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AFROCENTRIC PEDAGOGY APPROACH IN THE CURRICULUM OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM RENEWAL IN AFRICA: A CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to conceptualize in greater detail the educational system approach that is being imposed into African countries, South Africa as a case in point. Over the past years, Sub-Saharan countries have and still experience indoctrinated educational system in which the content is mimicked from purported hegemonic states such UK, USA and other western counties inter alia. The problem of education retrogrades from the prior independence of African countries in the early 1960s wherein, the colonial masters organized and silently played a crucial role in shaping the formation of education in Africa; and not much has changed in terms of education since then. A particular concern is that the system of education might have designed to impoverish African people and perpetuate dependency to the western nations. Hence, at the core center of the educational system is the curriculum which seem to be inevitable and requires an alteration, particularly in South Africa. Therefore, the outlook of this paper is to critique and interrogate the system of education in South Africa looking at the socio-economic development and a continuous alteration in respect of the curriculum. The paper shows that for the realization of African renaissance, ideals of Africa Agenda 2063 and accelerated development, the system of education must be transformed and be Africanized to benefit the people of Africa. The paper uses literature-based approach as a methodological framework in order to analyze the status quo of education in South Africa. The paper concludes and recommends that the transformation of current educational system requires an alteration to the inclusive of indigenous knowledge to vigorously respond to socio-economic woes in Africa. Furthermore, the paper advocates for indigenous knowledge consideration in the incessant curriculum renewal.

Keywords: Curriculum, Educational Systems, Indigenous knowledge, South Africa.

Rezumat. Scopul acestei lucrări este de a conceptualiza în detalii abordarea sistemului educațional care se impune în țările africane, Africa de Sud drept exemplu. În ultimii ani, țările sub-sahariene au și încă experimentează un sistem educațional îndoctrinat în care conținutul este imitat din pretinse state hegemonice, cum ar fi Marea Britanie, SUA și altele.

Problema educației retrogradează de la independența anterioară a țărilor africane la începutul anilor 1960, în care stăpânii coloniali s-au organizat și au jucat în tăcere un rol crucial în formarea educației în Africa și nu s-au schimbat multe de atunci în ceea ce privește educația. În centrul sistemului educațional se află curriculumul care necesită o modificare, în special în Africa de Sud. Prin urmare, perspectiva acestei lucrări este de a critica și interoga sistemul de educație din Africa de Sud privind dezvoltarea socio-economică și modificarea continuă a curriculum-ului. Lucrarea arată că pentru renașterea africană, a idealurilor Agendei Africii 2063 și a dezvoltării accelerate, sistemul de educație trebuie transformat și africanizat pentru a aduce beneficii cetățenilor din Africa. Lucrarea folosește abordarea bazată pe literatură drept cadru metodologic pentru analiza status quo-ului educației în Africa de Sud. În concluzie se recomandă transformarea sistemului educațional actual, care necesită o modificare a incluziunii cunoștințelor indigene pentru a răspunde energic la problemele socio-economice din Africa. În plus, lucrarea pledează pentru luarea în considerare a cunoștințelor indigene în reînnoirea neîncetată a curriculum-ului.

Cuvinte cheie: *Curriculum, Sisteme educaționale, Cunoștințe indigene, Africa de Sud.*

1. Introduction

The post-colonial Africa is also alleged to be a neo-colonial Africa in a plethora of educational systems that is pragmatically a conundrum. This means that the post-colonial Africa is in rhetoric because major decision that seeks to influence the developmental direction are taken from outside of African civilizations, most in particular Europe and western nations [1]. The tragedy is that the future of Africa is discussed in its absence by the first world countries. Regrettably, the calamity of a neo-colonial project is gaining momentum by day in education, silencing the interest of the Africans. Of a particular concern is that the system of education might have designed to impoverish African people and perpetuate dependency to the western nations. The project in education appears to have hegemony over every sphere of the modern economy and the society in particular [1]. Hence, that raises the debating points that focus on its reflections and discussions around the issues of education in a post-colonial South Africa.

Clearly, South African education does not teach people to be inventors instead it channels them to memorize and lacking Afrocentric innovation. Hence, at the core center of the educational system is the curriculum that requires an alteration. Accordingly, it appears that the current education imparts young and emerging academics and scholars with the information that ensemble with the western states. On the same trajectory, the norms, values, culture, ethics and indigenous pedagogy are being exterminated and circumvented because of the education that is being taught at the educational institutions of higher learning [2, 3]. The paper submits that the indigenous knowledge should be incorporated to the existing curricula to harmonize with the pragmatic conditions of the African people and be pertinent to the needs of the people.

The paper concurs with [3, 4] that not only the western education system is a panacea for impartation of knowledge in area of unique and different capacity and capabilities. However, it is pivotal that knowledge, in any way, should not exist in isolation because, if they do, it will alienate certain knowledge and philosophies from various perspectives. If knowledge of a particular field is in isolation, then that would not be constituted as “knowledge”; thus, knowledge constitutes the amalgamation of both western and indigenous knowledge in education [4]. As a result, if there is a monopoly of education considered and

applied ubiquitously irrespective of practices and capacity of a specific area then that calls for compromises. Moreover, the writings of ancient scholars are still relevant today that local knowledge, the rituals, tradition, and inheritance rights disappear particularly since the inception of the western modern education [5]. An outlook that knowledge cultivates in a form of interaction between the individual and the environment; that is the surrounded cultural and natural settings which are imperative to the educational development of knowledge [5].

2. Materials and Methods

This paper used a literature-based methodology. Which means that the paper is purely conceptual and also adopted a qualitative approach. This type of a methodology was long used by philosophers in an attempt to describe and understand the developments of the time. The paper relied on an examination of literature and materials from secondary sources. The secondary sources provided secondary data obtained from regulatory and policy papers, academic books, journal articles and relevant reading materials which were deemed necessary to achieve the purpose of the paper [6]. It used a thematic analysis, wherein themes were identified and developed and further interpretation and meaning of the themes were provided for better understanding.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Interrogating the Current State of Curriculum in South Africa

There is nothing on the already existing literature or educational system that teaches young people the primary imperatives of self-development in terms of education and edification of knowledge just like the elders, [7] divulged the notion. Instead, young people learn how to absorb the taboos from their families that are taught using western ideology of education and culture. Yet, alienating the western approach of education as a panacea instead of converging with the indigenous knowledge could primarily persist the inability to meet the needs of the state and that is to circumvent the educational construct [7]. The challenges of the current curriculum are precisely due to globalization and democracy which does not do any justice to the woes and providing proper and quality education to the constituency. Meanwhile, it could be argued that the curriculum developers and teachers continue to fail learners and students thereof. However, it becomes a challenge when students write what they have observed through indigenous teachings from their communities. Conversely, teachers and lecturers antagonize the curriculum instead of converging with the needs and aspirations of the learners in their respective academic, social and personal context [7]. What exacerbates the current predicaments of the curriculum is what the teachers and lecturers impart to the students with the knowledge that is limited and scant to the classroom and the lecture halls, hence there is always a scope to guide and channel the journey of teaching and learning [7, 8]. When interrogating the status quo of the curriculum in South Africa, one can vividly note that, it mutes the indigenous knowledge and gives all the privileges and encomium to the “Western-European” perceptions [8].

For the past recent decades across Sub-Saharan and all the regions of Africa, indigenous knowledge has been successfully muted [8]. Accordingly, that is exacerbated by the contemporary educational system that does not enhance and transform the current state of educational development in Africa, particularly South Africa [8]. The pride of Africa resides in its indigenous use of resources, languages, and education [8]. Hence, the indigenous knowledge in Africa is used to define aesthetic, identity, symbolic, spirituality and all other

social norms and values that relates to the people given their geographical areas. Within that context, the social norms portray the language, culture, taboos, dance and music, riddles, rituals, and the indigenous knowledge that African people possess [9]. Be that as it may, the indigenous knowledge system endures the historical imbalances in the current dispensation of democracy and further circumvented in the current state of educational system across African countries [9]. Which means, there is nothing if not little in the current educational system that teaches people about the indigenous science, health, technology, and trading to name the few. The modern or conventional educational system undermines the African people about their origin, knowledge, and history. The adage that “for a nation without history shall perish” seems to be a reality in the current juncture most specifically in South Africa, wherein unemployment is skyrocketing, poverty seems to be the way of life, economy is at its lowest phase of recession and other socio-economic issues are unabatedly escalating on daily basis. All these challenges that South Africa is experiencing are merely because of the educational system that is adopted from the west which its curriculum does not respond to the needs of the African people [9, 10]. It is therefore proven that the indigenous knowledge can contribute to developing and re-shaping the educational system that its curriculum can speak and respond to the dilemmas of the country [11]. Furthermore, if indigenous knowledge can be considered in the curriculum development, then there can be a retain and redeeming of the splendor of African typicality of education and knowledge that can possibly deal with the socio-economic conundrums [11].

One can argue that the western epistemology and pedagogy have created and lay down the rules through educational system dominance. Considering that echoed dictum, the knowledge system consumption and production portray western domination [12]. That is to portray that the supremacy of what was the imperialists and now parading and masquerading as modern western knowledge is rooting deep into African states and education. The latter dictum and sentiments are shared by [13] who confirms the supremacy of western curriculum in the post-colonial Africa whom in words uttered that, “it is everywhere, dominating the disciplinary and interdisciplinary discourse and department, paradigms and publications, academics, politics and practices”. The dictions of [13] as corroborated by [14] are still perceived as the key words for highlighting the skewed educational system that hammer the development of developing countries; wherein universities and research institutions are still guided and embedded by the ideologies of the western curriculum. Consequently, the universities and research institutions never cease to surprise the African countries with the knowledge they absorb and produce which is controlled by the same western hegemony [15]. Even though the libraries attempt to include indigenous knowledge and traditional heritage of Africa, most particularly in South Africa, such is not sufficient because those are just symbolising not contents. In fact, very scant intellectuals and academics are interested in pursuing indigenous knowledge research and devote themselves to the process [15].

When South African became a democratic country 30 years ago, the immediate mandate for the newly elected government was to transform and shape the system of education that would be salvage to the challenges confronting the South Africans in particular. Instead, from the primary and secondary educational perspective, it adopted the western curriculum in the name of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and now absorbed Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS). All these curriculums were mimicked from the western countries to try and reform the system of education. That was deliberately and intentionally done to overlook the true identity of

Africans. However, not everything is wrong with the western curricula, however, there are certain vacuums that must be installed with a sense and essence of indigenous knowledge science to properly fit in a specific context of South Africa. Consequently, the educational system to date is failing young and old in South Africa because they are in dire milieu of poverty and inequality. Meanwhile, [15] has vehemently lambasted the formal education that provides teachers with the training that makes them be part of the “elite strata” who’s their acquired knowledge and skills set them apart from the native communities and yet their upbringing was purely indigenous like any other pupil who grew up in an African community. The paper seeks to incorporate in the current system of education, the indigenous economy, such that all the indigenous people can partake vigorously, meaningfully, and equally in the economy.

It could be noted that the education white paper 3, was a program aimed to transform the educational system of higher learning that was manufactured and adopted in the year 1997. The white paper acknowledges the key conundrums that are manifested in the institutions of higher learning in South Africa. These incorporate among others the redress of the imbalances of the past, the need to respond to new social woes, respond to the realities and available opportunities and respond to the national crisis. The national plan for higher education of 2001 focused on the de-racialization, achieving unity and diversity, being comprehensive, producing the graduates who are equal to the task of social and economic development of the country, installing research ingredient in higher learning and restructure higher educational system [15]. These are aspects that one would wish to see being executed to their full capacity. The provoking question that one is reluctant to ask, but must be asked anyway is, to what extent have these objectives being accomplished? In other words, what went wrong that the government policies and frameworks failed to materialize the objectives of the national plan? Perhaps this is the same nest filled with elements of success and failures in it. Hence, the paper seeks to do away with such a nest and bring a new nest with a sense of indigenous knowledge that would be responsive to socio-economic dilemmas. For that reason, [15] argue that the urgency with the South African curricula is of paramount importance and that it can no longer be postponed.

3.2. Colonial Educational System and Indigenous Knowledge Integration

The paper disproves the notion that African continent was ‘tabula rasa’ before the inception of western systems and had no origin. The discourse on indigenous knowledge has provoked the thoughts of the most Africa leaders particularly in South Africa over the recent years [15]. In South Africa, the indigenous knowledge is what informs the indigenous communities when it comes to the learning about indigenous pedagogy or education wherein the indigenous knowledge becomes a focal point of learning the basic principles of human development [15]. Paradoxically, the indigenous teachings are swept under the red carpet of western teachings. The colonial goons and its associate of apartheid system or administration have confidently disregarded and undermined the indigenous knowledge describing it as unscientific, ungodly, full of evil and diabolical, illogical system and anti-development to name the few [15]. Albeit the Global Knowledge Conference that took place in 1997 in Toronto that has put forward the ideals of indigenous knowledge which are to learn, preserve and share the indigenous knowledge became a pipedream. Hence, scant attention and little has been done in Sub-Saharan Africa to guarantee the maximum utilization of the indigenous teachings for a common goal. Equally, Africa endures to be in dire conditions of under

development and suffers from western doctrines under the so called “democracy” which is limping like a crippled old person [16]. Conspicuously, South Africa in particular persist times without number to languish in the pool of poverty in most (if) not all the aspects of the economy under the democratic dispensation.

The term “indigenous” has been vilified and slandered particularly under the new modern society and the beginning of formal western education. This knowledge (indigenous) is afforded low prestige because it belongs to a specific racial or ethnic group of African people and is perceived to be lacking the necessary cultural capital [17]. To this end, the curriculum which is the product of colonizing the mindset of African people has been adopted and persists in schools and further developed and perpetuated in the universities and colleges across the world. Therefore, the paper argues that the western curriculum must be reformed to allow Africans to have and resuscitate their old-fashioned way of education and learning because that is what defines them. One can explicitly note that very few if not many Africans are conscious that they are in cultural, economic, social and political bondage [17]. All of these are primarily due to what the curriculum and the content encapsulate which is not to provide a leeway for African people to know who they are and what they are. Be that as it may be, neocolonial cultural dependency is a peril to the autonomy of African psychology and sovereignty [17]. On the similar stance, African people continue suffering the intellectual poverty of the western curriculum and lacking the knowledge of self-consciousness [17].

It could be avowed that the mindsets of African people are still indoctrinated with the racial content of the curriculum. Similarly, [18] denotes that racialized curriculum is a new form of imperialism, a neocolonial apparatus of manipulation to take control of knowledge production in the world. Incontrovertibly, the western education has flourished in the Sub-Saharan countries to hide and distort the indigenous knowledge in the dustbin of history. In that, the modernity of western syllabus since the independence of African states in 1960s has not provided a long-term solution to socio-economic woes in a manner in which African people would have hoped for [18, 19]. To date, most of Sub-Saharan countries still experience myriad dilemma ranging from, sluggish economic development, low life expectancy and triple challenges, i.e., poverty, inequality and unemployment [18]. At the core center of Africa’s under development, it is a nest of western education and its philosophies, which is designed and shaped to bring wealth to the western communities at the expense of African countries. Moreover, the conspiracy theories from the west have failed to at least incorporate some of the ideals of indigenous knowledge in the mist of its content; failed to provide a creative panacea to ameliorate the Africa’s development particularly South Africa and must be rejected with the contempt they deserve. For that reason, students in South Africa took it to the streets to demand amongst other quality and decolonized education.

For a state that does not take care of young people would be deemed as a failed state. Students across the universities and colleges, specifically in South Africa stood up and fight to the bitter end and became the martyrs of the struggle to get free education for the poor and the missing-middle. Amongst others, students also included in their memorandum of demands the quest to get quality and decolonized education [19]. Students wanted education that they can relate to; that can be able to transform their communities into a better area; that can respond to social and economic needs. Many of the students to date [20] feel life is discombobulating, full of anarchy and devoid of meaning. Young people are not able to describe their moods and their affiliation to the society around them [19]. This is primarily because of the system of education that has imprisoned and “arrested” the minds of the

society young and old to reject their own self and abscond from the indigenous pedagogy [19]. The paper submits that the indigenous teachings and system is the only ingredient to add value and give a meaning to African people through education and transformation of the curriculum. Since indigenous knowledge rises from real-life experiences of African people, its incorporation into the existing curriculum in schools, Universities and colleges would motivate, inspire and broaden their intellectual capacity of knowledge and milieu around them [19]. Hence, indigenous knowledge is the knowledge that one has before entering the classroom and performing the academic activities [19]. The paper also extends to establish and explore in an African context, the doctrines of Pan Africanism which are collective self-reliance, economic growth and self-sustaining development. These doctrines would be materialized through teaching and learning of the indigenous knowledge so that the conceptualization and robust discussion could have and bring sound positive impact to the students, learners and the society at large; alternatively respond to the societal needs.

3.3. The Difference Between Academic Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge

The paper refers to [19] in respect of the indigenous knowledge and conventional science or academic knowledge. Conventional science is generated through rules, policies, standards and planned procedures while indigenous knowledge is generated from community members [19]. It therefore, worth noting that indigenous knowledge derives or elicited from the existing wealth of community wisdom and information, local utilization of the resources and the creative art from the members of the community. While academic knowledge seems to bank on principles, theories and laws for the purpose of education. Moreover, [19] also makes a distinction that academic knowledge pays attention to the individualism and narcissism as it disregards and kill students and learners through the failure of academic activities such as tests and assignments. Opposite to the latter point, indigenous knowledge pays attention to the cooperative communalism, socialism as it pursues to include all the people in the community [20]. Academic knowledge is found in literature and packages with labels such as chemistry, economics, accounting and biology to name the few. Meanwhile, indigenous knowledge is not found in packages, it is passed on orally from generation to generation. Be that as it may, the paper seeks to acknowledge and document the indigenous knowledge to the existing curriculum so that it does not disappear.

3.4. The Significance of Indigenous Knowledge in Education

The valuable insights of indigenous knowledge could be a vehicle towards inclusive education and spearhead the educational transformation in the country [20]. Its insights are necessary for the efficient use of resources, land and spiritual relationships with nature. Teachers can execute any of the insights from the indigenous knowledge into a teaching space [20]. In that way, students and learners could be taught how to sustain life, protect the environment and not exploit it with technological elements. The consumption of indigenous knowledge in the learning process is essential to teach children about sustainability of human life and nature using indigenous methods and that this information could be passed along to the next generation [21]. Notwithstanding the values, principles, morals, traditional rights and ethics of the aboriginal people in South Africa who are popularly known as the Khoisan people in the current democracy [21, 22]. This will assist leaners and students to fathom how to protect the rights, water, land and the ecological system amongst others.

Despite the decades of African independence, to these end scholars, intellectuals and academics have not succeeded in transforming the continent to establish its original

methodological processes and theoretical structure for the source of indigenous knowledge and sustainable development [22]. Moreover, the government is quick to provide the resource to the universities, schools and colleges to enhance the educational system. But scant attention is being given to indigenous knowledge despite the contributions by the National Research Foundation (NRF) [22]. The paper, therefore, provides a thesis statement that in order to provide a panacea to the socio-economic challenges the indigenous knowledge must be included in the current curriculum to be relevant to the needs of the people, Africans in particular. The primary problem is that the current education is inherited from imperialists and colonial masters depending on who colonized a particular country and their way of learning and teaching is different from African countries [22, 23]. This is exacerbated by globalization and perpetuated by the strong ties between African countries and their former colonizers [24]. Due to globalization, African countries do not invest much in indigenous knowledge because they are trying to keep up with the western standards of education for the purposes of ratings. This is done at the expense of the intelligence of the people and subjects them to succumb to education that they do not know. Meanwhile, [24] implies that another problem of Africa in terms of education is that both research and academic tasks are still executed in western languages such as English, Portuguese and French, which neglect the indigenous knowledge research, methods and its ideals. Not even at least “Kiswahili” as indigenous language of Africa is recognized a medium of communication in Africa is given much attention. The paper explored the distinction between the academic knowledge and indigenous knowledge to strengthen its propositional statement.

4. Results and Discussion

In line with the discourse provided above, it is pivotal to amalgamate what exists in respect of education and knowledge in concomitant with the indigenous practices. Likewise, the inclusion of both western and indigenous knowledges would mean power and critical analysis of the mainstream knowledge [25]. The convergent of western and indigenous knowledge would also mean muting effects and omissions negative social and economic repercussions [25]. The pertinent of this paper would be incomplete without quoting one of the martyrs of fighting for decolonizing the mind of the black man “Steve Biko” who alluded those developing countries are subjected to all oppression by western countries through institutionalized machinery, laws that restrict it, heavy work conditions, poor payments, very difficult living conditions and most importantly poor education [26]. That is sustained by [26] who implies that a black man from developing country is castrated from his origin and history and that has resulted into the extermination of indigenous ideals. Accordingly, the western cosmology that is institutionalized to the educational system has alienated indigenous knowledge that gave rise to the conditions of schizophrenic to the African people [27].

5. Conclusion

The predicament in traversing through finding the relevant epistemology in educational system and a better approach for the unabated socio-economic issues is of no trivial in South Africa. However, the driving dominance of western epistemology and ideology in an Afrocentric substratum seems to be the ambiguity and ambivalence in dealing with issues of educational curriculum. Thus, the ambivalence derives from either considering African content of education as an approach by those advocating for western epistemology approach. Hence, in South Africa there is a call for decolonization of education as a recommended panacea in the educational spectrum. There could be a nuance between the

western ideology and pedagogy of African content looking at the context nature of African capabilities and indigenous knowledge. That is why African pedagogy approach can be discovered as “heavens” only if the system of education is to be designed and structured to accommodate indigenous knowledge and capabilities to ameliorate the afflictions that the people endure on daily basis and in respect of the issues faced by Africans. The paper therefore, suggests that knowledge that is acquired before entering the classroom is indigenous knowledge which the native Africans have and are not taught in modern education. It is not a problem to integrate the two pedagogies for better education and impartation of knowledge in developing countries of Africa. In fact, the paper does not call for phasing out western approach of education but recommends the integration of the two which could work well for economic development and rendering services across the globe.

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