Europe, which as one of the greatest colonialists, the Englishman Cecil Rhodes, said was to be inventive by finding new lands to exploit. So succinctly, these diametrically opposed world views established new relations where one group expected the best of human qualities from the other, and the other was bent on relegating the former to an economically viable commodity to be used as occasioned by international market forces.

Beyond the psychological, colonialism was also cultural. With the preliminary psychological effects already achieved, Europeans emphasized how their cultural traits were advanced, more coherent, and more effective in achieving life possibilities that were not only better than the lowly Africa ways of existing, but actually necessitated the Other's need to adopt them for human advancement (Said, 1993, 2002). Hence the highly announced so-called European high culture that was supposed to achieve *la mission civilisatrice* for the civilizationally benighted of the earth. Interestingly, the outcome of the civilizing mission was for all harnessable undertakings anything but civilizing. The expansiveness of the physical and mental destruction wrought on the lives of the colonized by colonialism—what Hall (2006) might call the problematic deconstructions of spaces, histories, environments, and identities—has been abundantly discussed by some of the best historians of the social psychology of colonialism (Césaire, 1972; Fanon, 1967, 1968; Memmi, 1991; wa Thiongo, 1986), and we do not need to say much about it. It suffices to mention here that its effects are still being fully felt and will continue to torment the lives of the colonized and their offspring for decades if not centuries to come. Indeed, while many well-intentioned people will advise us to “forget blaming colonialism” for the woes of the current world system, more sober analysts should disagree. In doing the right thing, Gilroy (2005) notes how “the countless tales of colonial brutality are too important to be lightly or prematurely disposed of” (p. 48). In the new configurations of the continuing imperial order, therefore, the continuing humiliation of non-Western peoples through fabricated wars and the harsh realities of deliberate economic exclusion should represent what Gilroy calls the still operative project of “colonial alterity.”

From the cultural point of view, the most potent weapon that colonialism has employed to deconstruct—indeed deform—the lives and futures of people was colonial education. Apparently this is counter to the first pointers mentioned above where education was supposed to lead to the social development of individuals and societies. This development as we understand it today would comprise among few other things the socioeconomic, politico-cultural, and psychoemotional well-being of people. However, colonial education constituted so-called systems of learning that were against the historical, linguistic, and cultural attachments of African life (Achebe, 2000; Shizha, 2008; wa Thiongo, 1986). Here one important objective of this type of schooling was to cleanse the *persona Africana* of anything that was African. In psychoemotional and cultural terms, the devastating outcomes of these schemes of miseducation

may not be difficult to ascertain. As we now know, culture should have been and has been partly rescued from the early sociological and anthropological warehouse where it was stored, which especially and in relation to colonized populations spoke about and depicted them as helpless childlike creatures whose existentially static lives were to be reformed for their own salvation. The new analysis of the cultural terrain is now more endowed and should be understood as culture extensively locating and operationalizing all aspects of people's lives. Culture should be dynamic, evolving, and activating or deactivating through temporal and relational changes, the political, economic, educational, and aspirational contextualizations of societies and the life systems that define their world.

*Colonial Systems of Education and the De-philosophizations of Africa*

With colonial education rescinding the cultural platforms of people's education, it was also de-philosophizing the basic *raison d'être* of the whole learning project. Undoubtedly all educational programs, whether traditional and precolonial, colonial or postcolonial, have their own philosophies of teaching. That is, as Ozmon and Craver (1998) note, a clear way of analyzing and responding to the universal questions of the main questions of the philosophy of education: what education we need, why we need it, and how we do it. As indicated above, for traditional societies the questions were clear and practical in their lives, hence the assumed validity and relevance of the learning programs that they put together for both juvenile and adult learners in their communities. Indeed, this was also the case for colonial education where the overarching objectives were not to educate the colonized, but to inculcate in their minds *inter alia* (a) their natural need for the colonizer, (b) their internalization of extensive psychocultural regimes that affirmed their inferiority vis-à-vis the colonizing entity, and (c) their training to support the project of colonization.

Interestingly, the story of de-philosophization did not end there. With the historical notations and unidirectional conclusions so important in colonial relationships, the simple deployment by the European metropolis through some of the important European thinkers and writers that Africans were "aphilosophical" was enough to rescind immediately in the simple minds of the former any possibility that the latter had any capacity to create and sustain effective platforms of educational philosophies that could justify the viability of their learning programs. The claim was, of course, breathtakingly false. And clearly the more inclusive attendances of popular philosophy as the organized, and at times disorganized, observable or speculative inquiry about our world, which fully fits with the African preferences in the area, were to be selectively rescinded.

At the interval of the debates, though, the peculiarly sought scientism of philosophy might not arrive, and perhaps in more than any other area of the social sciences and humanities, philosophers should be happy to broaden the perspectival contours of the tradition. As Osei (1971) noted,

Africans have their own ideas about the nature of the universe, time and space, about appearance and reality, and about freedom and necessity. The efforts of

the African to interpret man [and woman] in relation to the universe shows just as much intelligence as we find in the philosophy of the Greeks. (p. 19)

Analyzing the topic from a descriptively related but with quasi-detached analytical intentions, Towa (1997) some years later, adds the following:

African philosophy is the exercise by Africans by a specific type of intellectual activity applied to the African reality. The type of intellectual activity in question is as such, neither African, nor European, Greek or German; it is philosophy in general. What is African are the men [and women] of flesh and bones who are and who evoke the problems of supreme importance and on whom these problems are applicable immediately. (p. 195)

As expected, the appeal for a multicentric platform of world philosophies interests those whose exclusionary theorizing favors their constructions and deconstructions of history and society. Needless to say, the continuities of the globally dominant unicentricism did not and could not silence the counter-logocentric realities of people's actualities. So much so that in Césaire's terms (cited in Masolo, 2000), the rationality of European enlightenment could not disentangle itself from the cruel deeds of the colonial master, and for the natives the overall fluidity of life, the refusal to follow the parametering order of reason, and the delight to superlativize the occasionally disorganized noise, the shouts that define life and the *I* that mediates all these, are people's ways of exercising their existential liberation and livelihood freedoms. So despite all the problems, the community has survived, and even new formations of the philosophical tradition have been accentuated. Among these is Odera Oruka's (1991) work in *Sage Philosophy*, which showed how the expressed thoughts of wise men and women in any community could meet the scholarly demands of any philosophical treatise, especially as analyzed with respect to didactic wisdom, expounded wisdom, and rational thought. And although in the colonial context the clash of cultures and systems of knowing on all things personal and knowledge-based should have been intense, it eventually favored those whose superior technologies subjugated those who were more interested in the humanity of their oppressors.

#### *The Importance of the Epistemological Platforms*

In the varied intersections where cultures and philosophies of human development meet, the questions of epistemology should also be important. In their most generalizable terms, epistemological questions usually deal with specific epistemic clusters and ways of knowing that are embedded in or define them. As Fumerton (2006) noted, all epistemologies usually involve the conceptual constructions of knowledge and knowable platforms of learning evidence that would all be attached to the justification of what is to be understood, probabilities of knowing, and other epistemic processes that justify the acquisition of the previously unknown. In Africa's encounter with the colonial project, African epistemologies went the way of African education and attached philosophies of learning. Here historically entrenched and socially effective oral epistemologies were rescinded willy-nilly, and the imposition of the text-borne knowledge created specific impediments that immediately disfavored any educational development for the African people. As wa Thiong'o (1993) and Allen (2004) discussed, knowledge and its epistemological characteristics cannot and

should not be proscribed by whether they can be linguistically articulated, for we factually learn so much else that is clearly constituted in the language categories of daily life.

It is through these realities that the issue of contextualization should be paramount in how we construct or deconstruct the epistemological conjectures that locate and refine schooling, general learning, and any resulting possibilities for social development. For me, contextualization represents an important praxis in the continuum of creating ideas, conceptualizing those ideas, examining their educational viability in specific temporal and spatial intersections of schooling, concretizing as much as possible their applicability in select life systems, and formulating them as applicable to local or even international programmatic realities that directly and sometimes indirectly affect how people live. As such, contextualization should induce important epistemological possibilities that can affirm the viability of knowledge systems in one location or another. By ignoring the basic importance of contextualization, colonialism in Africa and elsewhere took away the relevance of learning programs and disentangled so much that would have helped the socially and environmentally responsive intentions and actions of human progress. It is on the basis of these realities that I am attracted to pragmatic philosophies of education, which also greatly appealed to three of the most important philosophers of the past century, Dewey (1926, 1963), Nyerere (1968, 1974), and Freire (2000). In effect, pragmatic philosophies of education focus on the irreducibility of actual contexts of learning where the ideologies or theories of education should be subjected to the pragmatics of educational possibilities. Undoubtedly, precolonial African philosophies of education were pragmatic in that they responded to the histories, cultures, and the needs: *'ka'dadka Afrikaanka ah* (African people), and were as such conducive to both the physical and emotional well-being of the community.

Also associated with colonial problems of decontextualization are the intergroup realities of deconscientization as opposed to transformationally desirable probabilities of conscientization (Freire, 2000) where people become convinced that they were created to serve the interests of the colonizer. As Memmi (1991) so effectively discussed in his classic *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, with subaltern populations gradually internalizing heavy doses of perforce operationalized inferiorizations of their ontologies, philosophies, and epistemologies, they begin to collaborate with the colonized on the extensive "oppressionalizations" of both their psyche and corpus. Here the multitude of the multidirectionally interwoven cultural and social attachments should not be underestimated. As Fanon (1967) so effectively analyzed, the loss of subjective agency assures the objectification of self, which could in turn effect an explosion of demerit points in people's capacity to understand and analyze their environment, critically evaluate their context, and achieve requisite alternatives in the course of their lives.

Among the items in the colonial philosophies of education storehouse, for example, were the number of years most natives needed to service the colonial economy and the areas of specialization they were allowed to enter. In many cases, colonized populations were not allowed to go beyond grade 7, with the general understanding that such limitations were essential for two important

reasons. The first was that they would give the natives some form of understanding in terms of what they could contribute to the effective exploitation of their physical and human resources by colonialism. The second was to keep from the natives enough learning capacity that might help them develop into well-informed and critically aware citizens who could question their rights vis-à-vis the colonizing entity. As Rodney (1982) noted, this was one of many ways by which Europe achieved the underdevelopment of Africa. In Rodney's intentions here, with which I agree, development should not be measured by the sophistry of available technologies or per se accumulation of material resources, but on people's satisfaction with their overall relationship with regard to their social and physical environments. Here, instead of using the enlightenment-driven measurement of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which as it is intended today attempts to establish tangible correspondence between a country's GDP and level of development, one may opt for the model created by the Himalayan mountain kingdom of Bhutan where Gross Domestic Happiness (GDH) takes precedence. Indeed, this GDH idea is if for no other purposes interesting in that it speaks about a possible alternative to the perverted, marked, and mastered *survival of the fittest* model that has led to the pauperization of hundreds of millions in the current so-called and aptly misnamed global economic downturn. The downturn was actually a quasi-permanent livelihood perspective for billions of the world's disenfranchised, but because it has now touched the lives of the globe's first-class citizens in North America, Europe, and few other "developed" areas, it is bad and should be fought against by all means.

Again, to illustrate the important point on meaning and possible trajectories of development in ancient Africa and how the European metropolis reconstructed it more inclusively, an example I use in my teaching is the possible analysis of defining and operationalizing the phenomenon with respect to a farmer in Mozambique who has a small plot of land with a small house in the middle that she cultivates and that yields enough for herself and her family. This farmer achieves enough contextual happiness in the situation in which she resides and can do more: probably she would not negatively affect the environment that sustains her livelihood. The farmer achieves even more: the combination of the organic food she harvests, which feeds the family; the clean environment in which she lives; and the assumed happiness she enjoys all assure her physical health and the health of her family. In the simple constructions of this simple narrative, contrast this life with that lived by the developed par excellence. For me this could be someone who writes advanced computer mathematics in Silicon Valley in north-central California in the United States, who in one of the most important aspects of his life creates the advanced number-based formulae for the achievement of exceedingly advanced technologies that supposedly enhance and simplify our lives. Here the psychological platforms are important in that the meanings of life enhancement will depend on who is doing the defining. For the purpose of this argument, though, let us say more about our subject, the explosively developed computer scientist.

He is tense, perennially short of time, continually in competition with everyone else; he is also highly irritable with any personal or professional

distractions and does not comprehend the lowly world of social relations. For him isolation and the “mathematicizable” rationing of time with especially trained specialist creatures is sacred. By extension he is continually pressed for everything, expansively complains about physical and mental fatigue, continually worries about the scarcity of reformattable domains that could accord him more interconnected and numerically endowed platforms that could herald next-generation computing interfaces for the delayed harnessing of fame and fortune, and overall does not enjoy anything that is elementally or organically subjective. The de-academicized nature of the story here should not be an accident. In our discussions of the history and the actualities of Africa, colonialism, philosophical and epistemological issues, and the role of education in human well-being, the essence of the case cannot disengage from social development, which is either enhanced and/or obstructed in one context or another. Even in the Bhutan case, the Western media might have reduced it to an exotic, even Utopianistic peculiarity that should not represent the real needs of people. And they may have a point there, but only on the basis of the post-facto world where unattainable and culturally unappreciable development needs have been implanted in the minds of people (Rahnema, 1997). The above story may also be minimized on the rationale of assumed postmodern relativism, or as some well-intentioned but expansively uninformed people would say, *everything goes* theories. Factually, though, there is nothing, despite the proliferation of the idea that can be called postmodern relativism. As I understand it, postmodernism and its later theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-François Lyotard, Helen Cixous, and selectively Michel Foucault among others, with the original conceptualizations of the area having actually come from African and African-Caribbean historians and sociologists of colonialism including Fanon, Memmi, Césaire, and Achebe (see partly Fischer, 1992) never advocated for any open, trajectory-deprived relativism. Research in this important area of study simply helped usher in new platforms of appreciating the historical contributions and current validities of extensive clusters of knowledge that fitted the life development schemes of the contexts for which they were created.

The point on the contextualization of knowledges is important in creating and sustaining African philosophies and epistemologies of education. The issue of contextualization should again highlight the unannounced colonial agenda that knew how the de-philosophization and the de-epistemologization of African educational and cultural platforms could facilitate the imposition of new non-authentic identities on people, where through the attached processes of misrecognition, loss of self-esteem, and possibly self-efficacy (Taylor, 1995) could truncate the subjective initiatives and the development potential of people. Undoubtedly the colonial mission in this domain has been realized, and as I say above, the reliable regimes of mental colonization that afflicted the lives of colonized Africans and others in similar historical circumstances are extensive and of *longue durée*, especially in how Ferdinand Braudel and not all his followers have used this historical-materialist point. Clearly Foucault’s (1980) *Pouvoir/Savoir* (*Power/Knowledge*) analysis of the epistemic and power-mediated livelihood intersections of socioeconomic and political realities was not lost on his colonizing compatriots a century or so earlier. But even with the



relevance of the postmodern perspective to analyze and critique select aspects of the exclusionist theories of modernity where only those who fit the fast trajectories of the computer mathematician mentioned above are modern and developed and the rest are primitive, backward, and underdeveloped, there are still select concerns that we should raise with postmodernist assumptions

One of these, as far as I am concerned, is its avant-garde presumption about who can speak for whom, and what major theorists know about the knowledges they might have intended to validate vis-à-vis those who have created and used these *savoirs* in the first place. As such, there might be some analytical vacuity in the historical and cultural platforms that postmodernism uses to make sense of the myriad issues that constitute its theoretical domains and attached descriptive and learning outcomes. So although it should tentatively claim the possible noble formations of new voice for the philosophically, epistemically, and epistemologically silenced, it may accidentally add to the vocal and pedagogical disempowerment of the already globally disenfranchised. Thus postmodernism, despite its usefulness in select notations of knowledge and development debates, has a historical disadvantage, and the way forward for African epistemic and philosophico-cultural enfranchisements, must ipso facto come from Africa proper.

Among the main difficulties faced in achieving this important re-philosophization and re-epistemologization by Africans are (a) the policy and program continuities of colonial education, and (b) the homogenizing effects of globalization where extra-local economic interests and demands limit both state and institutional capacities to recreate entrenched systems of teaching and learning. A simple example is how so many resources that are needed to deconstruct the problematic platforms of education and development and reconstruct new possibilities are hampered by the weight of the interest payments (and only interest payments) on the debt African countries owe to Western countries and their financial institutions, which are paid yearly and which many times exceed the amount of expenditure available for educational and other forms of social development. It is these predatory international financial institutions' schemes of life that continually limit the constructive reconstructions of education and progress in much of these developmentally weakened platforms.

Despite these realities, the desire and the practical project to re-philosophize and re-indigenize African education and development can no longer be left on the shelf. Hence the increasing emergence of, temporally speaking, postcolonial clusters of an African academic philosophy that has been responding to the call for new anticolonial contexts. With Nyerere (1974), Kane (1963), Achebe (1958, 2000), and other essential disquisitions, the important work of the late Nigerian philosopher Eze (1997, 1998) and his cohorts has added so much that clearly validates the viability and life-tested pragmatics of African philosophies: philosophies of education and attached epistemologies that should all be useful for the much-needed revival of learning and progress regimes that should be based on and critically responsive to the needs of the public. It should go without saying that how Africans have successfully inquired and reflected on their lives over millennia would stand as a life-affirmed testimony to the endurance and validity of African thought systems, schemes

of learning, and related existentialities that were necessary for the survival and progress of both the individual and the community.

Indeed, with these and other emerging debates having contributed to the affirmation of historical and current presence of well-established systems of African philosophies that have successfully guided the social life of people over many centuries and decades, at least we should have moved beyond the points of validity and validation and should have both descriptively and analytically crossed into the sphere of new ways of reviving the old and new philosophical and epistemological plateaus to reestablish the lost topographies of culture, learning, and development. Of course, we did not. So much so that with the global endurance of European hegemony, current systems of education wherever they are located still disfavor the history and the actual life of the still otherized Other. However, with the new migration patterns and with so many countries becoming more multinational and partly multicultural than before, the role of teachers to disavow former configurations of the world and uphold the inclusively endowed learning rights of all learners should become paramount.

#### *New Cosmopolitanisms and the Global Role of Teachers*

While the above selectively describes the important intersections of colonialism and the philosophical/epistemological effects on African education and development, the world has changed in dimensions. The realism of postcolonial Africa has been mostly one of neocolonialism, where as mentioned above, the fundamentals of the issues discussed here did not change and colonial philosophies and systems of knowledge including the paramount status of colonial languages are still at work in most of the continent. But new multi-group cosmopolitanisms have also been forming across the globe. To be sure, due to expansive political and economic plunders committed by Africa's neo-colonial elite, Africans have been migrating to Western Europe and North America in large numbers over the past 30 years. In Canada the trends have been as strong as any in the rest of the world. With so many people moving to Canada, especially in the past 20 years, the number of people who are identified as African-Canadian or selectively of African descent in this cold northern country has quickly reached the 700,000 mark and is expected to increase in the coming years. The effects of this migration story are multiple, and an obvious one is the severe brain drain that befalls Africa as most of the people who leave the continent would be those who are well educated and economically or intellectually endowed. Although some may prefer to identify this phenomenon in the more popular configurations of globalization, I selectively prefer to locate it in the context of cosmopolitanism, for it involves so much more than just the process of moving peoples and commodities and centers around the geographic and emerging meaning-making in the context of international and intergroup interactions and relationships. In this vein, Benhabib (2006) should have a point when she notes,

Cosmopolitan norms of justice, whatever the conditions of their legal origination, accrue to *individuals* as moral and legal persons in a worldwide civil society ... [and] endow individuals, rather than states and their agents, with certain rights and claims, [and terms such as globalization] are misleading

in that they fail to address the distinctiveness of cosmopolitan norms. (*italics in the original, p. 16*)

In terms of the livelihood events that are instigated by arrival in the new countries, the issues are complex; culturally, economically, and politically multilayered; and more often than not ontologically oppositional vis-à-vis the pre-migration expectations of the new immigrants. By and large, these immigrants in the so-called Western democracies find themselves on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic and political ladder, but they nevertheless become one component of the ongoing formations of the changing global cosmopolitanisms (in the moral, cultural, and politico-economic intentions of the term) where no matter in what country they reside, they are affected by and should affect the global transactions that connect all citizens of the world. Although cosmopolitanism (or world citizenship in the simplest sense of the term) has assumed more meaning and outcomes than people like Kant had expected in the 19th century, it nevertheless selectively fits the lives of these and others who move around the globe in search of better life possibilities and related educational and professional attachments. Interestingly, one can also talk about two types of cosmopolitanism today. The first would be based on choice, where people have the luxury of choosing their place and interactions in these now expansive, cosmopolitan spheres. The other fits what Hall (2006) calls vernacular cosmopolitanism, where those who have to be a part of the global scene but might lack the politico-economic and cultural currency that is needed, must join the scene at a socially subordinated level. In most instances most of the new immigrants would fit this reality of vernacular or lower cosmopolitanism. Indeed, the case for this should have achieved more currency since the now descriptively celebrated but still tragic events of September 11, 2001.

As Giroux (2002) noted, with the 9/11-induced *Patriot Act* in the US, the criminalization of the public space, especially there, has become the norm, and the role of education has shifted from the noble goal of citizenship enhancement to that of undemocratic surveillance practices that threaten the basic rights of those who are different from the norm in any way. This, of course, does not bode well for those whose journey was partly triggered by a desire for more liberating education either for themselves or more so for their children. With most new immigrants to the West technically different from the norm and with millions of their children joining current intersections of public education, the role of teachers to stay with the higher mission of education to safeguard the rights of all and aim for the social development of every learner should not be sacrificed to the debased specter of *us against them* culture. Here the early principles of general multicultural education where the toleration and publicly sanctioned but subjectively de-criticalized varied life styles are celebrated would not suffice. Indeed, the choice of the term *life style* should deserve one or two sentences. When we rhetorically talk about culture in the varied contexts of North American multicultural education, for example, we are actually practicing in contemporary platforms of schooling life styles, which I submit are different both analytically and operationally from the practical constructions of the life that culture qua culture should represent.

As mentioned above, the meanings of culture should be deliberately separated from the early staticizations of early cultural writings. Culture contains people's historical, linguistic, and all related complexities of life management and meaning-making projects. It is not and cannot be limited to the sharing of dressing styles, food taste, and the deliberate exoticization of difference. Thus the possible application of critical multicultural education (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004) must be sought, and the full realization by teachers that the schemes of de-philosophization and de-epistemologization of the African world view discussed above are not limited to past colonial classrooms, but are also found in current Western classrooms, libraries, and general discourses, is important. Indeed, the learning alienation and by extension future development demobilization of many children from immigrant families in so-called pluralistic Western democracies results from the double case of teachers either not understanding the weaknesses or even the violent outcomes (with respect to these students' needs and rights) of what they are teaching and how they are teaching it or exercising an outright resistance to any challenges that might change the system. It is here that the importance of critical multicultural education, where one main objective is the radical desire to equalize cultures, histories, and resulting life possibilities should be helpful, not in the claim of any homogenizing intentions, but in the context of contextually practiced diversity.

Attached to the critical platforms of the inclusive and pragmatizable notations of culture in the educational context is also the issue of racism. With the spread of globalization and the resulting intersections of cosmopolitan citizenship, there are the effectively metamorphosing realities of global racism. It is not uncommon (as I can attest to myself in the Canadian context) to hear how immigrant families in Western countries where the rights of minorities in all spheres of life as stipulated in all their constitutions should be protected (Kymlicka, 1998) negatively interact with the debilitating practices of racism that come not only from other students, but also from teachers and the school management. The increasing incidences of racism in these schools are not detached from the lessons that colonialism taught these teachers about the lives of colonized natives, and for many of them this may be the only learning correspondence they have ever experienced with the histories and lives of the new arrivals. The correspondence is anything but constructive. Indeed, to the surprise of many educational researchers, some of the material that is chosen for class reading in schools in some parts of Canada seems to have come straight out of the colonial travel writing, which as Achebe (2000) taught us is an interesting but fundamentally shallow interpretation of complex, intelligent life systems that are hardly understood by the racist narrators. Just as troublesome is how the story of racism that has no reliable biological validity (Cook, 2002; Gould, 1996) is still institutionalized beyond the schooling space and is actually supported by national institutions at almost all levels of government (Goldberg, 2002).

The continuities of the institution of racism should not detain our imagination that much. To be sure, such events and related life practices persist when they advantage some groups and always disadvantage others. And although I always try to avoid the descriptive establishment of a continuing correspondence between the social and educational difficulties that immigrants face in

the West and the world of racism, the fact remains that if the dominant group benefits from the continuation of racism, they may not lead the needed campaigns to rescind it. The role of educators must be different. As practitioners in the crucial area of social development, no one I know of or could know would go into teaching to help sustain colonialist or racist ways of teaching and learning. By and large, teachers should be tentatively certified (until proven otherwise, of course) as leaders in the universal project of citizenship development, the upholding of human rights, and the tangible expansion of the real operations of social justice. Thus to achieve the noble aims of socially binding and ontologically liberating programs of citizenship development in the world's difference-rich classrooms, teachers, especially those in the West's increasingly multiethnic and multicultural classrooms, should burn the books on colonialism, racism, false accommodation, and the pejorative constructions of toleration. They should instead pave the way for the extensively desired praxes of critical pedagogy where the experiences as well as the aspirations of the learner regardless of how he or she is different from the now problematically celebrated norm are practically valued, and where dialogic methods of teaching enrich and intersectionally enhance new ways of the educational imperative, which should serve the needs and rights of every student.

### *Conclusion*

At the beginning of this article I revisit the colonial and postcolonial problems of decentering African histories, cultures, thought systems, and ways of knowing. The processes of de-philosophization and de-epistemologization that I speak about were not achieved by colonizing Europeans through one-time deformation of traditional life as we should have known it. They were, rather, undertaken via the systematic deculturing and miseducation of Africans and others who have been subjected to the same practices that were spawned by Europe's imperial plunder. With African countries achieving some form of political independence, the basic philosophies of colonial education and ways of knowing were not modified. Instead, these systems of teaching and learning were implemented intact during the postcolonial period. Undoubtedly this has affected the place of education as capable of providing people with correct social development prospects. With this complemented by the oppressive elite systems that have marginalized most of the population in almost all countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Africans have been migrating to the West in large numbers in the past 30 years.

In many of these cases, the receiving countries such as Canada had (have) immediately to deal with the influx of many African children into the education system, now a corporeal part of the country's sometimes misnamed multicultural mosaic. Instead of opening their minds to the world of these children, it seems that many teachers in Western classrooms reflected the lessons they learned through the abundant colonial literature and other more recent problems that they associate with Africa. Thus the clash of intentions and expectations has led to many of these children disengaging from the system, with many negative implications for the lives of these learners, but also for the countries that they would have served as productive citizens contributing to the betterment not only of the new lands, but also their old societies. To disavow these counter-educational and counter-social development practices,

teachers are encouraged to strive to achieve critically informed classrooms that affirm the citizenship rights of all learners, and in the process fulfill the noble learning mission of helping these children and all other children to constitute for themselves and their societies better life prospects and less liable sociocultural and political-economic spaces.

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