

Original Article

Potholes in the Decolonization High Way of Zambian Education

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Abstract: *The concept of decolonization of education is not a new phenomenon as it dates back to the 1960s when the agitators for independence believed that self-government would reverse the status quo of that time. Formal colonial education was considered unfair and discriminatory and worse still it had coloured indigenous African thought, classifying it as pre-logical and pre-critical (Adebisi, 2016). Therefore, there is a need to decolonize it. Since then, there have been several post-colonial curriculum reforms though these reforms have found it difficult to balance internationalization with Africanisation. Further, of late Africa has seen educational decolonization movements such as the 2016 'Rhodes Must Fall' in South Africa and extended to Oxford in the UK. This paper uses the qualitative approach, document analysis method, and marginal framing to argue that there is a cocktail of potholes in the decolonization process of African education in general and Zambian education in particular. Among the bottlenecks, are issues of indelible mark of colonial mindset, dysfunctional 'Ubuntu' philosophy, dependency syndrome, cultural imperialism, and the horse and rider concept. The paper further argues that Zambian education is a colonial import. It is a house built by the Master. Unfortunately, for us, the West has changed its architecture, and, in some way, we are fighting a phantom enemy. But worse, we are still using the blunt instruments he left us. To vary the metaphor, we are trying to repair Cecil Rhodes highway from Cape to Cairo with numerous potholes and craters along the way. Should we repair the highway, and in some way continue to rely on the legacy of Cecil Rhodes? The alternative is to build our highway, but do we have the wherewithal to do that? The paper recommends a 360-degree paradigm shift in the way decolonization of education has been handled over the years, a complete shift to indigenous knowledge systems to patch up the potholes. Africa in general and Zambia in particular should move away from the banking concept perpetuated by colonial education to an emancipative concept and must be prepared to take nations' tax systems.*

Keywords: *Potholes, decolonization of education, Africa, indigenous knowledge, Zambia*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is envisaged that the concept of decolonization of education is not a new phenomenon, but dates back to as early as the 1960s when the agitators for independence believed that self-government would reverse the status quo of that time. Before colonial education was introduced to the Zambian education system, indigenous education was accorded great space. However, the current situation is that the opposite is true about the Zambian education system which has heavily been characterized by colonial input which has marginalized the rich indigenous knowledge (cf. McClusky, 1963). Due to the above scenario, the Zambian education system has developed enough potholes which must be checked and mended to regain the original image and status. Simukungwe (2019) advocates that universities should be sites of advancing education for decolonization such as educational policies that can bring about decolonization. Decolonization was born to counter the formal colonial education system which was considered unfair and discriminatory and worse still it had colored indigenous African thought, classifying it as pre-logical and pre-critical. Gurminder (2014) argues that decoloniality is only made necessary as a consequence of the depredations of colonialism but in their intellectual resistance to forms of epistemological dominance which they offer more than opposition. Therefore, decolonization aims at reverting the colonial mindset to the reality of society such as the Zambian set-up (cf. Ngugi, 2019). From independence days, there have been several post-colonial curriculum reforms though these reforms have found it difficult to balance internationalization with Africanization.

Of late, Africa has seen educational decolonization movements such as the 2016 'Rhodes Must Fall' in South Africa and extended to Oxford in the UK. However, there is still a cocktail of potholes in the decolonization process of African education in general and the Zambian education system in particular. Among the bottlenecks, are issues of an indelible mark of colonial mindset, dysfunctional Ubuntu philosophy, dependency syndrome, cultural imperialism, and the horse and rider concept which are critical challenges and require a great wave of decolonization in the curriculum of Zambian education to match with the



indigenous local knowledge. The Zambian education system is a colonial import from the West and is treated as a house built by the Master. Unfortunately, the Westerners who replaced Zambia's indigenous education with coloniality have changed its architecture, and, in some way, Zambians are fighting a phantom enemy. Worse still, Zambian education is still using the blunt instruments of colonial education the Westerners introduced. To bring the metaphor back home to our consumption, the Zambian education system is trying to repair the Cecil Rhodes highway from Cape to Cairo with numerous potholes and craters along the way. In this paper, we ask a very progressive and thought-provoking question, "Should we repair the highway, and in some way continue to rely on the legacy of Cecil Rhodes?" We conceptualize that the best alternative is to build our highway and legacy. To patch the deep potholes in the highway of Zambia's education system, the paper recommends a 360-degree paradigm shift in the way decolonization of education has been handled over the years. Patching up the deep potholes in Zambia's education system requires a rapid shift and should be directed towards the restoration of indigenous knowledge. We advocate that Africa and Zambia in particular, should move away from the banking concept perpetuated by colonial education to an emancipative concept.

II. METHODS AND APPROACHES

This is a qualitative study hence the qualitative approach was adopted during data collection and analysis. Burns & Grove (1997) postulate that qualitative research refers to holistic, non-numerical, inductive, subjective, and process-oriented methods used to understand, describe, interpret, and develop a particular theory on a phenomenon or a setting like the one in the present study. Brink & Wood (1998) posit that qualitative research is a better strategy for understanding aspects that are difficult or complex to quantify through assigning numerical values, such as matters related to decolonizing language education in secondary schools and indigenous knowledge in general. Qualitative research was chosen to guide the study because it encourages abstract thinking through which meaning and theoretical implications of a particular corpus emerge, thereby, satisfying the notion that qualitative research design is flexible and unique, and evolves throughout the research process (cf. Burns & Grove, 1997). Mutch (2005) argues that qualitative research design enables the researcher to report the findings descriptively using words and sentential expressions. Data analysis went hand in hand with data collection as advocated by Mugenda & Mugenda (1999). Going by the assertion of Mutch (2005), the findings of the present study are reported descriptively using themes and sentential expressions to justify the potholes in the education highway and how the concepts of decolonization and de-marginalization can be applied to restore and uplift the legacy of indigenous local knowledge in Zambian education.

The study used the document analysis method during data collection and analysis. This study heavily depended on secondary sources as a way of observing COVID-19 health regulations. The method was comprehensively used to justify the topic and descriptive objectives using the available and valid sources of secondary data. Chaleunvong (2009) argues that identifying and retrieving secondary sources of data required for the study is the systematic starting point of efficient data collection. The retrieved secondary data became the major source of information during data analysis. The documents that were analyzed were accessed from libraries, the internet, and published works on patching potholes as a way of decolonizing education in general and Zambia in particular. The secondary sources of information were important in this paper because they supplemented the authors' understanding of the study concepts in terms of the background to the study, literature review, methodologies applicable in qualitative studies as well as the theoretical perspective.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was informed by the tenets of the marginal theory (McClusky, 1963). The theory advocates for the removal of challenges that hinder the effective application of education programs. The theory has been adopted as a corpus to identify and provide solutions that can be used to address the challenges referred to as potholes in this paper in Zambia's education system. Every challenge has a starting point and subsequently where it must end. Education practitioners both in Secondary Schools and Universities should become the solutions to the potholes in the Zambian education system which was started by the colonial master (cf. Simukungwe, 2019). It must be pointed out that a pothole develops due to negligence and ignoring of important facts by the key players. When not addressed at an early stage, potholes can become drum holes or craters and eventually become a danger to society. The potholes in the Zambian education system require a radical approach and shift by embracing and implementing the policies and principles of decolonization. Given the above scenario, the theory will render guidance during the identification of major potholes in education and provide alternatives that can be used to mend or patch the identified potholes.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The paper outlines various potholes in the Zambian education system and provides suggestions to eradicate the challenges of sidelining indigenous local knowledge.

A. Coloniality and Marginalization

The above concepts in the Zambian education system make the custodians of policy formulation deem everything Western to be of a high standard even when the initiators have abandoned the inherited system. The Zambian education system has been colonized from time immemorial and has continued even after independence in 1964. Coloniality is a pothole that was used to substitute the Zambian indigenous knowledge. This pothole needs to be patched through decolonization. Siame (2022, September 25) argues that the decolonization of the Zambian citizenry in terms of local language education should start with the mindset (cf. Ngugi, 2019). Otherwise, some Zambians who are still dipped in colonial mentality are not willing to decolonize the education system and incorporate indigenous knowledge.

Siame (2022, September 25) provides some of the critical suggestions that can be used to mend the potholes through decolonizing the local language education system in Zambia, such as the implementation of the 2013 curriculum framework on teaching initial literacy in local languages (cf. MoESVTEE, 2013), constituting a unified standard national local languages orthography and adopting a national official local language to provide national cohesion and unity (cf. Simpson, 2008). Siame (2022, September 25) observes that Tanzania has instituted a national official local language policy while Botswana and Namibia have both a national official local language and a national official language which is usually English. The above remedies are meant to patch the potholes in education and promote high levels of literacy in the countries. For instance, language education in Zambia has been decolonized from one (English language) to five (English plus four local languages) and finally to eight (English plus seven regional local languages) which can be represented as 1→5→8. Therefore, teaching of initial literacy should roll out to all the 73 languages spoken in Zambia instead of the eight languages that are in use at the moment (cf. Siame, 2022 September 25).

Ngugi (1986) argues that there is a need to decolonize language education from foreign languages to local languages. He further argues that Africans will be able to make advancements in various academic fields only when they can express themselves in a language that is their own culture. His assertion is in tandem with (Siame, 2022 September 25) in the sense that decolonization should be a way of preserving indigenous knowledge and local language education. Mubanga (2017) adds that it is necessary to decolonize the education system in Africa to redeem indigenous local knowledge.

B. Dependency Syndrome

African education is a colonial import. It is a house built by the Master. Unfortunately, the West has changed its architecture, and, in some way, Africans in general and Zambia in particular are fighting a phantom enemy. Worse still, the Zambian education system has continued using the blunt instruments the colonial master left. To vary the metaphor, Africa in general and Zambia in particular are trying to repair Cecil Rhodes highway from Cape to Cairo with numerous potholes and craters along the way. Should Zambia repair the potholes in the highway of education, and in some way continue to rely on the legacy of Cecil Rhodes? The alternative is to build our highway of indigenous knowledge, but do we have the wherewithal to do that?

Africa still teaches a Western curriculum using Western media. Africanizing our curriculum is going to be resisted by the West just as it is right now, no qualification from a Zambian university is considered worthy for graduate and postgraduate study in the UK. Africa still uses the Master's Tools to Dismantle the Master's House which we shall refer to as education in this paper. This is how Audrey Lorde expresses the challenge of dismantling the master's house using his tools. "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support" (Lorde, 1984: 110-114). In decolonizing the education system, one big pothole that requires serious and secure mending is using the colonizer's tools. Unfortunately, the colonizer's tools have never been updated from the time of colonization in the Zambian education system.

Soyinka (1978) blames African Scholars' over-dependence on Western theories on a lack of "theoretical audacity." He argues that, by willingly applying Western-based theories to conduct studies on African oral literature, Africans have resubmitted to theoretical colonialism: *We.....have been blindly invited to submit ourselves to a second epoch of colonialism this time by the*

universal human hood abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of their world and their history, their social neurosis and their value systems.

In the above quotation, Soyinka provides a timely warning of this new threat he foresaw years back. But inertia from the affected took center stage and in the 21st century, the threat is camouflaged in the mantra of globalization (global village), and yet the African education system remains subjugated in the matrix of research and many other areas. We further argue that the colonial purpose of education was to prepare the colonies to pay for their colonization through the tax system. Without tax, colonies were not sustainable. The same mentality is present in the post-colony where educated workers are punished for their education by providing the state with income in the form of tax. The colonial matrix shows that the more you get educated, the more you are punished in terms of paying taxes. Just think of your income tax as an employee of whichever organization you belong to. If you decide to change the purpose of education from a banking concept to an emancipative concept, you have to be prepared to take on the nation's tax system as well, that is, the crux of the push for the decolonization of the education system.

We can say that those of us who live below the equator are considered down. The map of the world was drawn to reflect Europe as the top dog. African geographers are, therefore, challenged to start lobbying for an alternative map of the world.

C. Theoretical Mindset

This is a situation where the education system in Zambia is theory-based at the expense of practicality. A theoretical mind embraces anything foreign even if it is not practical. This mind is not self-reliant and as such can be described to be Eurocentric (cf. Mubanga, 2017). This mindset has unfulfilled programs, for instance, the implementation of initial literacy to new graders in local languages which is enshrined in the 2013 curriculum framework whose purpose is to uplift literacy levels in Zambia (cf. MoESVTEE, 2013). This mindset is also visible in the 2013 framework which includes the teaching and learning of Portuguese which has not been implemented for nine years now (MoESVTEE, 2013). This is a serious pothole that needs decolonization to redeem the acquisition of indigenous skills and knowledge. The only remedy is to move away from being critical about theoretical aspects and settle for practicality.

Nyoni (2019) argues that African universities enjoy academic freedom but their curriculum continues to promote Western thought and ideas that maintain the hegemonic status quo as regards knowledge, teaching, learning, and research. The governance systems and academic and curriculum design reflect Western influences. The big question is which African theories, concepts, and methodologies have African universities designed? Have African universities designed curricula that answer the needs of indigenous Africans or does the status quo from colonial times continue to be perpetuated? The fact is that the Eurocentric body of knowledge continues to encourage students to enter the marketplace, but they are not adequately prepared to make fundamental changes to the status quo in society and the economy. Here, one is reminded of the advocates of an African renaissance in education such as Teffo (2000), Seepe (2001a), and Seepe (2001b) who argue that much of what is taken for education in Africa is not African, but rather a reflection of Europe in Africa. Additionally, the research epistemologies and methods, as Higgs (2011) observed, are located within the cultural preferences and practices of the Western world. Such practices have perpetuated an ideology of cultural superiority that precludes the development of a power-sharing process and the legitimization of diverse cultural epistemologies and cosmologies. This mindset requires a swift shift to decolonization by providing practical curricula to primary, secondary, and higher education in Zambia embedded in indigenous knowledge.

D. Colonial Caged Mind

In light of Africa's colonial legacy, African philosophy is confronted with the problem of establishing its unique African order of knowledge. Dube & Moyo (2022) argue that currently, people in the Global South live in an epistemically colonial world in which the colonial matrix of power operates various technologies of control to regulate and validate what is considered valid knowledge (cf. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021a; Mitova, 2020; Quijano, 2007). The above quotation clearly illustrates that Africa in general and Zambia in particular, still have the colonial caged mindset which is controlled by the colonial matrix of power, a pothole that requires a radical shift to decolonization to regain the indigenous local knowledge. Nabudere (2005) states that the struggle for Africa's authentic development is about an epistemological revolution and struggle for knowledge production that satisfies the demands for cultural identity. However, the biggest pothole in the equation is the colonial-caged mentality of the majority of Africans who are convinced that innovation, creativity, and knowledge production can only be done by the West. Therefore, Africans have continued to regurgitate Western epistemologies consistently and impactful decolonization efforts remain negligible and mentally captured (Nyoni, 2019). Nyoni adds that in post-colonial Africa, the caged colonial mentality continues to influence structures of leadership and curricular reform. The colonial mindset sees nothing wrong with the current

African School’s Curriculum, both at the primary and university level. For instance, the Literature set-books for the 2022-2024 Senior Secondary school syllabus marginalizes local Zambian novels and eulogizes foreign-authored novels as indicated in item 4-5, a serious pothole that must be mended and requires a rapid shift to tenets of decolonization.

The colonial caged mentality is also evident in Ngugi’s (1968) *Devil on the Cross* through the scenes at the Devil’s feast termed ‘testimonies’ through character depictions. Gitutu wa Gataanguri says, ‘My foreign name is Lord “Gabriel Bloodwell-Stuart-Johnes.” From today onwards my children will never go anywhere near your schools. I’ll go straight to Nyika wa Mbooi – She is highly educated and has even been to Cambridge – to tell her to look for an international school.....We shall go to international schools for international Europeans, where international English is spoken, schools without cripples for principles, schools without Europeans made of plastic and with electric hearts and skins whitened with Ambi acids. “We want an international color” (P...122). Ngugi’s character depiction in the novel is a replica of our education system and as such becomes a pothole in the decolonization highway. The belief and conviction of many Africans that European schools are better than African schools is a clear demonstration of a colonial-caged mind. It is this mindset that motivates Kihaahu wa Gatheeca in Ngugi’s *Devil on the Cross* to put up a fake European school to attract people. He made fake European children with fake European plastic wigs to attract parents to pay a lot of money to ensure that their children were in the company of Europeans (Ngugi, 1968: 121).

E. Choice of texts in literature in English at Grade Twelve

There are numerous potholes in the selection of texts for Grade Twelve learners in Literature in English as can be seen from the 2022-2024 syllabus. The selection criteria are problematic and do not seem to promote the acquisition of indigenous knowledge through text analysis by the Zambian learners.

The table below shows the selection criteria employed by the Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Centre, and the Examinations Council of Zambia for the 2022-2024 intake:

Table 1: Literature in English Prescribed Set Books for 2022-2024 (Secondary School)

S/N	TITLE OF THE NOVEL	AUTHOR	REGION
01	Woyengi	Obutunde Ijimere	West Africa
02	Mission to Kala	Mongo Beti	West Africa
03	No Longer at Ease	Chinua Achebe	West Africa
04	Song of Lawino	Okot P’ Biket	East Africa
05	Quills of Desire	Binwell Sinyangwe	Southern Africa
06	The Government Inspector	Nikolai Gogol	Europe
07	Romeo and Juliet	William Shakespeare	Europe
08	The Chrysalids	John Wyndham	Europe
09	The River Between	Ngugi wa Thiongo	East Africa

The above data shows that out of the nine set texts for the 2022 -2024 intake, only one text was selected from Southern Africa, in particular Zambia, which demonstrates a pothole highway in eliminating indigenous Zambian knowledge. We note that the Secondary School syllabus for Literature in English in Zambia aims at developing literary skills that are embedded in the texts as well as developing national principles and values (cf. Muleya, 2019). The question we need to ask ourselves is, which national values do the learners develop as they read through the international texts? The above question arises due to the selection criteria for texts that the Ministry of Education has adopted which displays the colonial mentality by disregarding any indigenous local knowledge (cf. Siame 2022, November 25). This trend needs a radical shift through decolonization. Local texts should be promoted because they contain indigenous experiences that would positively impact the implementation of national principles and values in the learners and the future generation in Zambia (cf. Muleya, 2019).

We note with concern that secondary school set books for Literature for 2022-2024 in Zambia are dominated by foreign-authored books (cf. ECZ, 2020). The analysis shows that at the secondary school level, West Africa and European regions account for 33.3% respectively, East Africa accounts for 22.2% while Southern Africa in particular Zambia, accounts for 11.1%, an indication of serious potholes in the selection criteria of Senior Secondary School Literature in English texts. To some extent, the selection pattern of texts in Literature in English shows that there is an inferiority complex towards Zambian writers. Arguably,

the criteria for Literature in English is not in tandem with the selection process of Literature in Zambian languages texts which only uses local writers to retain indigenous knowledge (cf. Siame, 2022 October 25).

Nonetheless, the above submission is at variance with Muleya (2019) who says, ‘Twenty-five (25) books of international standards have been produced in Zambia since 2010 under the title “Zambia and Literature from Zambia” and these include Bitterness by Malama Katulwende and others. Moyo (2021) submits that very few local books were being published and that internationally published books were in the majority of Zambian bookstores. The above submission is in tandem with Primorac (2011) who states that written literary texts from Zambia have been produced by a tiny cultural elite. Moyo (2021) further argues that ‘the challenge faced by most Zambian writers is that writing is not their activity. It is not their income earner. It functions as a hobby in their lives.’ The above argument shows that most Zambians have a poor writing culture.

Soyinka (2011), and Siame (2022, November 25) observe that Literature in Zambia seems to have been divorced from reality and the subject matter. The above observation suggests that most novels by Zambian authors lack national values and principles and as such are regarded as irrelevant to learners. Nonetheless, the above observation should not be used to promote unfairness in the selection of novels to be used in secondary schools and universities. Otherwise, the unfairness in the selection of novels will defeat Kelly (2012) who has been quoted in Muleya's (2019) submission that the role of Literature in English is to prepare the individual to live in a society who should subsequently develop into the new type of person needed to meet the challenges of life in Zambia.

V. CONCLUSION

Potholes are real challenges in the education system in Zambia from primary to university level. These challenges were created by the colonial mindset, marginalization, theoretical mindset, dependence syndrome, and the colonial caged mentality. There is a need to decolonize the education system by patching the potholes. Considering the gravity of the potholes in indigenous education, it is necessary to change the narrative by undertaking the desired education reforms which should subsequently lead to decolonization of the curriculum.

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