Reclaiming Our Indigenous Voices: The Problem with Postcolonial Sub-Saharan African School Curriculum

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Abstract

The school curriculum in postcolonial Sub-Saharan Africa experiences challenges that are a legacy of colonial education that remained in place decades after political decolonization. The case for African school curriculum is contentious in contemporary Africa because it negates the voices of African indigenous populations. Despite the advent of decolonization that started in the 1960s, African education systems mirror colonial education paradigms inherited from former colonial governments. Colonial education was hegemonic and disruptive to African cultural practices, indigenous knowledges (IKs) and ways of knowing. Prior to colonization, Africans were socialized and educated within African indigenous cultural contexts. With the advent of colonization, traditional institutions of knowledge started disappearing due to cultural repression, misrepresentations, misinterpretations and devaluation. Postcolonial educations systems in Sub-Saharan Africa should reclaim Indigenous voices through curriculum reforms. This paper explores the possibilities of reclaiming IKs in postcolonial Sub-Saharan African schools and the challenges in revisiting indigenous discourses on school knowledge. The paper argues that it is through the implementation and integration of IKs in schools that students, parents and communities can reclaim their voices in the process of educating the African child.

INTRODUCTION

The school curriculum in postcolonial Africa experiences challenges that are a legacy of colonial education that remained in place decades after political decolonization. The case for African school curriculum is contentious in contemporary Africa. Important questions that have to be asked are: What constitutes school knowledge in postcolonial African schools? How is that knowledge created and disseminated? The validation of school knowledge is political. So, how do we define and validate knowledge for the *official* curriculum in the face of multiculturalism, globalization,

and the internationalization of knowledge? What is the place of indigenous knowledge (IK) in African schools? This paper seeks to explore the reclamation of IKs in the postcolonial Sub-Saharan African schools and the challenges in revisiting indigenous discourses on school knowledge. The paper argues that it is through the implementation of IKs in schools that students, parents and communities can reclaim their voices in the process of educating the African child.

WHO ARE THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF AFRICA?

There are many indigenous people globally and because of the diversity of indigenous peoples there is no official or universal definition of *indigenous* people. However, most writers use it to refer to first peoples who are minorities in their own lands. For me, this is too narrow a definition as it would *disindeginize* most groups that are indigenous in Africa. Shizha (2005) describes Africa as a salad bowl of indigenous people who were formerly colonized but do not share a common ancestry or a common culture. The culture of indigenous Africans is characterized by cultural heterogeneity (cultural diversity) rather than cultural homogeneity (cultural uniformity). Africans do not share a common culture, but have cultures that are particularistic and based on high levels of cultural and linguistic diversity. Appiah (1992) rejects any theory that seeks to homogenise Africans when he states:

> Now I am confident in rejecting any homogenizing portrait of African intellectual life,
> because the ethnographies and the travel literature and novels of parts of Africa other
> than my home are replete with examples of ways of life and of thought that strike me
> as thoroughly pre-theoretically different from life in Asante, where I grew up. (p. 25)

Therefore, who are the indigenous Africans? In Africa, it is problematic to define and characterize indigenous people because of the diverse subcultural groups. However, all the formerly colonized societies in the continent that have ancestral roots in the continent are considered indigenous regardless of their marginalization status. As Kapoor and Shizha (2010) noted, "In Africa, the term *indigenous* is seldom used" (p. 3) because all formerly colonized original inhabitants are indigenous. Indigenous people in Africa tend to be narrowly defined to imply specific peoples that are marginalized by other ethnic groups and have close ties to ancestral lands. However, all formerly colonized groups have close ties to the land and in Africa they have a special relationship to their traditional land. That is why in Zimbabwe the term *Mwana wevhu* (Child of the soil) is used with reference to people of African origin.

International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have attempted to restrict the term *indigenous* to societies that have remained on the margin of "modernization". In Africa, it is for example, reserved for the *San* of Southern Africa, the *Tuareg* of the

Sahara Desert in North Africa, the *Maasai* in Kenya and the *Hadzabe* in the central Rift Valley of Tanzania. The most common characteristic for these groups is that they are mainly pastoralists, hunters and gatherers. Shizha (2010a) has a different view that all original citizens of Africa by ancestry and not through being settlers or off-spring of settlerism and colonization are entitled to the term *indigenous people*. Indigenous African peoples are the holders of unique African languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and possess invaluable knowledge of practices for the sustainable management of natural resources (Shizha, 2012). The concept *indigenous* refers to a sense of belonging naturally to a place. For Africans, ancestral lands, which belong to the ancestors, have a fundamental importance for their collective physical and cultural survival as peoples.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Knowledge creation is a political and ideological process. When it comes to school knowledge, it is those that control political and economic resources that impose their ideas, opinions, thoughts and ideologies on those considered "subordinates". In Sub-Saharan Africa, the political elite who decides on what constitutes valid school knowledge often takes for granted the collective knowledge or indigenous perspectives of African indigenous peoples. Over the years, since the publication of Brokensha, Warren and Warner's (1980) book *Indigenous Knowledge System and Development*, academic interest in indigenous people and their knowledges has grown. This book explicitly raised critical questions about the production of knowledge in the area of development and rural people in "developing" countries (Barua, 2010). The academic interest has spread to the area of knowledge production and dissemination in education in colonized and formerly colonized societies. The term *indigenous knowledge* has diverse meanings because of the differences in academic disciplines, ranging from social anthropology to sustainable development studies. IKs are often referred to in different ways including but not limited to local knowledge, traditional knowledge, indigenous technical knowledge, peasants' knowledge, traditional environmental knowledge and folk knowledge (Sillitoe, 1998). There are common threads in the definitions of IKs. One definition states:

> Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. (Warren, 1991, p.1)

A similar view which expresses the nature of IKs is given by Flavier and colleagues who state: "Indigenous Knowledge is (…) the information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems" (Flavier, de Jesus, Navarro & Warren, 1995, p. 479). The commonality in these definitions is that IKs have utility value in indigenous communities. They are experiential and address diverse and complex aspects of indigenous peoples and their livelihoods. In the process of generating IKs, indigenous people take into account their cosmos, spirituality, ontological realities, land, socio-cultural environment and historical contexts. IKs are transmitted, maintained and retained within specific cultural sites for education and sustainable development.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE COLONIZATION OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Until recently, IKs were colonized by other knowledges from outside indigenous communities. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the advent of colonization brought in foreign knowledges, the so-called "scientific knowledge" that denigrated IKs as unscientific, untried and untested for education and social development. Due to colonization, Western knowledge (deemed positive science or scientific) and IKs are/were often entrapped in power relationships (Shizha, 2010b). The dominant knowledge is/was frequently Western knowledge, which overpowered and dismissed the Other's importance (Barua, 2010). This partly explains the neglect in using IKs in the education system in Sub-Saharan Africa. African politicians, academics, policy makers and administrators, because of the Western education they attained, developed a colonized mind that still exists and persists today. This is the reason why they undermine and undervalue IKs in education and development.

In Africa, rich traditions and culture which define things "African" which were observed before colonization, are now playing second fiddle to the incursion of the globalized Euro-American culture. Culture contains the IKs of the people and generally culture is symbolic as it is based on the symbolization of things as they are used in behavioural patterns that a group of people understands (Shizha, 2009). African culture has been invaded by Western belief systems, ways of knowing, and ways of experiencing the world thus reinforcing the colonization of African IKs. Globalization, which has corrupted the African culture through its progressive technological changes in communication, political and economic power, knowledge and skills, as well as cultural values, systems and practices, is not value-free (Shizha, 2011). It promotes the epistemological and ontological realities and experiences of the most powerful in the world. According to Nsibambi (2001), globalization is not a value-free, guiltless, self-determining process but it is rather an international socio-

politico-economic and cultural infiltration progression facilitated by the policies of Western governments, multinational corporations, international agencies and a range of civil society organizations. When it is associated with IKs, globalization is a form of biocolonialism - a continuation of the oppressive power relations that have historically informed the interactions of western and indigenous cultures (Whitt, 2009). Globalization has catalyzed the colonization of African ways of knowing and the commodification of knowledge and of genetic resources that biocolonialism facilitates. Consequently, African cultural values are being lost as Euro-American homogenization of culture spreads and takes root. Concerning the effect of globalization Maweu (2011) argues:

> The advent of globalization, with its emphasis on modern science and technology, has led to this form of knowledge being either subsumed in the western concept of 'knowledge for sustainable development', or ignored altogether. The irony is that most of the developments in science and technology, which are at the core of globalization and "civilization", have their roots in Indigenous knowledge. (p. 36)

Maweu's argument, which I agree with, is that all knowledge forms start as indigenous. However, it is those who have the power to dominate and colonize others whose knowledge becomes reified. The worldviews and perspectives of "Others" (those who are on the margin of the global village) are sidelined and vilified as "traditional", "irrational", "backward" and "obsolete." Maweu (2011) and Shizha (2011) agree that Western knowledge in the guise of science and technology is effectively used to assimilate and entrench IKs in the "global village." Therefore, it is vital to decolonize/ deglobalize this misconception of the superiority of Euro-American knowledge in order to debunk the belief that western oriented knowledge is the only viable one.

WHOSE SCHOOL KNOWLEDGE IS IT?

The existence of colonized knowledge systems in Africa raises the question: Whose knowledge do schools impart? Education is not limited to accumulating knowledge and skills; it involves acquiring ways of interpreting and giving meaning to concepts, forming links and understanding ideas. It also entails ways of knowing, perceiving and interpreting the world. School knowledge has to express the social desires, anxieties, and socio-cultural needs for socio-economic development. It should align itself with learners' experiences that are characterized by their socio-cultural worldviews. Thus, the question on defining and validating curriculum knowledge for African schools is pertinent.

According to Eggleston (1977), "differences in thought processes and differences in perception of events and worldviews lead to differences in the store of knowledge possessed by each society and by each group" (p. 1). The stores of knowledge are

temporal and spatial as experience and history affect them (Shizha, 2005). Hence, that which counts as knowledge in one cultural group at a particular moment may not be considered as valid knowledge in a different era. For example, knowledge that was perceived as legitimate during colonial Africa may be discounted as invalid and irrelevant today. Brown (2000), likens teaching the Western knowledge and discourses as "[initiating] the native into the academic discourse community of his or her colonizer through mastery of its discourse conventions" (p. 95). Arguably, Western colonizing knowledge discourse paradigms undermine the learning process for indigenous students.

The significance of the school curriculum to the socio-cultural worldview of the African student, in both orientation and content, is of great concern to African academics and scholars. In Sub-Saharan Africa, arguably, postcolonial school knowledge continues to mirror colonial education residues. Colonial residuals continue to imprison the actions, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and the conceptual capabilities of indigenous people. One prominent African theorist on decolonization, wa Thiong'o (1986), observes that:

> Education, far from giving people the confidence in their reality and capacities to overcome obstacles…tends to make them feel their inadequacies, their weakness and their incapacities in the face of reality; and their inability to do anything about the conditions governing their lives. (p. 56)

Europeanized education, in other words, is a means of mystifying knowledge and reality, an alienating and dehumanizing process that continues to this day. Academic and often irrelevant ways of learning are emphasized even though most African states have moved towards localization of their examination systems (Shizha, 2005). Localization of examinations is not enough without radical curriculum changes. What is required is to transform and revamp the curriculum so that it reflects African IKs. Localization of examinations does not and has not transformed the African school knowledge systems that are still copycats of colonial constructs.

According to Dyck (2005), changes in the curriculum changes the knowledge discourse. The new transformed curriculum will offer a voice to the neglected and marginalized by highlighting common themes, perspectives, and practices of the various participating voices. Giltrow (2002) argues that these participating voices will contribute to the curriculum, pedagogy and learning environment "not as rules but as signs of common ground amongst communities …." (p. 24) and the "diversity of expression will [more accurately] reflect the complexities of social life" (p. 26) and, by extension, overcome the colonizing tendencies of the dominant discourse by creating new cultural paradigms of the peoples who share a common social space (Dyck, 2005).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, curriculum, both in content and pedagogy continues to teach students a foreign culture and worldview in a foreign language that inhibits learning experiences of students. As Andreas Huyssen, cited in Rust (1991, p. 617) observes Eurocentric knowledge is associated with both "inner and outer imperialism." African leaders and policy makers internalized the Western philosophical and ideological tenets that they were taught during the colonial era and this inner imperialism is reflected in the educational planning and policies. Thus, the need to redefine and reconstruct school curriculum in Africa and de-legitimise Western defined school knowledge and the "inner logic" of capitalist and imperialist dispositions cannot be overemphasized. African schooling reflects Huyssen's forms of imperialism in cultural tastes and psychological behaviour adopted by students and the indigenous African elite that emulate Western life style and popular culture through importation of textbooks and using European languages in schools.

Policies that continue to perpetuate cultural imperialism in African education systems are negating the narratives of the nations that are told and retold in African histories, literatures, and popular culture. These narratives provide a set of stories, images, historical events, national symbols, and rituals, which stand for, and represent, the shared experiences that give meaning to the African society (Shizha, 2005). While education systems that are embedded in colonialism lead to psychological and cultural alienation and cultural domination (Mazrui, 1993), they no longer go unchallenged. The challenge is to deconstruct and redefine the structures and systems of knowledge and rupture inner imperialism, which Habermas calls "inner colonization" (Rust, 1991, p. 617) that are a threat to the identity and self-perception of the African student. Thus, a redefined and transformed education system should aim at reclaiming and commemorate the African cultural histories. Schools should be cultural spaces and centres that provide strategies to reclaim African cultural identities to counteract threats of cultural identity loss.

COLONIAL EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE, AND THE SILENCED VOICES

Colonial knowledge in Sub-Saharan Africa was based on subjugating and silencing African voices. The missionaries and their compatriots (the colonial governments) viewed African ways of knowing, their cosmology, their spirituality and their ontological existence as "barbaric," "backward," traditional and "unscientific." Africans were removed from knowledge conversations and their existential experiences and forced to assimilate a hegemonic foreign culture. According to Shizha (2005), definitions of what counted as valid knowledge and how it was produced and distributed was intentionally towards establishing hegemonic social, economic, and political interests and relations. African learners were exposed to fragmented and compartmentalized knowledge contrary to holistic learning which they were used to in their villages

and communities. Holistic learning contributed to communal knowledge production and acquisition. Indigenous knowledge production was holistic and integrated all activities including rituals and skills required to sustain cultural practices, life of the family and community (Owuor, 2007). The aim of holistic learning was to prepare individuals for communal responsibility and interpersonal relationships as key components of the learning process. On the other hand, the colonial knowledge and learning styles promoted individualism and competition, which were antithetical and anathema to African communal living.

The purpose of education during the colonial period was mainly for religious conversion (silencing the voices of indigenous religions), economic exploitation and the assimilation of Africans. Kelly and Atbach (1984) observed that, "Education in colonies seemed directed at absorption into the metropole and not separate and dependent development of the colonized in their own society and culture" (p. 4). wa Thiong'o (1986) reiterates that:

> Colonial education was far from giving people the confidence in their ability and capacities to overcome obstacles or to become masters of the laws governing external nature as human beings and tends to make them feel their inadequacies and their inability to do anything about the conditions of their lives. (p. 7)

Colonial school curriculum constituted the voice of the dominant, which defined status, privilege, power and control in terms of racial differences (Shizha, 2005). Indigenous Africans were defined as inferior to Europeans and were erroneously taught to internalise the racial stereotypes of the coloniser (Mazrui, 1993). Thus, colonial schooling led to the loss of indigenous voices, self-identities and self-confidence. Through colonial schooling via Eurocentric knowledge, the missionaries and colonial governments were able to entrench imported cultural, economic and political hegemony. Hegemony was coined by Antonio Gramsci to refer to "the way the ruling class controls the institutions that control or influence our thought" (Boothman, 2008, p. 47). Martin Clark (1977) has defined hegemony in a manner that includes "how the ruling classes control the media and education" (p. 2). Gramsci provides us with a way of thinking critical to colonial political relations in colonial Africa and to view the relations in a historical context so as to understand the aims of colonial education and its attendant knowledge system.

Due to their subjugation, Africans negated their voices and became "willing" accomplices and co-constructors of Western cultural imperialism. Colonial schools were the vehicles through which European "Enlightenment" and "civilization" were forced on to Africa where colonization and exploitation were rationalized. Schools became institutions created and privileged sites for the reproduction of hegemonic knowledge.

The ultimate goal of colonial education according to Thomas Macaulay's (1994) statement describing the British imposed colonial education in India was "to form a class of interpreters; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (p. 430). The aim of racist colonial education was to leave those who were colonized with no identity and a limited sense of their past. Racism and ethnocentrism were used to justify the rationalization and legitimization of European imperialism. Echoing Macaulay, in relation to this form of racist education, Kallaway (1984) says about Bantu Education in apartheid South Africa:

> There is [was] no place for him [the native] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour…For this reason it is of no avail for him to receive training which has its aim as absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. (p. 173)

The form of education described by Kallaway was a cultural bomb, which was unleashed to annihilate indigenous voices as European culture was used as an extreme form of standardization, requiring blind conformity and masked rationalization (Shizha, 2005). Citing Hume and Hegel, Outlaw (1987) posits that in colonial Africa, "African peoples were explicitly denied the status of rational and historical beings" (p. 16). European invasion served to validate the colonial characterization of the European invention of Africa and Africans.

Cultural imperialism and domination dispossessed the Africans of their "tools of self-definition" (wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 16). Learning, which according to Giroux (1996) was "the mechanical memorization of the profile of a concept" (p. 121), alienated the owners of local knowledge from their social and cultural identity. The system used non-indigenous knowledge to silence the voices of the African student. Rodney (1982) observes that:

> The educated Africans were the most alienated Africans on the continent. At each further stage of education, they were battered and succumbed to the white capitalist, and after being given salaries, they could then afford to sustain a style of life imported from outside…That further transformed their mentality. (p. 275)

Colonial education did more than corrupt the thinking and sensibilities of the Africans; it filled their minds with abnormal complexes, which de-Africanized and alienated them from their socio-cultural milieu. wa Thiong'o (1986) observes that the lack of congruency between colonial education and African reality created people abstracted from their reality.

EFFORTS AT RECLAIMING INDIGENOUS VOICES AND CULTURAL COMMEMORATIONS

Postcolonial Africa needs to transform through educational deconstruction and reconstruction. To deconstruct colonial school curriculum is "to displace them into the fabric of historicity out of which they have been shaped… it is to become involved in the unmaking of a construct.…" (Outlaw, 1987, p. 11). Deconstruction is another strategy by which to "read texts," with a different sense of self-consciousness and consequences. Deconstruction of colonial school curriculum requires rupturing the hegemonic structures of Western defined knowledge. From this perspective, school knowledge is transformed, reconstructed and rewritten to celebrate difference, diversity, pluralism, multiplicity and heterogeneity without portraying any one form of knowledge as the culture of reference (Jacques Derrida, quoted in Lemert, 1999). In many African schools, European education continues to distort, misappropriate and misrepresent African realities, their lives, experiences and thoughts. Since independence, there has been little significant shift from Eurocentric definitions of official knowledge and school pedagogy. However, attempts to Africanize or indigenize school curriculum were made by some African governments.

EDUCATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN TANZANIA

Tanzania, under the late President Julius Nyerere, attempted to change both educational programs and development projects through *Education for Self-reliance* in 1967, which was his idea of indigenizing the education system. The expansion of educational outcomes and curriculum changes in Tanzania in the 1970s were viewed as a central component of his concept of *Ujama*a or the villagization program (Nyerere, 1968). Nyerere's views on education were located within an anti-capitalist and national-istic ideological perspective (Nasongo & Musungu, 2009). Characteristic of this position is the view that education has to reflect and sustain national priorities, aims and aspirations. The ideas behind Nyerere's *Ujamaa* educational program were *education for self-reliance* and *education for liberation*. Fundamentally, colonial education was based on the principle of capitalism and was too elitist and formal (stressing book learning), which alienated learners, encouraged inequality and the class structure. It also alienated learners from society and discouraged informal IKs in schools.

Through *Ujamaa* the intention of the Government of Tanzania was to make students productive through sharing of resources which would create equality and respect for human dignity. Nyerere (1968) envisaged an education system that placed a high value on the co-operative instincts of human beings (an indigenous discourse on communalism). The purpose of education was to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society (culture) and to prepare young people for future membership and active participation in society.

Nyerere opted to affirm the importance of society and that of the human person as a subject (Nasongo & Musungu, 2009). Commenting on *Education for Self-Reliance*, Nyerere (1968) pointed out that for education to be meaningful it should be relevant to learners and society. He advocated an Africanized education system that inspired the use of local knowledge and values that reflected activities generated within communities, identified by communities and benefited the communities.

While Mwalimu Nyerere's ideas were liberative and promoted indigenous discourses and perspectives in Tanzanian education, the self-reliance philosophy failed to achieve its goal. Parents were against a system of education that made their children labourers, an education system that was perceived as limiting the opportunities of their children in a changing world. Parents did not view the envisioned education system as liberating communities from poverty but reinforcing the existing poverty and inequalities. The system of development that Mwalimu believed in was "people-centred" but some people in Tanzania did not believe so. That's why the villagization of education and schools was challenged by the mushrooming of English Medium Schools that maintained the capitalist ideology that *Ujamaa* was supposed to deconstruct. Consequently, Tanzania has failed to completely shake off its colonial education and has reinvented the Eurocentric approach that is at odds with indigenous perspectives.

CURRICULUM REDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The period after Nigeria's political independence marked a change in the course of the educational system and curriculum development in Nigeria (Nakpodia, 2012). The colonial education which was inherited by Nigeria was criticized for being too theoretical to be able to make meaningful impact on the life of Nigerians (Marah, 2006). There were content and pedagogical innovations that were introduced in the curriculum. However, the changes do not overtly reflect IK perspectives. While some major subjects especially at Junior Secondary School went through some restructuring, and in some instance a substantial overhauling of the subjects, the changes do not adequately address the issues of IKs. Government promotes the learning of social studies, a junior class subject, above the study of history for the understanding of Nigerian cultures (Ibukun & Aboluwodi, 2010). Perhaps the reason for this action is that the cultural diversities in Nigeria will best be understood by young Nigerians when they learn these diversities in social studies. Ironically, Nigeria is currently facing the problems of ethno-religious crisis, political instability, insecurity, economic strangulation, environmental degradation and many others. Many of these problems arise because Nigerian leaders and policy makers do not see how the past can help to make the present, and shape the future for a better Nigeria.

There seems to be some confusion as to the distinction between the country's national goals and the underlying philosophy of Nigerian education. The philosophy of Nigerian education focuses on national development, interaction of persons and ideals, development of the individual and the general development of the society, a right to equal educational opportunities, and the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria (Oluniyi & Olajumoke, 2013). In addition, the national educational goals include, inculcation of national consciousness and national unity, inculcation of the types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies (Oluniyi & Olajumoke, 2013). What is glaringly missing is the link of the philosophy and educational goals to the Nigerian IK systems and perspectives. Although Marah (2006) contends that after the Declaration on Education for All as recommended by Jomtien Conference of 1990, Nigeria promised to include IK concepts across various disciples, this does not seem to be the reality in schools.

KENYA'S CURRICULUM INDIGENIZATION

Kenya adopted a colonial type of education at independence in 1963. Forty years after independence, the government of Kenya continues the struggle to reconstruct the country's formal curriculum in order to incorporate the multiple indigenous ways of knowing into the school system (Owuor, 2007). Kenya's well known Eurocentric education critic, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) saw postcolonial education as full of inadequacies and advocated for the decolonization of not only the African minds but also the education systems that continued to oppress Africans. Therefore, Kenya's education reforms since independence have focused on curriculum reconstruction to reflect diverse indigenous ways of knowing, and to promote social change and the empowerment of Kenyans (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

According to (Owuor, 2007), an examination of education reports, such as the Ndegwa Report of 1971 and the Ominde Report of 1964, indicates that the government fully recognizes the importance of integrating IKs into the formal education system. While these reports seem to be inclined towards inclusion of indigenous discourses and perspectives in the education system, there have been obstacles at the implementation stage. Owuor (2007) reports that the inclusion of IKs in Kenya is hindered by (a) the western-based schooling system that recognizes teachers as central in classroom knowledge construction (This prevents any space for classroom dialogue in which the experiences of members of local communities such as the role of elders can be incorporated in formal classroom knowledge construction.), (b) most Kenyan indigenous education systems are highly hierarchical, hence top-down diffusion of knowledge creates unequal power relations (Scott & Miller, 2002), and (c) the homogenization of Kenyan diverse

ways of knowing into a monolithic category of indigenous knowledge. Itolondo (2012) points out that in all schools in Kenya parents and public leaders value the passing of examinations, especially mathematics and science. The implication is that students should concentrate on mathematics and science-oriented subjects at the expense of other subjects. This attitude has tended to militate against the effective application IKs in schools in Kenya.

CHALLENGES TO RECLAIMING AFRICAN INDIGENOUS VOICES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

As with all kinds of change, curriculum transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced some challenges. These challenges have negatively impacted the reclamation of African indigenous knowledges in the school curriculum. Two major challenges that are discussed below are the impact of the colonial legacy and globalization.

RECYCLING COLONIAL MODELS

Unfortunately, in Africa, most decisions on education for development originate from central government, which have maintained former colonial administrative structures. As a result, education policies end up being copycats of Western models. After the decolonization of most African states, the curriculum and textbooks, along with teaching methods were in the hands of the educational industry and publishers of the North, mostly former colonial masters. One reason for this state of affairs was that the African independence movement lacked a clear curriculum policy (Lillis, 1985). For example, in the 1960s, the Education Development Centre (EDC) of Newton Massachusetts was launched as the "African Education Programme," when it was only meant for the Anglophone countries (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2008). Under this project, the EDC initiated the African Mathematics Programme (AMP), the African Primary Science Programme (APSP) and the African Social Science Programme (ASSP) as curriculum reforms. However, these programs had no relevance to the localization and indigenous programs required in decolonized states. Educators from the US and UK working with the so-called "counterparts" to prepare teaching/learning materials for African classrooms were out of touch with the required indigenization programmes. Subsequently, curriculum reforms failed to capture indigenous perspectives and discourses but reinforced Western curricula after independence.

GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERAL POLICIES

In Eurocentric thought, IKs are often conveniently represented as "traditional knowledge," connoting a body of relatively old information that has been handed down from generation to generation essentially unchanged, hence dismissed as obsolete (Maweu, 2011). The colonization of African IKs has been perpetuated by

globalization that tends to inferiorize and weaken African knowledges in favour of Euro-American knowledge (Shizha, 2010b). Globalization and neoliberal policies are a great threat to IKs' full implementation in education and sustainable social development. As Nicolaides (2012) noted:

> American norms, values and practices are being conveyed across the Atlantic as the suitable mode of behaviour for Africans. As a consequence of this cultural migration, Africa's rich culture is being degraded and is viewed as inferior by many Africans. (p. 118)

Globalization continues to dilute and destroy African IKs because of the Euro-American values that are being spread all over the world with relative speed. However, the United Nations has made declarations that are supportive of decolonizing indigenous knowledges and the persistent hegemonic Eurocentric epistemologies in the global indigenous communities. For instance Articles 13-15 of the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples advocate the teaching of indigenous knowledges in schools. Article 14 (1) states: "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning" (United Nations, 2007, p. 7). In addition to the above recommendation, Article 15(1) also states: "Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information" (United Nations, 2007, p. 7). Arguably, globalization might be frustrating the reclamation of indigenous voices in the school curriculum. Nevertheless, there are supportive global voices that are facilitating the reclamation programs to empower indigenous students in Sub-Saharan Africa and world-wide.

CONCLUSION

Reclaiming IKs in the African school curriculum should not be misunderstood as a project to replace racist education with another form of reverse racism. Worldviews change with historical moments and the current historical moment, due to globalization and the translocation of knowledges requires acknowledgement of differences and diversity. Therefore, indigenizing Sub-Saharan African school curriculum should be approached pragmatically. Inclusive perspectives in knowledge production and mediation should be what curriculum transformation aim at. Pedagogy should be approached from diverse perspectives that allow the pedagogical process to be culturally sensitive, accepting cultural variations that may exist within the classroom. Classroom life should reflect the social and cultural contexts that relate to students'

experiences. At the same time, classroom experiences should also focus on the need to meet the current societal needs. This means that although pedagogy should be culturally sensitive, it should not ignore aspects of Western knowledge constructs that have benefited African societies during the colonial period. Pedagogical practices that integrate history are conducive to a reconstructed curriculum that incorporates reality as perceived from different cultural historical moments. Learning, in this context, becomes a meaningful and fulfilling experience that helps students to be useful participants in their society. Previous failures at indigenizing African curriculum should not discourage attempts at integrating IKs and Western knowledge which results in multiple voices in Sub-Saharan African schools.

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