Decolonising the Education System in Knowledge Production in Zambia

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ABSTRACT

The education system is vital for the decolonisation and empowerment of students with Afrocentric knowledge and ideologies. Students at each level should be empowered with knowledge and skills that are contextualised in the real African context while, at the same time, being able to compete globally with their contemporaries. Learning institutions should be used as agents of change to dismantle white supremacist ideologies and to confront the colonising practices that influence the education system. This calls for decolonisation of the curriculum and methodology in educational institutions. The question is how education can be decolonised if the curriculum offered to students in learning institutions remains ethnocentric, Eurocentric and Western in both nature and structure. For the education system to be meaningful and to deal with the contemporary challenges we face today, Eurocentric dominance should be dismantled and Afrocentric epistemologies should be embraced. The curriculum taught should bring about the liberation of the African mind. Decolonisation of the education system should therefore answer the question of what content is taught and how it is taught. Learning institutions should be designed to decolonise the mind, the heart and the spirit. This means that a more individualised Afrocentric approach, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, should be used, and students should be given a platform on which to form their identities rather than having an identity forced on them. Drawing on the literature and on Zambian policy documents, this paper discusses six areas that call for decolonisation: building an Afrocentric curriculum, using ecologies of knowledge, unthinking education, meeting the needs of society, decolonising the mind, and the place of teacher education. The paper recommends that professional learning communities advocate for an African Renaissance to ensure a rebirth and renewal of the education system into a more Afrocentric type, that the key players in education be educated on the reality of decolonisation, and that learning institutions move away from the Eurocentric and Western domination of former colonial subjects through knowledge systems.

Keywords: Decolonisation, education systems, knowledge production, Afrocentricity, Zambia, indigenous knowledge

INTRODUCTION

The education system plays a central role in social reproduction and in the creation and legitimation of knowledge. Schools, colleges and universities do not simply pass on neutral information; they select which histories are told, which languages carry learning, which theories are treated as authoritative and which ways of knowing are set aside. Because of this, decolonisation can be broadly understood as an umbrella term for diverse efforts to resist the distinct but intertwined processes of colonisation and racialisation (Stein & De Oliveira, 2016). Nabudere (2011) similarly describes decolonisation as a process of undoing colonising practices. In education, this means confronting and challenging the colonial practices that shaped learning in the past and that remain present in the system today.

In addition, the education system is vital for the decolonisation and empowerment of students with Afrocentric knowledge and ideologies. Students at every level should be equipped with knowledge and skills that are contextualised in the real African setting while remaining able to compete globally with their contemporaries. Learning institutions should therefore be used as agents of change to dismantle white supremacist ideologies and to confront the colonising practices that continue to influence the education system (Alfred, 2009). The task is not to retreat from the world but to enter it on terms that do not require Africans to despise their own heritage.

For education to be meaningful and to respond to the challenges of the present, Afrocentric epistemologies should be embraced, and the curriculum taught should contribute to the liberation of the African mind. Decolonisation of the education system must therefore answer two questions together: what content is taught, and how it is taught. Nzimande (2015) observes that, given modern dynamism, decolonising the curriculum requires a broader rethinking of the curriculum as well as of the pedagogies used to deliver knowledge. Contextualising African education does not contradict universally accepted values, knowledge or standards, nor is it a reference to one particular culture. It is the redirection or redesign of the education system so that it reflects African history, politics, socio-economic realities and morals. Archibald (2008) explains that pedagogy constitutes how the curriculum is delivered, while teaching and learning is the actual process of knowledge construction. Pedagogy, teaching and learning go hand in hand and must be decolonised together if the intended goal is to be met.

The methods used to build knowledge matter just as much. Nabudere (2011) argues that methodology plays a pivotal role in knowledge construction in the education system and determines whether the knowledge constructed can be trusted. Decolonising methodology is about creating room for individuals to use approaches that edify them and are free from restricting influences. It implies transformative approaches that embrace Afrocentric ideologies, a point developed at length by Smith (1999), who showed how research itself has served colonial interests. Decolonising the curriculum, in turn, implies reconstructing the principles and historical foundations of learning experiences that were grounded in Western and European ideologies.

At independence, Zambia inherited an education system that embraced Western and Eurocentric ideologies. Such ideologies tend to prepare students who do not think outside the box and who wait indefinitely to be deployed by the government. It is against this background that this study examines the decolonisation of the education system in knowledge production in Zambia. The paper proceeds as follows. It first states the problem, purpose and significance of the study, then sets out a conceptual framework and a brief account of the Zambian historical and policy context. After a short note on method, it discusses six themes: building an Afrocentric curriculum, ecologies of knowledge, unthinking education, meeting the needs of society, decolonising the mind, and the place of teacher education. It closes with cautions, conclusions and recommendations.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of education is to equip people with an awareness of their identity. Colonial education, however, was designed to do something different: it systematically deprived Africans of knowledge of themselves. Kwarteng (2013) notes that the knowledge imparted in this system prepares a kind of graduate who appreciates everything Eurocentric and despises Afrocentric cultures. Woodson (1933) made a similar argument in The Mis-Education of the Negro, warning that education which teaches people to look down on their own heritage distorts their cultural consciousness. Writing earlier from the colonial encounter itself, Fanon (1963) had described how colonisation reaches into the mind and not only the territory of the colonised.

Zambia reviewed its curriculum in 2013, yet the education system still carries Eurocentric and Western ideologies in its content, its language arrangements and its dominant ways of assessing knowledge. Every year the system produces graduates who are expected to face the practical world outside the classroom. What is not clearly known is whether the education system prepares these graduates to fit appropriately into their real society and to contribute to producing knowledge that serves it. Although some recent work has begun to explore how Zambian teachers understand decolonisation in particular subject areas (Kabombwe *et al.,* 2025), the broader question of decolonisation in knowledge production across the education system remains thinly researched. This paper therefore seeks to study the decolonisation of the education system in knowledge production in Zambia.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to establish the areas in Zambia's education system that require decolonisation in terms of knowledge production.

1. **Objectives of the study**

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- To clarify what decolonisation of education means for knowledge production in the Zambian context;
- To identify the dimensions of the education system, namely curriculum, pedagogy, language and teacher preparation, that call for decolonisation; and
- To propose practical directions through which learning institutions can centre Afrocentric knowledge while remaining globally competitive.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in three ways. First, it contributes to a conversation that is growing across Africa but has had limited visibility in Zambian scholarship, by linking the idea of decolonisation to the specific question of who produces knowledge and whose knowledge counts. Second, it offers curriculum developers, teacher educators and school leaders a set of themes through which existing practice can be reviewed. Third, it speaks to the position of colleges of education, which prepare the teachers who will carry any curriculum change into classrooms. If teachers teach the way they were taught, then reform that bypasses teacher education will have limited effect.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Decolonisation and the coloniality of knowledge

Formal colonial rule has ended in most of Africa, but scholars of the decolonial tradition argue that its patterns of thought outlived it. Quijano (2000) introduced the idea of the coloniality of power, showing how a hierarchy created under colonialism, which ranked peoples and knowledges, continued to organise the modern world after independence. Mignolo (2011) extends this to knowledge, describing a Western modernity whose claim to universality conceals its particular, European origins. For Africa, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that the myths of decolonisation hide the persistence of coloniality in institutions, including universities and schools. In this view, a country may have its own flag, government and curriculum framework and still reproduce colonial hierarchies of knowledge.

Epistemicide and ecologies of knowledge

Santos (2014) uses the term epistemicide for the destruction of knowledge systems that accompanied colonial domination and calls for an ecology of knowledges in which different ways of knowing are recognised and set in respectful dialogue. This idea underlies the second theme of this paper. It does not ask schools to discard Western science or scholarship. It asks them to end the situation in which only one tradition is treated as knowledge and others are treated as belief, custom or folklore. Battiste (2013) describes a comparable process in Indigenous education in Canada, where colonial schooling set out to replace Indigenous ways of knowing and where decolonising education means nourishing the learning spirit of the learner.

Afrocentricity

Asante (1988) defined Afrocentricity as a way of seeing and analysing in which African people are treated as agents and subjects rather than as marginal objects within other people's histories. An Afrocentric orientation places African experience, culture and values at the centre of inquiry. Applied to education, it does not mean

excluding other knowledge, and it does not mean a closed or fixed idea of Africa. It means that African realities form the starting point from which learners look outward to the wider world.

Decolonising the mind and conscientisation

The Kenyan writer and scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), in *Decolonising the Mind*, argued that the most lasting effect of colonialism is the colonisation of the mental universe, particularly through language, so that the colonised learn to see their own languages, histories and cultures through the eyes of the coloniser. He described the imposition of colonial languages in schools as a cultural bomb, whose effect is to make a people lose belief in their own names, languages and environment, and he insisted that African languages must carry African thought, which is why he chose to write in Gikuyu as well as English. Freire (1970) offers a complementary pedagogical idea. Education can be domesticating, treating learners as empty containers to be filled, or liberating, treating them as people who can read and change their world. The phrase in this paper's abstract that learners should be allowed to form their identities rather than have an identity forced on them belongs to this tradition. Together, these ideas give the paper its lens: decolonising education concerns curriculum content, teaching methods, language, institutional structures and the inner life of the learner.

Historical and Policy Context of Education in Zambia

Formal education in what was then Northern Rhodesia developed under British colonial rule, with missionary bodies playing a large part in providing schooling. The aims of this schooling were shaped by the priorities of the colonial order and the labour needs of the colonial economy rather than by an African educational philosophy. Rodney (1972) argued that colonial education across the continent was designed to produce people who could serve the colonial system and not to develop African capacity for self-determination. Zambia became independent in 1964 and inherited the structures, languages and curricular traditions of that system.

The leaders of the new state were aware of the problem. President Kenneth Kaunda articulated Zambian Humanism as the national philosophy, which placed human beings and African communal values at the centre of national life (Kaunda, 1967), and a body of scholarship has examined how this ideology was meant to shape education. In the same decade, Julius Nyerere's Education for Self-Reliance in neighbouring Tanzania (Nyerere, 1967) argued that colonial schooling had produced an elite detached from rural life and called for education that served the community. These early efforts show that the question of decolonising education is not new in the region. The difficulty has been in translating philosophy into lasting classroom practice.

Later policy documents shifted the emphasis. The national education policy, Educating Our Future (Ministry of Education, 1996), set out a framework for the education sector. The Zambia Education Curriculum Framework of 2013 (Ministry of Education, 2013) is the most recent comprehensive statement of curriculum direction. It adopts an outcomes-based approach, describes education as an agent of change and an economic tool for development, and sets out a vision of holistic learners who are creative, productive and connected to family and community. It also lists values such as diversity, patriotism, respect and hard work, and states that learners should appreciate Zambia's ethnic cultures and traditions.

Two features of the 2013 framework are especially relevant to this paper. The first is language. The framework recognises familiar Zambian languages as the languages of instruction in pre-school and in Grades 1 to 4, naming seven zone languages: Cinyanja, Chitonga, Icibemba, Kiikaonde, Lunda, Luvale and Silozi. English is taught as a subject from Grade 2, and the framework states that English will remain the official medium of instruction from Grade 5 up to tertiary level (Ministry of Education, 2013). The second is localisation. The framework allows schools to adapt part of the curriculum to local needs, which it presents as a way to compensate for indigenous knowledge, values and practical skills that learners might otherwise acquire at home. It also requires that entrepreneurship education be integrated at all levels and introduces vocational and academic pathways at secondary level.

At the tertiary level, the Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013 (Republic of Zambia, 2013) established a regulatory framework for higher education, and the Higher Education Authority was set up under it in 2015 to coordinate, regulate, supervise and monitor standards in higher education. These arrangements govern the institutions,

including colleges of education, in which teachers are trained and in which much knowledge production takes place. Recent research has begun to ask how teachers understand decolonisation in practice. In a qualitative study of ten history teachers in Lusaka District, Kabombwe *et al.,* (2025) found that teachers linked decolonisation with adding neglected histories, emphasising local heroes, aligning the curriculum with local realities and promoting national identity and values. Their finding that teachers hold differing understandings of decolonisation supports the argument of the present paper that key players need to be educated about what decolonisation means.

Taken together, the policy record shows real openings for Afrocentric knowledge, notably the mother tongue provisions, localisation and attention to cultural values. It also shows continuing structures that favour inherited arrangements, notably the use of English as the medium of instruction from Grade 5 to tertiary level. The question for decolonisation is whether these openings are used to change what counts as knowledge in the education system or whether they remain at the margins of an otherwise unchanged structure.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This is a conceptual paper based on a desk review. It draws on scholarly literature on decolonisation, Afrocentricity and indigenous knowledge, on Zambian policy documents, in particular the 2013 curriculum framework, and on the authors' professional experience in teacher education. The sources were read critically and organised thematically around the questions of what is taught, how it is taught, in which language, and for whose benefit. Following Smith (1999) and Nabudere (2011), the analysis treats methodology itself as part of the decolonial question, and so it favours approaches that give weight to African sources and to the voices of teachers and learners. The themes that follow are therefore offered as an interpretive synthesis and not as the results of a statistical test.

Areas of the Education System that Require Decolonisation

The analysis identifies six interlinked areas. Each is introduced through the position taken in the original argument of the paper and then developed with reference to the literature and to the Zambian context.

Building a Curriculum that is Afrocentric

There is a great need to build a curriculum that draws on both Eurocentric and Afrocentric ideologies. The two should be integrated so that the curriculum builds an African personality that is able to compete globally. The position here is deliberately balanced. It does not call for the removal of Western knowledge, which has produced real advances in science, medicine and technology. It calls for the end of Western dominance, so that African knowledge is no longer an optional extra attached to a Western core.

Kwarteng (2013) argues that the curriculum should be relevant and responsive to societal needs and should prepare graduates who are imparted with African ideologies as well. A decolonised curriculum should therefore be used to unpack the effects of colonisation and to build a sense of Africanness in students. In practice, this affects what is placed at the centre of each subject. History is the most obvious example. A history curriculum that presents Africa mainly through the arrival of explorers, missionaries and colonial administrators, rather than through African societies, states, trade networks, resistance and liberation movements, teaches learners to see themselves as people to whom history happened. The same question can be asked of literature, where African texts may appear as supplements to a canon set elsewhere, and of the sciences, where the history of scientific ideas is told as if it began in Europe.

A decolonised curriculum should also be relevant to the lives of learners. It should not prepare graduates who are looking forward to going overseas for greener pastures. It should build citizens who are positive about Africa and who remain relevant to their continent. This point must be handled with care, because mobility and international exchange are legitimate aspirations and part of global competitiveness. The argument is that a graduate who has been taught to see their own society as deficient has little motivation to improve it. Alfred (2009) makes a similar case in an Indigenous context: education should strengthen a people's relationship to their own land, community and responsibilities.

The 2013 curriculum framework offers some entry points. Its stated aim of developing learners who are culturally aware and who appreciate Zambia's ethnic cultures and traditions (Ministry of Education, 2013) can be developed into a more explicit commitment to Zambian and African knowledge in every learning area. Without concrete syllabus content, teaching materials and assessment that reflect this commitment, the framework's language of cultural awareness risks remaining aspirational. Curriculum developers could begin with an audit of existing syllabuses to ask whose history, whose literature, whose scientific examples and whose experiences are presented, and whose are missing.

Using Ecologies of Knowledge

When searching for epistemic freedom, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of knowledges (Tracy, 2013). Western knowledge should not dominate the education system, and indigenous knowledge should be brought to the centre. The knowledge imparted to students should contain both Eurocentric and Afrocentric ideologies if the system is to produce students who are well balanced. Such a student has a spirit of Africanness and can at the same time compete globally with their contemporaries. We should also see the interconnectedness of indigenous and Western knowledge to revive the knowledges that were killed by our colonisers.

The concept of an ecology of knowledges (Santos, 2014) helps to explain why this is more than an addition of content. In an ecology, knowledges are not ranked in advance. Each is valued for what it can do. Zambian communities hold extensive knowledge in areas such as agriculture, food preservation, herbal medicine, environmental management, conflict resolution, oral history and the arts. Much of it is held by elders and passed on through practice, proverbs, storytelling and apprenticeship rather than through written texts. When schools treat only written, formal knowledge as legitimate, this knowledge is lost to the next generation, and learners are taught to see their own communities as places with nothing to teach.

Bringing these knowledges into education requires care. It is not enough to invite an elder to speak once a year as a cultural event. The knowledge must be treated as a source for serious study, with learners asked to investigate, compare and test ideas, and with communities recognised as partners in curriculum development and not only as subjects of research. Archibald (2008) shows, in the context of Indigenous storywork, how stories can educate the heart, mind, body and spirit together, a principle that Zambian educators could adapt for local oral traditions. The localisation provision of the 2013 framework is one place where such work could be done systematically.

Ecologies of knowledge also protect the achievements of the global scientific tradition. The aim is dialogue, in which a student can understand both the scientific explanation of a medicinal plant and the community's long experience of using it, and can ask critical questions of each. Such learners are better prepared for innovation than those taught that one body of knowledge is simply right and the other simply wrong.

Unthinking Education

Decolonising the education system through knowledge systems requires the unthinking of some ideas, theories, concepts and systems that were inherited from colonisers. We should critically review the way teachers, educators and lecturers practise their work, because teachers tend to teach exactly the way they were taught. Teaching habits are passed down through generations of teachers, so unexamined practices continue to reproduce the system that produced them.

Stein and De Oliveira (2016) add that in unthinking education, learners should not be seen as blank slates. They should be given a platform on which they can form their identities rather than having identities forced on them. This is very close to Freire's (1970) criticism of the banking model of education, in which the teacher deposits information into passive learners. A learner who arrives at school with a language, a family history, local knowledge and questions is a source of knowledge and not an empty vessel. A decolonised classroom begins with what the learner brings and builds outward.

The language used to impart knowledge also needs critical analysis. Wa Thiong'o (1986) argued that language is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture, so that when learners are schooled in a language that

is not their own, they are separated from the cultural memory that language carries. The 2013 framework's provision for familiar Zambian languages in the early grades is therefore significant, because children are said to learn more easily through languages they know and understand well (Ministry of Education, 2013). At the same time, the framework retains English as the official medium of instruction from Grade 5 up to tertiary level. This raises a question that should be openly debated: how can learners who have learned to read and think in a Zambian language for four years move into a system in which the languages of their homes disappear from formal knowledge production, and what is lost if they do? The answer may not be to remove English, which provides access to global scholarship and opportunity. It may instead be to strengthen the position of Zambian languages as languages of scholarship, for example through translation of key texts, bilingual teaching approaches and recognition of local-language research outputs.

We should also revisit our attitude towards Afrocentric knowledge. It is wrong to demonise and despise it. Teaching methods should be localised and indigenised, and they should be responsive to the nature of the students and of their environment. This may involve learning in groups, drawing on storytelling and proverbs, using community resource persons and linking lessons to local problems. Such methods already exist in many classrooms. What is needed is a shift in the way they are valued, so that they are seen as legitimate pedagogy and not as informal alternatives to the real method.

Creating an Education System that Meets the Needs of Society

According to Aylsworth and Trovato (2012), the body of knowledge imparted to students should enable them to meet the needs of society. The knowledge taught should be tailored towards meeting the needs and goals of society and should empower students with the ability to solve both local and global problems. To create an education system that meets the goals of society, practical skills such as entrepreneurship, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, gardening and carpentry should be integrated into the curriculum.

This theme links decolonisation to development. One of the legacies identified by scholars of colonial education is a bias towards book learning and white-collar employment, accompanied by a low status for manual and technical work (Rodney, 1972; Nyerere, 1967). Graduates trained for office jobs that no longer exist in large numbers face unemployment, and the wider society loses the skills it needs. A decolonised education system treats practical skills as forms of knowledge that carry dignity and intellectual content. Carpentry involves geometry and design, gardening involves biology, soil science and economics, and entrepreneurship involves problem solving and ethics.

The 2013 framework already moves in this direction. It requires that entrepreneurship be integrated at all levels, makes vocational subjects such as Agricultural Science, Design and Technology and Home Economics compulsory at primary level, and introduces academic and vocational pathways in secondary school (Ministry of Education, 2013). These provisions agree with the argument made here, but their value for decolonisation depends on how they are taught and valued. If vocational subjects are regarded as the path for learners who are thought less capable, they will reproduce the hierarchy of knowledge that decolonisation seeks to overcome. If they are connected to local economies, local materials and local innovation, and taught with the same intellectual seriousness as other subjects, they can contribute to a self-reliant society.

Meeting the needs of society also means producing knowledge about society. Colleges and universities should be places where Zambian problems, such as agricultural productivity, public health, climate change, local governance and cultural heritage, are studied by Zambian researchers, using methods suited to Zambian realities, and with results that return to communities. Smith (1999) cautions that research has often been done on communities rather than with them, and that its outputs have served outside interests. Decolonising knowledge production means reversing this pattern.

Decolonising the Mind

Learning institutions should be designed to decolonise the mind, the heart and the spirit. This implies that the curriculum taught should bring about the liberation of the African mind. According to Kwarteng (2013), decolonising the mind should be used as a strategy to overthrow the authority that colonisers' traditions exercise

over Africans. This requires destroying Eurocentric supremacist beliefs and the structures that upheld them in every area of African life. To decolonise the mind, a more individualised Afrocentric approach, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, should be followed.

The idea of decolonising the mind goes back to Wa Thiong'o (1986), and its sources are older still. Fanon (1963) described the psychological damage caused by a system that teaches the colonised to see themselves as inferior, and Woodson (1933) described the same effect in the education of African Americans. Adams (1995) documents how boarding school education for American Indians was designed to remove Indigenous identity, and Almeida (1998) presents Indigenous education as a matter of the survival of children and their communities. Although these accounts come from different regions, they describe a similar pattern: schooling used as a tool of cultural replacement. Battiste (2013) names the broader project as decolonising education and nourishing the learning spirit.

For Zambia, decolonising the mind has practical implications. It involves how learners are taught to talk about themselves and their cultures, whether classroom materials show people who look like them in roles of authority, whether African names, languages and customs are treated as normal, and whether the achievements of Africans in science, leadership and the arts are part of what students learn. It also involves the heart and spirit, which means building confidence, dignity and a sense of belonging, as well as ethical responsibility to others. This broader understanding agrees with the holistic aims in the 2013 framework, which speaks of the full and well-rounded development of learners (Ministry of Education, 2013).

An individualised approach recognises that learners are not identical. Learners in urban Lusaka, in rural farming communities and in fishing communities along the lakes and rivers bring different languages, experiences and aspirations. Learners with disabilities and learners from minority communities have their own needs. A one-size-fits-all approach, which treats all learners as the same, is itself a colonial habit, because it assumes a single model of the ideal learner. The alternative is not to leave learners without common goals, but to design common goals that are reached by different routes.

The Place of Teacher Education

Any reform of curriculum or pedagogy depends on teachers, and teachers are prepared in colleges of education and universities. If the maxim that teachers teach as they were taught is true, then teacher education is both the place where colonial habits are most likely to be reproduced and the place where change can be most effective. Kabombwe *et al.,* (2025) found that teachers in their study held varied understandings of decolonisation and suggested that the findings could inform teacher education programmes. This supports the view that teacher preparation should include explicit engagement with the meaning of decolonisation, with the history of education in Zambia and with approaches to teaching that build on indigenous knowledge and local languages.

Colleges of education could take several steps. They could review their own course content using the questions raised in this paper. They could include indigenous knowledge and local language pedagogy in teaching practice. They could invite community knowledge holders into their programmes as co-teachers. They could also support student teachers in carrying out small-scale community research that returns knowledge to the schools where they will teach. Finally, the lecturers themselves need opportunities to discuss decolonisation, since they too were educated within the system under review. Heleta (2016) warns, in the South African context, that decolonisation of higher education requires sustained engagement with epistemic violence and Eurocentrism in institutions, and not only symbolic gestures. The same caution applies here. Mbembe (2016) makes a related point about the university as a whole: its Eurocentric canon rests on the claim that Western knowledge is universal, and he calls for a more open and plural institution in which other traditions of knowledge can take part as equals.

CAUTIONS AND TENSIONS

A paper that argues for decolonisation must also be honest about the tensions within it. First, there is a risk of essentialism. Afrocentric knowledge is not a single, unchanging body. African societies are diverse, and Zambia alone contains many languages and cultural traditions. A decolonised curriculum must not replace one narrow

view with another, and it should leave room for debate, change and critique of African traditions themselves. Asante's (1988) idea of centring African people as agents is compatible with this openness, since agency includes the capacity to question.

Second, there is the relationship between local relevance and global competitiveness. Learners will study and work in a world connected by trade, technology and migration, and they need the languages, skills and credentials that this world recognises. The position taken here is that these aims are compatible. Learners who know their own history and who can use their own knowledge are better placed to enter global conversations as contributors, not as imitators. Nzimande (2015) notes that contextualising education is not in conflict with universally accepted values and standards.

Third, change is limited by resources. New syllabuses need new textbooks, teacher training and assessment methods, all of which require funding and time. Decolonisation should therefore be planned as a staged process that begins with feasible steps, such as audits of existing materials and pilot courses, and builds toward larger changes. Finally, decolonisation should not become a slogan that replaces evidence. Its claims should be tested through research on what learners actually learn and how they actually fare.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is a demand to dismantle the supremacy of Eurocentric and Western ideologies in the education system. To achieve this effectively, Western ideologies should not dominate, and Afrocentric ideologies should be placed at the centre of the education system. The discussion has shown that this requires change in six connected areas: the content of the curriculum, the recognition of diverse knowledges, the habits of teaching and the language in which it takes place, the link between education and the needs of society, the formation of the learner's mind, heart and spirit, and the preparation of teachers. Zambian policy already contains important openings, including the use of familiar languages in the early grades, curriculum localisation, cultural values and the integration of practical skills. The challenge is to move these from the edges of the system to its centre.

The position of this paper is not that Zambia should turn away from the world. It is that learners should enter the world from a secure place, with knowledge of who they are, respect for the knowledge of their communities and the confidence to contribute to global scholarship on their own terms. Education that achieves this will serve both the individual graduate and the society that educates them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the discussion, the following recommendations are made.

- Professional learning communities should advocate for an African Renaissance, to ensure a rebirth and renewal of the education system into a more Afrocentric type. In practice, teachers, lecturers and school leaders should form regular forums to review content, share locally developed materials and document successful practice.

- The key players in education, including policymakers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, school managers, teachers and parents, should be educated on the reality of decolonisation of the education system, so that the term is understood as a concrete programme of change and not as a slogan.

- Practical skills should be central in the education system. Entrepreneurship, carpentry, gardening and other skills should be taught as forms of knowledge with their own intellectual content and dignity.

- The education system should embrace both Eurocentric and Afrocentric ideologies, with an explicit commitment that neither dominates and that learners are taught to engage critically with both.

- The Ministry of Education and the Curriculum Development Centre should audit existing syllabuses and learning materials for the place they give to Zambian and African histories, literatures, scientific contributions and indigenous knowledge, and should publish the results.

- Colleges of education and universities should include decolonisation, indigenous knowledge and local language pedagogy in teacher preparation programmes, and should create partnerships with communities and knowledge holders.

- Education authorities should strengthen the status of Zambian languages as languages of learning and scholarship, including through translation, bilingual approaches and recognition of local language publications.

- Researchers should carry out empirical studies, with teachers, learners and communities, of how decolonisation is understood and enacted in Zambian classrooms and institutions.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper is conceptual and rests on a review of the literature and policy documents. It does not report data collected from learners, teachers or communities, and its themes should be read as proposals to be tested. Further research could use case studies of schools and colleges, classroom observation, document analysis of syllabuses and textbooks, and interviews with teachers, learners and community knowledge holders. Comparative work with other African countries that have attempted curriculum reform after independence would also help to show which approaches have lasted and which have not.

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