Educational Systems and Neocolonial Thought

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Abstract

In this paper, a detailed exploration is conducted on the enduring influence of colonialism and neocolonialism on African education systems. It discusses how the legacies of colonial and neocolonial governance continue to shape the content, methodologies and overall framework of education, often prioritizing Western viewpoints while marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems. The conversation also highlights how neoliberal principles and global interconnectedness reinforce these colonial and neocolonial legacies by advocating for market-oriented reforms and privatization that result in widening disparities. Through a critical lens, the paper evaluates existing studies and real-world instances to propose strategies for deneocolonizing African education. These solutions entail integrating indigenous wisdom, utilizing teaching approaches that resonate with local customs, and engaging communities in educational decision-making processes. The focus is on transforming African education to honor diverse cultural identities, propel societal progress, and bolster struggles for political liberation – all with the goal of empowering underrepresented voices and challenging colonial and neocolonial ideologies.

Keywords: Educational Systems, Neocolonialism, Deneocoloniality

Introduction

Neocolonialism is closely related to colonialism and neocolonialism, and it means a hierarchical system where one entity exerts dominance over another by establishing a dynamic of control and dependence that significantly influences the political dynamics of the oppressed group. Neocolonialism also indicates an intentional and subtle arrangement whereby power is asserted over another society by founding settlements and exploiting resources for profit, often resorting to coercive tactics.

Throughout history, there has been a pattern of subduing or wiping out populations to establish colonial supremacy (Boahen, 1985; Oyeniyi, 2022). European powers utilized colonialism not only to enforce political control but also to maintain a state of underdevelopment in Africa by introducing an educational system that diverged significantly from local traditions. This colonial education was designed to suppress and exploit communities by prioritizing European values while disregarding indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. As a result,

colonialism not only allowed for exploitation but also served as a means to transfer wealth back to the colonizers' homelands, thereby aiding European advancement through the extraction of labor and resources from Africa (Frankema and van Waijenburg, 2012; World Economic Forum, 2023).

In Africa, the lasting effects of colonialism and neocolonialism continue to profoundly influence development. The introduction of railways led to forced labor programs and substantial investments by Europeans during that period reshaped labor and land markets in Africa to ensure the continent's role as a key exporter of goods that primarily benefited European economies (Frankema and van Waijenburg, 2012). These actions laid the groundwork for persistent dependency and underdevelopment in postcolonial Africa that perpetuate a cycle of exploitation and inequality (Boahen, 1985).

Understanding neocolonialism and its impacts on educational settings is worth investigation as this phenomenon has systematically pushed the African education landscape into a subservient position, fundamentally altering its indigenous knowledge systems and ingenuity. In West Africa, Western education through missionaries was introduced as a way to spread European beliefs before formal conquests began. European colonial powers also took charge of the education systems in many African countries to reinforce their control. By the mid-1800s, Western education began shaping a class of educated individuals, mainly consisting of formerly enslave Africans from Sierra Leone. Nonetheless, this educational structure posed challenges, as it birthed educated individuals who were detached from their communities and traditions while also fostering cooperation with Europeans to maintain control in West Africa. Conversely, African leaders who received education locally and internationally emerged as nationalists and played a crucial role in ending European empires in Africa (Nwauwa, 2020), but neocolonialism in African education largely persist, and its manifestations are essential to be uncovered and resolved.

The rest of this paper presents the concept of neocolonialism in the African education context, the theoretical framework and research methodology adopted for this study as well as some case studies or examples of relevant issues surrounding this topic. The last part of the paper presents the conclusion and makes recommendations.

The Concept of African Educational Systems and Neocolonial Thought

Since its emergence in 1965, neocolonialism has been used not to describe the influence exerted by former colonial powers but also by emerging superpowers like the United States and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Neocolonialism is often used to depict situations whereby developing economies struggle to establish their autonomy under the impact of globalization.

Neoliberalism is an economic and political ideology that promotes free-market capitalism, privatization, deregulation, and a reduced role of the state in economic and social affairs. It emphasizes the efficiency of market mechanisms in resource allocation, encouraging competition and fostering economic growth. In the context of education, neoliberalism often translates into policies that prioritize privatization, market-driven reforms, and cost-sharing mechanisms which can exacerbate inequalities and limit access to education for disadvantaged groups and can worsen inequalities (Giroux, 2020). Privatization for instance involves transferring public services to private entities, while deregulation eases government restrictions

to promote entrepreneurship. Similarly, market-focused reforms stress market forces' influence on policies and decreased public spending, thereby reducing government funds for social services such as education.

In order to enroll many countries into neocolonial economic structure, mechanisms such as structural adjustment programs (SAPs) were mandated by the global financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank for countries to implement as neoliberal measures for getting financial support (Ball, 2012). This was said to promote school competition, funding based on performance, and commercializing education (Ball, 2012). Meanwhile, SAPs are economic policies implemented by international financial institutions in developing countries as a condition for receiving loans or financial aid. These programs typically involve neoliberal reforms such as reducing public expenditure, privatization of state-owned enterprises, deregulation, and trade liberalization. In education, SAPs have often resulted in reduced funding for public education, leading to increased privatization and inequalities.

Additionally, Eurocentrism is a worldview that positions European culture, history, and values as superior and universal and often marginalizes or devalues non-European cultures and knowledge systems. In the context of education, Eurocentrism manifests in curricula that prioritize Western perspectives, often at the expense of indigenous and non-Western knowledge. This can lead to a disconnection between students and their cultural heritage, thereby perpetuating a neocolonial mindset. Furthermore, globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, driven by international trade, investment, and information technology. In education, globalization has led to the adoption of neoliberal policies, the spread of standardized testing, and the increasing influence of global institutions on local education systems. While globalization can facilitate knowledge exchange and innovation, it can also exacerbate inequalities and promote a homogenization of educational practices (Altbach and Knight, 2020).

Conversely, decolonization refers to the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies, structures, and practices, particularly those persisting in postcolonial societies. In education, decolonization involves challenging and transforming curricula, pedagogies, and institutional frameworks that perpetuate Eurocentric perspectives and marginalize indigenous knowledge. The goal is to establish more inclusive and culturally relevant educational systems that reflect the identities, histories, and knowledge systems of previously colonized peoples (Mbembe, 2016).

Moreover, postcolonialism emerged as an area of study following World War II, covering aspects such as politics, sociology, history, and culture (Duffield and Hewitt, 2013). Despite increased opportunities and resources after gaining independence, educational strategies in African nations often mirror Western customs while neglecting their own cultural, linguistic, intellectual and philosophical heritage (Escobar, 1995; Fanon, 1963/2005). To fully comprehend education systems, one must consider the continent's wider institutional, political, cultural and economic landscapes (McEwan, 2009). Scholars advocating for this approach stress the importance of culturally relevant education rooted in "the African experience," a concept known as decolonization. This method aims to promote fairness and effective governance in colonies by tackling disparities through education-based discussions and actions (Rodney, 1972; Nandy, 1983). The goal of decolonizing education is to dismantle colonial ideologies in educational structures in order to empower indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices for a more inclusive learning environment (Levy and Young, 2011; McCowan and Unterhalter, 2015).

Nonetheless, African education systems, despite political independence, remain deeply

rooted in colonial traditions and heavily influenced by neocolonialism, thereby perpetuating Western dominance and unequal power dynamics. The continued use of Eurocentric curricula, teaching methods, and institutional frameworks sidelines indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices, establishing educational settings that do not accurately reflect the social and cultural realities of African communities. Additionally, neoliberal policies and globalization worsen these issues by advocating for privatization, cost-sharing, and market-oriented reforms that often undermine fairness and inclusivity. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) explores the concept of "coloniality of power" within African education by highlighting how a curriculum often emphasizes Western history, literature, and scientific advancements at the expense of Africa's own contributions. This perpetuates a sense of intellectual inferiority and cultural devaluation, leading to a disconnection between students and their heritage (Woolman, 2001). The impact of neoliberal policies and globalization further solidifies these colonial influences through market-driven changes and privatization that exacerbate inequalities within the education system. Notably, the SAPs enforced by the IMF and the World Bank prioritize economic efficiency over educational fairness. These policies lead to decreased funding for public education, increased privatization, and the introduction of user fees that make education less accessible to marginalized communities (Tikly, 2003).

In response to the preceding challenges, the paper advocates for deneocolonizing African education by incorporating indigenous knowledge and promoting teaching methods that are culturally relevant. This shift involves moving away from memorization-based learning and authoritarian teaching styles to student-centered practices that foster critical thinking and creativity. Scholars like Freire (1970) stress the significance of an empowering education that encourages learners to question their surroundings and effect positive change—an objective in line with deneocolonization goals. Engaging local communities in educational decision-making processes is also deemed essential in this endeavor. Also, emphasis has been laid on the importance of involving parents and community members in school governance, as it can result in educational practices that better suit the specific needs and contexts of local communities.

A collaborative method ensures that educational systems mirror the values and goals of the individuals to which they cater and foster a sense of ownership and significance. By combining these tactics (incorporating local knowledge, embracing culturally appropriate teaching techniques, and engaging communities in educational decision-making), African education systems can progress toward increased fairness, cultural preservation, and empowerment. This comprehensive approach not only tackles the historical wrongs of colonialism but also establishes a more inclusive and adaptable educational framework for the future.

This study is therefore significant as it seeks to uncover and confront the seated neocolonial influences that persist within African education systems. It highlights the importance of updating practices to better reflect diverse cultures and contexts.

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

Emerging from the Frankfurt School in the 20th Century, Critical Theory is a philosophical stance that questions various aspects of society, culture and politics to uncover power imbalances and ideologies that perpetuate inequality and oppression. Key figures in this field include Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, who advocated for the sciences not only to

interpret the world but also actively work toward changing it. Critical Theory highlights the importance of ideology in maintaining control and stresses the need to examine these ideologies to reveal underlying power dynamics (Adorno, 1973). It emphasizes how ideology plays a role in sustaining authority and emphasizes the significance of analyzing these beliefs to expose power structures. This viewpoint is particularly useful when looking at educational systems as it offers a framework for exploring how historical colonial influences and contemporary neocolonial impacts shape educational practices, content and organizational frameworks, ultimately reinforcing Western dominance and unequal power dynamics.

In educational settings, Critical Theory is used to shed light on how Eurocentric teaching materials and methods often sideline indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage. By delving into these frameworks, researchers and policymakers can identify and challenge the power dynamics that uphold legacies of neocolonial control. For example, tools such as SAPs implement changes that prioritize market efficiency over ensuring equal access to education, thereby reinforcing existing socioeconomic gaps. The theory also emphasizes practical application. By combining reflection with hands-on action, it aligns with the objectives of deneocolonizing education. It urges educators and decision makers not only to critically evaluate educational frameworks but also to actively implement changes that foster equity in learning and inclusivity (Freire, 1970). Through the application of this theory, this research aims to suggest approaches for decolonizing systems by integrating indigenous knowledge into curricula, embracing culturally relevant teaching methods, and engaging local communities in the learning process.

Therefore, Critical Theory offers a framework for comprehending the enduring impacts of colonialism and neocolonialism on educational systems. The theory advocates for initiatives that amplify voices and advocate for justice in an African context. Also, Critical Theory is effective at unveiling power dynamics within societies, making it suitable for examining the lasting effects of colonialism (and neocolonialism) on African educational systems (Mbembe, 2016). One notable aspect of the theory is its emphasis on praxis, a blend of reflection and action. This method encourages educators and policymakers to make changes that uphold equity and inclusivity. In addition, the theory's adaptability allows it to be utilized in various fields, thereby proving useful for examining intricate social and political scenarios in the realm of education.

Despite its benefits, Critical Theory does come with limitations. At times, it can be overly abstract, posing challenges when attempting to translate its concepts into actionable policy suggestions. Critical Theory delves into how colonial influences and neoliberal strategies impact educational content, teaching approaches, and institutional structures within African education systems considering these factors. It also strives to uncover and challenge the Eurocentric principles ingrained in these systems while advocating for the inclusion of diverse knowledge and culturally pertinent teaching methodologies. While the theory effectively sheds light on power dynamics, its major shortcoming is the inability to always offer concrete solutions for policy adjustments. Additionally, its foundation in critical thought may not fully encompass the intricacies of African contexts, potentially limiting its effectiveness in addressing specific cultural and societal issues. Nonetheless, this study applies the theory to propose viable tactics for deneocolonizing African education and amplifying voices that have been marginalized.

In terms of research methodology, I delve into the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism on African education systems through the utilization of content analysis in a

qualitative manner—i.e. by emphasizing words instead of numbers. Content analysis is valued for its ability to provide insights into future educational practices. This approach involves examining various documents such as policy papers, curriculum guidelines, historical records and academic literature. The data collected are analyzed to identify recurring themes that align with the research questions. The goal of the analysis is to shed light on themes related to legacies and neocolonial practices by using the findings to address research inquiries. Key themes are presented and discussed as case studies, and the Eurocentric curricula, teaching methodologies and institutional frameworks are explored to comprehend how they influence content and structures that uphold dominance and perpetuate power dynamics. By exploring these case studies as themes, using document analysis helps me to gain a better understanding of how neocolonial practices continue to impact education systems and propose strategies for promoting deneocolonization efforts.

Document analysis offers several benefits. First, it provides insights into both historical and current educational practices, as highlighted by Bowen (2009). Second, this method respects privacy by not necessitating direct interaction with individuals, making it suitable for investigating sensitive topics like colonial and neocolonial legacies (Yin, 2014). Finally, document analysis proves useful for tracking changes over time and grasping the historical context of present-day educational approaches (Merriam, 2009). Despite its advantages, document analysis also has its limitations. Selection bias poses a key concern as it can influence outcomes based on the documents selected, potentially excluding relevant materials (Bowen, 2009). Also, researchers' interpretations may introduce bias to the analysis (Merriam, 2009). In addition, this approach is limited by a lack of quantitative data that could bolster broader conclusions (Yin, 2014).

A Case of Neocolonialism Legacies in African Curricula, Pedagogical Approaches and Institutional Structures

The education systems in many African countries still reflect the legacy of their colonial past even after many decades of gaining independence. This influence can be seen today in aspects such as the curriculum content and dependence on financial aid. The concept of educational methods impacting non-Western societies could be referred to as educational neocolonialism. It has inspired movements such as "Rhodes Must Fall" at the University of Cape Town and Oxford, as well as discussions like "Why is My Curriculum White?" at University College London. The effort to decolonize the curriculum entails advocating for institutional changes despite facing challenges and resistance. Educators acknowledge the necessity of addressing educational influences that often reflect a narrow mono-cultural viewpoint, overlooking marginalized communities. Decolonizing the curriculum involves recognizing and appreciating the perspectives and contributions of marginalized individuals throughout history—a process that can benefit society as a whole (Moncrieffe et al., 2019).

The "Rhodes Must Fall" movement originated at the University of Cape Town in 2015. This student-driven initiative called for removing the Cecile Rhodes statue, seen as a symbol of colonialism and white supremacy, from the university campus. The movement quickly spread to other South African universities and eventually reached the University of Oxford, sparking global conversations on education decolonization and combating institutional racism (Kwoba et al., 2018).

The movement at the University of Cape Town highlighted the importance of addressing the long-standing effects of colonialism and neocolonialism within institutions by implementing changes in curriculum and governance structures rather than mere symbolic gestures. Taking down the statue was seen as a crucial step in recognizing and taking apart symbols of colonialism that fuel exclusion and inequality.

Likewise, the "Why is My Curriculum White?" movement at University College London sparked discussions on the prevalence of Eurocentric viewpoints in academic syllabi. This initiative highlighted the significance of including all voices, especially those from marginalized groups, to foster a more inclusive learning environment.

In their views, historical figures like James Johnson in Sierra Leone and Edward Blyden in Liberia criticized missionary schools for overlooking African heritage and history. They contended that integrating traditional culture and native languages into education is vital for preserving cultural identity and pride. Prior to independence, they noted that education often sought to dominate Africans rather than empower them through knowledge. Challenging these aspects, some scholars highlighted that colonial schools provided European style education in their territories. They argued that these were adapted versions crafted to maintain control. Many Africans educated under this system felt it marginalized African indigenous knowledge. The emphasis on individualistic values overshadowed the communal norms of African societies. Moreover, the disconnection between students and their communities exacerbated this issue, thereby worsening the situation. Thus, colonial education enforced dominance and economic exploitation and resulted in disparities, social stratification, intellectual subservience, devaluation of indigenous culture, and irrelevant educational material (Woolman, 2001).

The long-term effects of colonialism on education systems in various African nations are evident through the influence of a value system that favors Western perspectives and overlooks indigenous cultures. This results in educational content, structures and teaching methods that prioritize foreign knowledge and norms over African viewpoints. Colonialists tailored the education frameworks to suit their own interests, leading to feelings of inadequacy among local populations.

The curricula predominantly focus on history, literature and scientific accomplishments while downplaying Africa's contributions. For example, history lessons taught in French-speaking West Africa often portray France as a promoter of racial superiority and aim to shape African students' identities according to colonial ideologies. In addition, educational approaches influenced by these perspectives tend to emphasize memorization and strict authority, which may hinder students' critical thinking skills and creativity. These methods rooted in Western traditions fail to consider the unique needs of African learners and their cultural contexts.

Even after gaining independence, many African countries continued with Eurocentric teaching practices and still perpetuate a legacy of dominance inherited from colonial rule. The educational systems in Africa still reflect the hierarchical and bureaucratic structures established during the colonial era. By prioritizing academic standards over indigenous knowledge, these systems reinforce existing power dynamics and hinder the incorporation of traditional knowledge into formal educational settings.

Additionally, the dominance of Eurocentric values in African education results in the sidelining of indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions. Indigenous education, which emphasizes community responsibility, social interaction and practical abilities, often goes unnoticed within formal educational systems. This lack of acknowledgment perpetuates the

perception that African knowledge and customs are inferior to Western standards, further embedding colonial viewpoints in educational frameworks.

Across the vast expanse of the Saharan region in Africa, indigenous education displays a diverse array of customs shaped by unique nuances yet united by shared themes. In contrast to Western educational structures, traditional African education flourishes informally within family units, communities, and cultural environments. It unfolds as a lifelong journey whereby individuals progress through various life stages, gaining experience, respect and wisdom along the way. Mungazi (1996) prioritizes wellbeing over individual accomplishments and stresses the importance of instilling a sense of responsibility. Busia (1964) also highlights the value of teaching individuals to prioritize their interests.

Also, this educational model integrates growth and development with practical activities aimed at transmitting cultural knowledge and skills through observation, imitation and active participation (Fafunwa 1982). Nevertheless, the introduction of individualistic ideals at certain points clashed with Africa's communal cooperative values, resulting in significant cultural disconnection (Mungazi 1996).

In Western education, the emphasis is on evaluating students individually, while traditional education aims to engage all children in the community. African educational practices prioritize hands-on learning and practical exploration over teaching methods that may enhance learning retention compared to typical Western approaches. This underscores the influence of Eurocentric ideals in educational structures and highlights the importance of deneocolonizing education to embrace indigenous wisdom and cultural values. Accordingly, African nations can strive to develop educational systems that authentically represent and cater to their cultural and economic needs.

Some scholars argue that aid organizations contribute to promoting ideas within peripheral governments through advocating for changes in teaching methods and curricula. These agencies exert influence through persuasion rather than direct coercion. Developing countries are encouraged to accept loan funds and follow the suggested strategies of lenders to enhance their education systems. Despite gaining independence in the mid-20th Century, Africa still grapples with challenges rooted in its history. Eurocentric curricula and institutional structures that uphold power dynamics hinder the establishment of contextualized and inclusive education systems, thereby perpetuating disparities and impeding socioeconomic progress.

Unfortunately, the discourse on neocolonial legacies in African education systems is very polarized. Critics of Eurocentric curricula in education also frequently couple their arguments with decolonization as an essential means to avoid continued intellectual subservience and cultural subordination pointing out that this engrained cause for concern is exaggerated further when revising educational content. Movements like "Rhodes Must Fall" and "Why is My Curriculum White?" demonstrate the move towards decolonizing colonial legacies and replacing them with more inclusive curricula (Ahmed, 2019; Moncrieffe et al., 2020).

Critics, on the other hand, have argued that Western models of education (for example, British and American systems) in Africa are very important because these have equipped Africans with skills and methodologies developed through centuries which can be applicable to modernization and development. According to scholars like Peter Kallaway and Silvester Trnovec (2021), colonial education was not simply a tool of oppression but also provided access to power-conferring knowledge which enabled African leaders in their anti-colonial struggles. They also argue that to completely reject Western educational paradigms would be a tragic loss

of useful pedagogical traditions and could impede Africa's development within the world knowledge economy. This view emphasizes the difficulty in balancing moves to maintain cultural authenticity while reaching out effectively on a global platform through African education (Le Grange, 2016).

A Case of Non-acknowledgment of Indigenous Knowledge System

European nations utilized colonialism not only to assert political power but also to perpetuate underdevelopment in Africa by leveraging their influence to introduce an educational system that diverged significantly from indigenous systems. The colonial educational system aimed to suppress and exploit communities by promoting Eurocentric values while overlooking local knowledge and cultural traditions. In the era of globalization, Western approaches tend to shape indigenous knowledge system (IKS) and ideologies of different regions leading policymakers in non-Western nations to update their policies and structures to align with global standards influenced by Western models. While adopting strategies proven effective elsewhere, there is a risk of overlooking the cultural heritage and identity of their own nation (Nguyen et al., 2009).

The influence of neocolonialism on education is clearly seen when traditional indigenous knowledge systems are being overlooked in favor of educational frameworks that dominate school curricula. In the neocolonial context, past colonial rulers made sure that the leaders of independent nations would continue to depend on them for political guidance. These nations face ideological, cultural and military influences from their former colonizers, who exploit them for their own interests. This control is usually exerted indirectly through channels rather than through direct military intervention, as in the colonial period.

Initiatives aimed at deneocolonizing one's mindset should begin with an exploration of ideas presented by authors and progress toward embracing and implementing these concepts in practice. I emphasize that deneocolonization efforts should extend beyond mere discussions by incorporating practical actions and a resolute commitment to putting these initiatives into action. Deneocolonizing knowledge within circles, primarily addressing issues like curriculum development and pedagogical strategies to bring about transformation in Africa, has only received recent attention.

Societies have traditionally viewed education as a means to effectively integrate individuals into the community and prepare them for adulthood. African education has emphasized responsibilities, career readiness, political engagement, and spiritual and ethical principles. The African "White Paper on Post-School Education and Training" states that education should prioritize the development of individuals, to make them capable of critical thinking, active engagement in society, and possess a commitment to creativity and ethical values. The Department of Higher Education and Training in 2013 highlighted the importance of individuals understanding their society and participating in its social and cultural aspects (Forster and Forster, 2023). To ensure that individuals are well-informed and able to contribute to democracy, it is essential to provide education that is practical, contextually relevant, and respectful of diverse cultures. This form of education should cater to learners' needs while reflecting the dynamics of the society of which they are a part. Therefore, education should empower learners to observe, listen, analyze, experience new things imaginatively, believe, and understand thoroughly for their own wellbeing (Forster and Forster, 2023).

Evans and Mendez (2021) reported an increase in global opportunities across Africa

South of the Sahara over the past five decades. Postcolonial views on education have become significant in this discussion because of how education has helped spread Western cultural influence and beliefs about knowledge in Africa. Scholars like Bifuh and Ambe (2020) have highlighted this issue. In response, the African Union (AU) has been working on policies for African universities that focus on things like standardizing curricula, promoting academic mobility, maintaining quality standards, and establishing centers of excellence. These efforts aim to enhance the relevance and competitiveness of education in Africa within the global knowledge economy.

To address the challenges of the deneocolonization and Africanization in education, effectively embracing change is crucial. This includes fostering self-respect among individuals, encouraging an appreciation of their heritage, and acknowledging the importance of their diversity. According to Forster and Forster (2023), the ultimate goal is to empower individuals to contribute as global citizens both within and beyond Africa's borders.

Nevertheless, neocolonial practices sustain power imbalances within educational systems by perpetuating Western dominance through economic, political and cultural channels. Despite gaining independence, many African countries still rely economically on colonial powers and international financial institutions. These entities frequently implement policies that prioritize their own values in the African context, reinforcing existing power imbalances even further.

As indicated earlier, the IMF and World Bank introduced SAPs in the 1970s. These programs, which focused on market-driven reforms and economic efficiency, were implemented during the 1980s and 1990s. They led to a decrease in funding for education in African countries, which negatively affected both the quality and accessibility of education in the continent. One major consequence of these programs was the widening of socioeconomic gaps due to their emphasis on efficiency at the expense of equity and inclusivity.

The IMF and World Bank introduced SAPs to address economic crises in developing nations, especially in regions like the Global South. These programs helped only if countries implemented economic reforms aimed at stabilizing and restructuring their economies (Investopedia, 2021). SAPs typically involve economic policies tailored for developing economies, such as reducing government spending. This can lead to cuts in public services like education and healthcare, with the goal of alleviating budget deficits, but potentially impacting social services significantly (Economics Help, 2023). One more policy involves opening up markets, which means getting rid of trade barriers and supporting trade to boost competitiveness and attract foreign investments.

Privatization, a key component of SAPs, involves selling government-owned businesses to companies in order to enhance efficiency and generate revenue for a government. Also, the government promotes deregulation to reduce its involvement in the economy, thereby fostering a welcoming environment for businesses. In addition, currency devaluation is used to adjust exchange rates, thereby making exports more affordable on the market and increasing export earnings.

SAPs have faced criticism and controversy despite their intended advantages. Critics argue that these programs often worsen poverty and inequality by enforcing measures that mostly impact the poorest members of society, as seen in countries where they were put into effect. Ghana's experience with SAPs during the 1980s and 1990s serves as an example of these effects. The introduction of these initiatives resulted in a decrease in government spending on social services, particularly education. This decrease in support led to a deterioration of

educational facilities, lower wages for teachers, and an overall decline in education standards. Stability and debt repayment often took precedence over maintaining and enhancing educational quality.

In this vein, Zambia underwent major structural changes that impacted its education sector. The implementation of user fees for secondary education, introduced as part of the SAPs, resulted in reduced enrollment rates, especially among the most financially disadvantaged households. The emphasis on cost sharing added a financial burden to families already grappling with poverty, thus hindering access to education for many children.

Likewise, Zimbabwe felt the consequences of SAPs. The decrease in spending led to a sharp drop in educational quality, with schools lacking essential resources like textbooks and teaching materials. The push toward privatization and cost recovery further marginalized groups, in turn widening existing disparities within the education system.

When government spending is cut, it often leads to a decrease in access to services such as education and healthcare, thereby worsening social inequalities. This has been observed in countries, as mentioned by experts like Ferguson (2006). Additionally, SAPs have faced criticism for undermining sovereignty because borrowing nations are required to follow strict conditions imposed by the IMF and World Bank. These conditions can restrict their ability to implement policies that suit their socioeconomic situations. Some argue that this situation mirrors neocolonialism, whereby wealthy nations and global financial institutions hold sway over the economic decisions of poorer countries.

The examples presented in this section illustrate the obstacles and resistance encountered by advocacy groups striving to deneocolonize the educational content. They underscore the significance of acknowledging the impact of colonial and neocolonial influences on academic structures, which tend to favor a singular cultural perspective while sidelining diverse viewpoints. Deneocolonizing the curriculum entails recognizing and appreciating the roles played by marginalized figures in historical contexts, ultimately yielding advantages for society as a whole. Thus, the convergence of Western educational frameworks with indigenous knowledge systems represents the amalgamation of ideas on the influence of neo-colonialism on the current status of African education.

A Case of an Impact of Neoliberal Policies and Globalization on African Education Systems

During the early 2000s, notable leaders like Tony Blair and Bill Clinton highlighted the importance of updating education to meet the needs of the modern era. In his State of the Union Address in 2000, President Clinton emphasized the significance of providing a quality education to every child (Clinton White House Archives, 2000). His administration introduced programs such as GEAR UP (Gaining Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), which aimed to assist disadvantaged youths in getting ready for college by offering mentorship, tutoring, guidance on college preparation, and financial aid (Clinton White House Archives, 2000). This initiative focused on supporting students from their school years through high school graduation, with an emphasis on early intervention to improve readiness for college and academic success.

Challenges such as educational disparities faced by low-income and minority students led to the establishment of GEAR UP. This effort provided grants to partnerships involving high

poverty middle schools, colleges, universities, community groups, and businesses. These collaborations offered services like academic support, mentorship programs, college readiness workshops, and scholarships. By establishing a supportive environment and providing essential resources for academic success, this program helped to increase college enrollment rates among disadvantaged students.

Current issues in education include concerns about resources availability, differences in curriculum standards, and unwanted interference from authoritative bodies. The growing impact of strategies in a globalized world, which significantly affects educational rules and curricula, worsens the obstacles. In developing countries, notably in Africa, the education sector encounters significant deficiencies. Resources like money, infrastructure and staff are often lacking, leading to overcrowded classrooms, scarce teaching materials, and poorly maintained facilities (Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013). For instance, in Kenya, political intervention and financial constraints have greatly impeded the execution of educational changes (Jansen, 1998).

The enforcement of policies has led to noticeable disruptions in educational schemes. A crucial element of these strategies is their influence on syllabi by promoting content that aligns more with market demands than local cultural and social contexts encompassing critical thinking and cultural awareness. The focus on efficiency and job readiness might sideline subjects crucial for a holistic education such as arts and humanities (UNESCO, 2022). Additionally, neoliberal approaches have been integrated into the higher education policies of many national governments by emphasizing privatization and decreasing state involvement.

Despite the advocacy by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for merit-based access to education, the World Bank continues to push for diversified funding sources and cost-sharing between private entities and the public sector. Enhancing sustainability strategies often result in increased educational disparities and restricted access for marginalized communities, as noted by the World Bank (2023). To effectively address these challenges, a holistic approach is essential by considering specific circumstances and needs. This involves reassessing funding mechanisms, ensuring inclusivity and broadening curricula to incorporate diverse cultural and historical perspectives.

Education systems in African countries face significant obstacles due to limited resources, distorted curricula and external influences that are not conducive to their goals. Policies that prioritize market efficiency and privatization at the expense of equitable access and quality education exacerbate these difficulties.

Policies stress the significance of accountability, standardized testing and performance indicators in assessing outcomes. Nonetheless, this emphasis on results could divert attention from teaching methods and place excessive pressure on students and educators (Ball, 2003. Critics in South Africa have raised concerns about incorporating testing into reforms as it could narrow the curriculum scope and hinder students' creativity and critical thinking skills (Jansen, 2004).

Also, while proponents of neoliberalism argue that these policies are essential for integrating African economies into the global market, others emphasize the loss of local cultural contexts and the imposition of Western educational models that may not align with African values and needs. Scholars like Anne Pitcher suggest that the success of neoliberal reforms in Africa depends heavily on the political will of governments and the support of social coalitions, without which such reforms often fail to achieve their intended outcomes (see Wilson Center, 2004).

In contrast, other observers argue that the reforms are necessary for modernization and global competitiveness; yet, there is a growing call for more contextually relevant educational policies that prioritize inclusivity and cultural preservation alongside economic development. This underscores the ongoing tension between adopting global neoliberal strategies and maintaining the cultural integrity and social equity of African education systems (Verger et al., 2016; Mundy and Murphy, 2001).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The influence of legacies and neoliberal policies on the education systems in African nations has been significant. Despite achieving independence in the past century, educational practices in the continent still largely mirror Western values often while neglecting indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions. This continued dominance of perspectives upholds power dynamics and societal gaps hindering the development of educational systems that truly reflect realities and cater to local needs. Neoliberal policies introduced through SAPs by organizations have exacerbated these issues by promoting privatization, cost sharing, and market-oriented changes. These policies often lead to reduced investment in education and increased disparities and a growing dependence on foreign aid and expertise.

It is therefore recommended that the effective deneocolonization of educational systems in Africa will require an approach that involves revising curricula to integrate indigenous knowledge, embracing inclusive teaching methods, and encouraging the use of native languages for instruction. Equally important is providing quality training for teachers, actively engaging communities to ensure culturally appropriate educational practices, and implementing policy adjustments that are crucial to support these reforms and establish empowering learning environments. By prioritizing these efforts toward deneocolonization, African countries can develop systems that advocate for equity, cultural preservation, and political freedom. Therefore, making these adjustments is essential to establish environments that support perspectives, showcase African cultures, and meet the economic and social needs of African communities.

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