

Towards the Africanization of Teacher Education: A Critical Reflection

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Abstract

In general, education in Africa has not been relevant to the needs of African societies. The fundamental problem in this regard is that, educational structures were formulated by colonial powers who had a cultural background different to that found among Africans. Decades of self-rule and independence have not succeeded in empowering Africans through enabling them to determine their own indigenous African educational framework. In part this difficulty is as a result of the continued social and economic ties between African countries and their former colonial proprietors. Although Africa is politically independent, it remains technologically and economically dependent on countries that colonised it. As such, the current educational structures in Africa are meant mainly to foster this bond instead of truncating it. Any reforms in African education are conceived and implemented within the framework of this relationship, and hence they cannot proceed far enough to develop and foster indigenous African knowledge systems.

Subsequently, there is an inevitable need today to decolonize education structures in Africa by means of reclaiming indigenous African voices through curriculum reforms and the transformation of education discourses at all realms, including teacher education. This paper advances an inclusive strategy towards teacher education curricula which is based on an *African epistemic* slant for the Africa. In doing so, attention is directed at the teacher education in Africa, and within the precincts of indigenous African knowledge systems as the rightful place and parallel to the array of knowledge systems in the world. The implication is that indigenous African epistemologies in teacher education curricula will be reflected in the schools and the classrooms where those teachers teach.

Keywords: Africanization, teacher education, critical reflection, indigenous knowledge systems, African epistemic slant.

1. Introduction

African philosophy as such and African epistemology in particular emanates from a colonial treatise that there is no philosophy in Africa. The implication of this retraction is that African perspective of philosophy does not ensue from surprise as such, but obstruction. As a result, debates, responses, and reactions ensued such that a wider corollary that touches on sensitive issues such as the identity of the African people, their place in history, and their influence on humanity including education,

especially the theory of knowledge could be retracted. The search for identity drew attention to the concept of African episteme, its relevance, and context expressly in all realms.

As the 21st century surges, it is inevitable that African philosophy and African values have to be integrated in the processes of contemplating an education system (Msila, 2009). The aim is to configure and postulate a system of education that would uphold the indigenous knowledge systems (Higgs & Van Wyk, 2007). The process of figuring out education systems that foster indigenous knowledge systems provides the background of Africanizing education institutions. The aim is not to eliminate modern education, in favour of Africanizing education, but to add African epistemology in form of indigenous knowledge systems in order to enhance modern education.

An important realm of African episteme is the pedagogy and more so the education of teachers. In this view, the substance of African philosophical reflection on education cannot be conceptualized devoid of integrating the aspect of African *epistemic* slant which depicts the foundation of indigenous knowledge systems in the entire continent. This is a crucial inclusive strategy towards teacher education curricula (2014). An indigenous knowledge is the totality of local set of world-views which is unique to a given culture or society. The essence of indigenous knowledge is to facilitate unique process of making decisions in every context of communal engagement including social, economic, spiritual, education, and any other activities in progress of the African society. An attempt to Africanization of education draws attention to the use of indigenous knowledge systems. Africanization requires a radical restructuring of education in order to match the collective nature of Africa culture and epistemology reflected in indigenous knowledge systems.

In this paper, the concept of Africanizing education refer to the educational reform which involves an endeavour of integrating African cultural factor as a form of epistemic slant into the formal pedagogy. It comprises of a critical regeneration of what is valuable and prized in African culture in education theory and practice. The essence is to define African realities and perception, nature and context into the theory of knowledge. The inference here is to repeal the distorted view that Africans possess little or no indigenous knowledge of value that can be utilized in the process of educational transformation. It follows necessarily that Africanization of education displays the potentiality of improving of on social and political setting in an attempt to transform the human society.

2. Theoretical Framework

As a theory, phenomenology comprises of a set of abstract and conjectural approaches that attempt to understand the way in which people experience the world they create and inhabit; the study of human experience and consciousness in everyday life; and the concept of phenomenon in which an observer contemplates an object rather than the quality ascribed to the object itself. The starting point is the idea of 'being' in the world, that is being situated in a physical and social space. It follows that human beings cannot conceive or even create an analysis of human experience which has no existential presuppositions. This is because an observer is situated within the world being observed. In this case, a method of literary criticism based on the belief that things have no existence outside of human consciousness or awareness.

Therefore, the significance of Africanizing education is a process that takes place in the mind and serves as an attempt to integrate African value systems into the theory and practice of pedagogy. A phenomenological theory combines with the notion of selection whose criteria is to identify what is ideal for a given situation. Accordingly, it is obvious that when people meet and the matter at hand is about education, then educators with inherent cultural expertise are summoned as advisers. In other words, the better educated a people are fashioned to live the cultural precepts. This resonates Plato that the status of the republic is founded on the selection of its education. In consequence, the modern world which is considered as 'knowledge society' relies on the diverse cultural basis in order to rationalize its education and achieve potential invention, against competitive society within the international realm. It is therefore inevitable that phenomenological theory guides this paper to identify what is practical for Africanizing education as an endeavour to serve the necessities of African society.

3. Methodology

This paper used interviews in teaching and learning institutions to facilitate the process of acquiring primal data. It is palpable that the phenomenological function of philosophy provided the existential experiences from which the interviews ensued. On the other hand, critical function provided the background of evaluating the interviews.

What is phenomenological function? As such, phenomenological technique is an apt description of existential basis of reality. In such context, 'phenomenon' is envisaged to refer to an ordinary human experience. The role of phenomenological function is to interpret reality and experiences in terms of human perspectives. An idea is defined and interpreted in concrete experiences that human beings encounter. As a philosophical method of inquiry, phenomenology is based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not of anything independent of human consciousness.

What is critical function? As such, critical method which is also referred to as Socratic or prescriptive or epistemological is essential meant to provide evaluate and judgment to a situation. Objectively, critical method evaluates ideas, recommends or prescribes what ought to happen in a particular case. It aims at providing better alternatives that can enrich existing ones through careful reflection. The essence of critical function is to liberate the human minds from dogmatism, fanaticism and hypocrisy by means of becoming more honesty in terms of thought in order to avoid fallacies such as generalization, association, attack of the person etc. it also draws attention towards being tolerance to opposing ideas. In education, the critical method promotes creativity and critical thinking as well as prescribing worthwhile behaviour. In this paper, phenomenological and critical functions are served as the means to explore the existential status of education theory, provided an evaluative analysis of education practice, and prescribed an alternative approach which in Africanization of education theory and practice.

4. Contextualizing African Epistemology

In the recent past, African perspective towards education has been figured in terms of ethnicity, ideology, sage intelligent, and the philosophy of professional identification. However, these trends are relatively wide beyond the scope of this paper. On the other hand, such trends are largely ambiguous, and as such do not explain the existential condition of education in Africa, the essence of African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems, and how such are relevant in the training of an African teacher. This explains why the substance of Africanizing teacher education to be parallel to the necessities of African continent is inevitable.

4.1 African *Epistemic* Slant

African philosophy finds its basis from the unity in diversity of African traditions whose elements objectify the meaningful continuity in variety in terms of responsive and creative satisfaction. In African epistemology, there is an integration of beliefs about the elementary estimation of reality. This is an expression of the fact that reality is beyond the empirical realm of space and time; that everything which exists is and equally charged and animated with life forces.

An African *epistemic* slant defines African epistemology in terms of its roots that are deeply ingrained in the metaphysical and spiritual traditions in Africa. In this case, the tradition of a people is the basis of the cause and effect of their experience. It is from this ambiance that the term philosophy is defined as a reflection on human experience, and for an African, it implicates African religions, root culture, oral literature, traditional arts, fables, proverbs, idioms, rituals, music, dance, folklores and myths, are the content of African epistemology. Hence, the epistemological ideal in African perspective is to create co-existence through the cause-effect nature of the experiential and non-experiential realm. African indigenous knowledge system or epistemology contributes positively towards the headway of the society in all its realms.

4.2 African Indigenous Knowledge Systems

An effort of positioning the nature and uniqueness of African indigenous knowledge systems and epistemology requires a regulated tenacity to shape the curriculum in collocation with the process of teaching and learning. The essence of inserting African epistemology necessitate locating the nature of rationality, objectivity, rejecting what is obsolete, accepting what is apt, modifying and adapting what can augment creativity in terms of improving the psychological, intellectual, and economic realms. An inclusion of African epistemology in the curriculum is an indispensable solution to harmful disparities, distortion, trifling, and elusiveness in modern education.

The epistemology and intellectual reserves of African indigenous knowledge systems provide sensitive activity for viability and strength where the identity of a human being supersedes that of material being. The dominant trends as a result of indigenous value systems, and ethics refined over several epochs define African epistemology. It is crucial that the curriculum and the educational milieu of structures deserve an evaluation, understanding, and revitalization of African indigenous

knowledge systems and epistemology. The end result will emphasize on refraining from the paradigm which is founded on disdain, disrespect and arrogance, and instead will insert respect, humility and openness as crucial values permeating the new curriculum.

4.3 Indigenous African Educational Framework

In its perspective, African perception of education is a pragmatic social activity. This is the model of the African philosophy of education. Within, the pedagogy sagacity, the role of wisdom is perceived as the conceptual model and the initial impetus to facilitate teacher education in Africa which is necessary to benefit not only the Africa, but everyone throughout the world. The emphasis should be placed on admiring the philosophical thought of African epistemological prospect in education. Thus, the African epistemological prospect is the background that defines the lives of people in relation the theory of knowledge, and will persist in edifying existential experiences in Africa.

In this milieu, the philosophy of wisdom, or African epistemology comprises of the ideas and thoughts which embrace African value system or indigenous knowledge. Therefore this process of inquiry that explores the epistemology and experiences of the Africans in terms of their lives, communities, situations, and how such are related to generation of knowledge is fundamental. In its nature, indigenous knowledge systems is a combination of diverse forms of knowledge including social, economic, political, scientific, philosophy, learning and educational systems. These systems emanate as identifying facets from the culture and history of a people.

4.4 The Substance of Africanizing an African Teacher

This paper attempts to postulate the substance that corroborates and defines an African teacher. The nature of education as articulated in Africa gyrates within the mindsets of colonial proprietors. As such, the broad view of education and particularly education of a teacher focuses on general principles, aims and objectives of education. Technical philosopher doing philosophy of education is too abstract and not relevant to the everyday concerns of professional teachers in the school. In this regard, the African continent requires encapsulating ways of thinking that uphold African values in various structures of the society. A transformative education in Africa would be truly meaningful if Africans realize the importance of that which belongs to the continent as they utilize the western knowledge systems. An African teacher pedagogy requires an integration of African epistemology into modern western education and western form of living. This integration is a pertinent component that should involve complex of capabilities drawing on African heritage of indigenous knowledge. An African philosophical outlook postulates concepts such as Ubuntu, humanism, and communalism whose contribution to African epistemology and Africanized education cannot be flouted.

An importance of Ubuntu is rooted in African traditional society and philosophy and it means humanness or the quality of being human. It espouses the ideal of interconnectedness among people. It defines the nature and basis of African Humanism that involves alms-giving, sympathy, care, sensitivity to the needs of others, respect, consideration, patience and kindness. The ideals of

the concept need to be stressed to learners, preparing them for the future. As such, Ubuntu is exclusively African, but equally universal since it is tacitly articulated in other parts of the world to display the sense of collective identity. In relation to African epistemology, Ubuntu is essential in shaping an Africanized education in terms of African experiences, concerns, aspirations and the process of constructing knowledge. It is essentially fundamental in responding to the inherent issues and concerns daunting human conditions in Africa under the influence of modern western education. An analysis of education within an African context has to shed light on how Africans learn and construct knowledge. When the communal aspects of African epistemology are infused in education, a community of learners is generated and the individuals glean to each another in an unselfish manner.

An idea of a collective inclusive in the society displays the significance of communitarianism in African socio-ethical thought. Such collective inclusion is reflected in social structures of African societies. Communitarianism sees the individual as an inherently communal being and is never isolated individual monad. This implies that an integration of African epistemology, or African knowledge systems is necessary to substantiate and shape Western education towards African interests. Therefore, the probable coexistence and synergy of African knowledge systems and Western knowledge systems is indispensable.

4.4.1 The Curriculum and African Epistemology

As an academic blueprint, the curriculum must depict diverse sequence of theoretical and practical models. The principle and dominant facets include the realm of independent ideas and the critical analysis of ideas. These two realms are explored and reflected in the context of their implications in teaching and learning strategies, content, evaluation and anticipated outcomes, within the light of African theory of knowledge or epistemology. In its entirety, knowledge is perceived as an independent frame of facts. These facts are disseminated by the teacher to the learner. On the other hand, the learner is evaluated using diverse forms of examinations. In this case, the teacher arranges the content in a logical manner and remains the central actor in the learning process.

In this realm, the essence of African epistemology is at risk due to possibility of chauvinism, disdain and adverse perception. The opposite realm which insists on critical reflection brings forward the societal perspectives, and prevalent influential relations that define the recipients of knowledge. This is naturally perceived as socially oriented in terms of a transformative African epistemology. An awareness of societal complexities at all levels presupposes an academic discourse whose aim is to terminate such concerns. Consequently, the curriculum designed to respond to such issues and as such, it is corroborated as an instrument of liberation and empowerment.

Accordingly, a curriculum that draws its meaning from African epistemology creates more consciousness about the meaning of being an African, the tenets of social existence, the role of perennialism, functionalism, preparationism communalism, and holiticism of African well-being. This realm has it that the teaching and learning activities and strategies must focus on shaping a learner to integrate western education and African indigenous knowledge systems. An integrated curriculum that comprises of African indigenous knowledge systems and western education assists

the learner to proliferate the intellect through exposure to rigorous intellectual activity and remain build awareness of communal expectations.

The implication this integration of indigenous knowledge and western education is an integral awareness that knowledge production is socially derived, and that relations of domination and oppression could affect the content. The process of evaluating the progress of the learner is founded on measuring how the acquired attitudes and social consciousness are realized. In this case, examinations to satisfy western education must be coupled with assessment of transformation derived from African epistemology or indigenous knowledge systems. The content of African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems is obtained from conservative disciplines. Therefore, the concept of praxis and the structure logical inference must be integrated to produce knowledge base for an African learner.

4.4.2 Instructional Resources and African Epistemology

All the instructional resources should African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems to enhance transformation. Accordingly, a curriculum planner is obliged to gather the content generated from conventional and revised information about African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems. The universities and training colleges of teachers in Africa must engage in this exercise for the right reasons, and strive for collaborate establishment of knowledge accumulation and consolidation, problem solving and community enrichment using African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems.

An attempt to enhance African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems in teacher education and training should integrate discussions, debates, symposia, interviews and tutorials in the teaching and learning strategies. These approaches highly support the essence of African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems. Therefore, the ideal situation is that African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems is reflected in the principles of pedagogy, the content to be taught, and teaching and learning strategies. An integration of African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems to western education in the training of teachers is sufficient to generate excellence in Africa and beyond.

It is equally rational that integrating African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems in the curriculum requires support from the political extension. These power relations should be confronted, persuaded or outwitted in order to ensure that African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems find its way into the teacher education and training.

4.4.3 The Teacher and African Epistemology

Some of the most significant means of preparing the teacher to embrace African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems is to expose them to the collective knowledge inherited from previous generations. This knowledge is either structured or unstructured but whatever context, it is fundamental in preparing a teacher who is determined to safeguard African values and tenets.

An important tenet required in training, education and formation of teachers in African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems is that consciousness is crucial. The aspect being conscious includes an awareness of others and their tasks in the society irrespective how miniscule such roles tend to be. It implies that a relevant and imperative ground rules are the aspects of sensitive, time, space, place, gender, race, and community. In its nature, African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems transcends chauvinism in favour of collective responsibility and detachment. It follows necessarily that African teachers are partially trained if they circumvent African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems in their education.

5. Africanizing Teacher Education - the future of African Education

The outcome and the future of African rationality and its implication in theory of knowledge and the nature of African thought is epistemologically distinctive from the European ideal. An African perspective on thinking suggests that an African sees, feels, imagines, reasons or thinks and intuits simultaneously. It is equally apparent that Africans do not only think about such concepts; they live and feel their realities. These are the principal aspects that must serve as submissions on commitments for a better and Africanized curricular in teacher training.

Africanization must oscillate on the continuum of re-orientation of persons, institutions, structures, products, processes and ideas towards a fresh, creative and constructive imaging of Africa and African contexts which take past, present and future African reality and African potential seriously, consciously and deliberately.

The transformation envisaged in Africanization of education centers around re-orientation of institutions and structures, people, teaching and non-teaching staff, and individual learners towards African contexts and realities. It further encompasses re-orienting processes and ideas, and integrating African values and perspectives in education to supplement modern pedagogical processes and activities.

The directions and directives defining Africanization ostensibly indicate the essence of mainstreaming of African issues, histories, and approaches to enhance re-connections particularly through heritage studies and practices, and through the rehabilitation of indigenous knowledge systems. African histories, cultures, knowledge, and philosophy are directed to become the cores of new curricula. In the midst of this plenitude, Africanization coincides with the structural adjustment of training of teachers at the universities. On all these levels, the question remains as to what it is that deserves transformation through Africanization of teacher education.

There are capacities that are abrogated as necessary for constructing African perspectives and such deserve debriefing, probing, investigating, debating and public assigation, critical and creative thinking. This recovery of occluded capacities from African perspectives are crucial in the training of teachers otherwise, universals in knowledge are not generated from power and control besides the means necessary to invent knowledge. In this case, training and education of teachers must transcend the idea of national culture to embrace a pan-African vision as a form of universalism.

6. Conclusion

This paper reveals that Africanization of teacher education is mandatory if the pedagogy and training of teachers is envisaged to safeguard the existential voices and values in the African continent. An attempt to Africanize teacher education draws attention towards inevitable responsive to the realities on the continent. In calling for the indigeneity of the social sciences and humanities in Africa, the proliferation of relevance of curricula at the teaching and learning institutions is inevitable. The relationship between marketization, commercialization and privatization of teaching and research at African universities, and the rationale for the call for Africanization-as-indigenization is not immediately apparent in all its implications.

As such, Africanization which is also referred to as indigenization is mired as an antidote to improve the modern education. It also the indispensable means of addressing the question of relevance and creating a link to the local, regional, and global dimensions of this question, explicit and explicable.

Africanization of education is highly occlude from transforming the curriculum such that African universities are no longer effective sites of generating knowledge, but sites of hotel construction, from lecture halls to pre-fabricating shopping malls, and from the culture of collegiality to the thicket of corporate vultures where academic concerns are now centering on manipulation of mark sheets to show passes. These anomalies are extrinsic to universities that control and direct the training of teachers. The main sources include the policies, goals, and orientations of African education. In contradistinction, there is inherent necessity of an internal reorganization of knowledge production as the core responsibility of university structures. An integration of African epistemology in teacher education defines the dictum that Africans are agents of their own history and masters of their destiny in shaping an education theory and practice that are suitable to their societal necessities and prospects.

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