Exploring the Options for a Decolonised Knowledge Paradigm for African Education through a Critical Contrast of Afrikology, Ubuntology and Conceptual Decolonisation:

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Abstract

There are plausible reasons to suggest that education in the African contest demands fresh orientation to be more reliable and productive. The position implied by this claim is that knowledge needs to generate new forms of attitude for it to be functional and relevant to African life. This call is what is represented by the calls for decolonisation of the curriculum of studies. By Africa is implied Sub-Saharan Africa and by education is meant the formal certified ways of imparting knowledge. But decolonisation is a concept with wide implications which needs to be deconstructed for it to achieve its desired objectives. Decolonisation could be interpreted in such wide terms as -decolonisation of school structure, decolonisation of learning structure, decolonisation of curriculum, decolonisation of concepts and ideas. This paper represents a search for a decolonised knowledge and curriculum paradigm. It maps out three options proffered in the effort to provide alternatives for a fresh knowledge paradigm- Afrikology as suggested by Dani Nabudere (2011), Ubuntology as suggested Chinweizu(2008)and Conceptual decolonisation as suggested by Kwasi Wiredu (1995).The paper will provide a critical contrast between the three options with the view to locating the possible alternatives to explore in achieving a decolonised knowledge design in the continent. The method applied is textual analysis and comparative criticism.

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Introduction

There are plausible reasons to suggest that education in the African contest demands fresh orientation to be more reliable and productive. The position implied by this claim is that knowledge needs to generate new forms of attitude for it to be functional and relevant to African life. This call is what is represented by the calls for decolonisation of the curriculum of studies. Although decolonising education in Africa cannot be summarised by this need, it cannot be denied that it constitutes part of the need for decolonisation. By Africa is implied Sub-Saharan Africa and by education is meant the formal certified ways of imparting knowledge. But decolonisation is a concept with wide implications which needs to be deconstructed for it to achieve its desired objectives. Decolonisation could be interpreted in such wide terms as decolonisation of methods of learning, decolonisation of learning structure and/or items of learning, decolonisation of curriculum, etc. This paper represents a search for a decolonised knowledge and curriculum paradigm. It maps out three options proffered in the effort to provide alternatives for a fresh knowledge paradigm that addresses the demands of decolonisation- Afrikology as suggested by Dani Nabudere (2011), Ubuntology as suggested Chinweizu(2008)and Conceptual decolonisation as suggested by Kwasi Wiredu (1995).The paper will provide a critical contrast between the three options with the view to highlighting their similarities and/or dissimilarities and motivating the search for other possible alternatives to explore in achieving a decolonised knowledge design in the continent. The method applied is textual analysis and comparative criticism. To achieve the aims of the paper I shall (i) provide some justificatory remarks on the need to decolonise knowledge in Africa. I proceed from here to (ii) outline and interrogate three options harboured in the views of the three scholars mentioned on decolonisation. I make a critical contrast between these options. The method applied is textual analysis and critical reflection.

Decolonisation Knowledge: Some Justificatory Remarks.

> The bullet was the means of physical subjugation…Berlin of 1884 was effective through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom. But where the former was visibly brutal, the later was visibly gentle.
> (Ngugi wa Thiong,o 1986:9)

The above statement by Ngugi wa Thiong'o to a large extent explains why the concern with the theme of decolonisation in African scholarship is cogent and justified. Arising from the encounter between Europe and other parts of the world in the later part of the last century and which lasted hundreds of years and led to disruptions in the ways of life of the people of Africa and several other parts of the world with reverberating consequences, the challenge in intellectual pursuit among African intellectuals has revolved around how to address this effects of this mental and cultural damage. This is more so as colonialism has continued in different shades through neo-colonialism and through the project of globalisation- which considerably favours a furtherance of the ideals, ideals and values that were transmitted by European modernity through the project of colonialism. This in effect is what the project of decolonisation is all about. Although decolonisation is majorly seen as the project of and for the colonised, it would seem that even the colonisers should be involved in this. This is because colonialism is a product of certain knowledge and attitudes which the colonisers perhaps found valid and relevant apparently because of the how it is generated and the presumed aims and goals it is meant to serve. But at least from the negative outcomes of colonialism the trust bequeathed to it by the colonialists needs to be rethought. The focus of this paper however is on how the project of decolonisation can succeed among the colonised through the forms of education that is generated to serve this purpose.

Several works have sought to decolonise knowledge design (Ngugi, 1980; Wiredu, 1995; Chinweizu, 1980; 1987; Mazrui,1975; Ugwuanyi, 2011;2018; De Souza,2014; Apusigah & Millar, 2010).A reading of these schools of works show that they basically amounts to proposals on how to overcome the values and ideals of colonialism through mental decolonisation. The aims of these work is on how to negate the ideals of colonialism which has made it difficult for Africans to self-invent and to act with the authority of a rightful difference for their advancement as individuals and a group. Indeed at the mental level colonialism manifests itself in what can be called the building of fake and false worldview and thought schemes in the mind of the colonised. This is illustrated by Ngugi wa Thiong'o(1986) when he says:

> Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality assumed; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to the environment. It starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated spheres in the same person. On a larger social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies.

Inherent in the phenomenon of colonialism therefore, is the tendency to under develop a people and incapacitate them. This effect of colonialism is what spells out the need and mandate for decolonisation, which in effect amounts to the effort to destroy, negate, remove ,overcome colonialism through measures that re-instate a people and enables them to advance by being themselves and no other and through wilful choices that flow from natural and cultural potentials. In the project of decolonisation especially at the levels of knowledge, education and intellection, two options present themselves. The first is to *undo* colonialism – by way of doing away with colonialism in its entity. The second to *redo* colonialism by picking the vestiges of what is good in colonialism and redo them in an African way.By redoing colonialism is meant picking some cultural outcomes of colonialism such as formal

educational system as reworking to serve a worthier end. This work joins the effort to consider this option. The focus of my effort is to consider which knowledge can generate the relevant and worthier educational gains by creating a decolonised attitudes, values and ideas in the educational industries in Africa

To do this I have set out to discuss three African scholars namely-Chinweizu, Kwasi Wiredu and Nabudere. This choice of these scholars stems from their different disciplinary orientations and the possible multidisciplinary gains of their ideas and positions, A third gain of engaging these scholars is their strong Afrocentric orientations and the potentials of their ideas to combat a major negative challenge in African education which is an outcome of colonialism(especially Chinweziu and Nabudere). Here I mean the challenge of epsitemicide. By epsitemicide I mean the form of knowledge that undos or conquers the knower. Epistemicide, "amounts to knowledge by destruction. It suggests that certain knowledge can be created and administered to a people by their faithful compliance or by their ignorance of same to underdevelop and destroy the minds of the knowers or for some far-reaching ends that are destructive."(Ugwuanyi,2020).While Nabudere sees this in this divisive and alienating nature of knowledge propelled and promoted through colonialism and the western knowledge academy, Chinweizu sees this is the knowledge for destruction which is the outright objective of this form of knowledge.

II

Decolonising Education: The Options of Chinweizu, Kwasi Wiredu and Nabudere

The first scholar I engage in the search for options for decolonising education is the view of the pan-Blackist scholar Chinweizu. In many of his works such as *The West and the Rest of Us*(1975);*Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature*(1983,Co-authored);*Education in Black Africa*(2010),*Decolonsing the African Mind* (1987), Chinweizu has critically reflected on the nature of education under a colonial structure and how it produces a colonised mind. But it is perhaps in his work *Ubuntology* (2008), that the author provides a coordinated effort to address the dangers of false knowledge in Africa and spells out options on how to decolonise this form of knowledge through what can be called combative epistemology. Thus a detailed knowledge of his ideas in this work and an effort to operationalize his ideas can promote a decolonised paradigm in education.

Ubuntology(2004)is a work in four parts namely (i) a discourse on what the author calls "White Chauvinist Studies and African Studies imperialist brand"(Chinweizu 2004:2-16);(ii) A treatment of "Autonomist Black World Studies/Abibifology and Africalogy"(Chinweizu 2004,16-35);(iii)Ubuntology as an academic enterprise/field(Chinweizu 2004,36-46); and (iv)Africalogy, Chinweizu 2004,46-63).The first part of the work is a dense crititique of western ethno-centric knowledge paradigm. But a subsequent part of the work provides some glimpse into the form of knowledge that the author recommends for Africans as an antidote to the current colonial forms of knowledge production and consumption.

This option is captured in what the author captures as black redempionist studies, the major part of which is what the author calls "Autonomist Black World Studies" or what he applies another language to call *Abibifology* as an answer to the challenge of black survival. As Chinweizu puts it:

> *Abibifology*'s object of study is the world civilisations of the entire black or African race. It seeks to elucidate our past, from the point of view of our race, and in pursuit of the self-determined interest of our race, and by methods grounded on the fact rather than fantasy, by discovery than dogma, and other principles rather than prejudices (Chinweizu 2004: 17).

The thrust of the ideas of Chinweizu in *Ubuntology* is that the black world should be raised to the level of "a conscious operational concept" (Chinweizu,2004:17) in order to raise a worldview that will create a decolonised attitude in the thoughts and behaviours of the black world. Hence, he outlines five processes of achieving a black operational consciousness, namely: (i) "Alien-self stage (ii) Black self-recognition state (iii) Black Baptism state to (iv) Melagnosis stage (v) Black commitment stage (Chinweizu 2004, 23–27).His argument is that the current form of education is deficient because the black person has"received indoctrination in Afrophobia, Melanophobia, Europhilia and Blancophilia" (Chinweizu 2004:27). Hence, he outlines certain measures that will produced a more liberatory knowledge process in Africa. These include: (a) Melagnosis—full knowledge of the history and future possibilities of the black world; (b) Melanescence—becoming a conscious and committed member of the black world; (c) Melaappropriation—taking the black world one's estate to cherish and defend; (d) overcoming Melanophobia—contempt and hatred for the dogma of Black Inferiority and White Superiority; (e) imbibing the ideals of Afrocentiricism—seeing and acting in the interest and standpoint of the Blacks in all things; (f) Industrialisation—Machinofacture (*Ubuntology*, Chinweizu 2004: 21–27).

Chinweizu proceeds to reformulate fresh paths to achieving functional and relevant knowledge in Africa by invoking what the author calls "ways/paths to knowledge, which have been bequeathed by African civilisation" (Chinweizu 2004: 32). These ways include: "Emprico-logicism, Holitistic dialectis, Psycho-spiritual probes, Dialogical inquiry, Structural, functional and transformational analyses and Mystical, Visionary, Hallucinatory, intuitional, Extrasensory perception paths to knowledge" (Chinweizu 2004:32).

This aspect of the work is followed by a revision of major areas of learning and how they could fit into the black scheme of thought that will lead to a fully liberated African mind. He outlines Among the many new disciplinary orientations outlined two deserve to be mentioned here. The first is what the author calls Afrocentric psychology, which will examine why racial solidarity is "so weak among Blacks" (Chinweizu 2004:42) and how confidence and pride in the Black race can be fostered among Blacks. Another is Black World Strategics (Chinweizu 2004:37) which will enable the black people to learn how to defend themselves in a world that is currently designed to overrun them. The third is Bio-economics, "economics made compatible with the biosphere" (Chinweizu 2004:54), the objective of which is "the rejection of profit accumulation and maximisation as the supreme good" (Chinweizu 2004:54).Chinweizu s recommendation implies a creation of fresh knowledge paradigm through different forms of thought that is parallel to the received colonial knowledge design. The implication of this is that decolonisation should begin with total and reserved contempt with the knowledge bequeathed through colonialism.

The second option I shall discuss among the outlined options for decolonising education comes from the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi wiredu.Wiredu laments that:

> What is problematic is not simply that Africa was colonised, but the fact that colonialism was able to make deep inroads in the psychology of our people in most part of Africa; that it succeeded in inducing in them a colonial mentality(Wiredu 1995:35).

Colonial mentality as an outcome of colonialism itself means a mind-set that operates with fear, lack of the will for truth, suppressed truth, brazen lies and huge falsification of reality in favour of received indoctrination and ideology on which the conquest of colonialism was anchored. He thus recommends a detached rational evaluation of issues to undo what he calls "the severest distortion of the African consciousness(Ibid,p.30) arising from colonialism. As a measure to dolonise knowledge consumption in Africa

Wiredu advances the idea of conceptual decolonisation. According to Wiredu, conceptual decolonisation amounts to :

> Avoiding or reversing through critical conceptual self-awareness the unexamined assimilation in our thought (that is, in the thought of contemporary African philosopher) of the conceptual framework embedded in the foreign philosophical traditions that have had impact on African life(ibid;p.22)

Or conversely:

> Exploiting as much as it is judicious the resources of our own indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditation on even the most technical problems of contemporary philosophy(ibid;p.22)

Wiredu states further that:

> The negative is of course the reverse side the positive. But we cite it first because the necessity for decolonisation was brought upon us in the first place by the historical super-imposition of foreign categories of thought system through colonization(ibid;p.22)

Wiredu's proposal is focused on philosophical concepts but this focus is urgent and hugely relevant beyond philosophy for a number of reasons. The first is that philosophical concepts are fundamental concepts that underlie our assumptions of what other concepts should mean and do. Thus in a way, all philosophical concepts are fundamental and foundational to the grounding of other concepts. The second is that in African thought these concepts operate in a subtle manner that without unpacking and untying them one cannot get at their fundamental assumptions. Wiredu's option has some merits in the sense that it tackles the use of concepts as frames of thought aimed at defining and delineating thought for the African mind. The major obstacle on Wiredu's option however is how this could be done in the different languages of African and the possibility of the language of coordination in this project.

The third option that has been suggested as a formula to decolonise education in Africa is the view suggested by the Ugandan scholar Dani Nabudere in what he calls *Afrikology*. Afikology

as Nabudere conceives it "tracing the historical, cultural, scientific, and social links between the Cradle of Humankind and the contemporary world with a view to healing the seismic severances occasioned by violence, false thinking, war, loss, and dispossession to accomplish an epistemological and psychic sense of wholeness for African collective self"(Osha, 2011, p.35) Nabudere grounds his ideas on some basic assumptions which deserve to be outlined to appreciate howhe derived his options for decolonising knowledge. Nabudere believes (a) that the current western patterns of knowledge has its root in the Greco-Roman world;(b)That this pattern of education finds it root in the Greek epistemology as invented by Greek philosophers and scholars;(c)that this invention is an adulteration of wrong reformulation of the Ethiopian modes of knowledge and learning which emphasized oneness and cosmological wholenessas the inherent nature of knowledge and finally that (d) the option for desirable knowledge design is to retrace the current knowledge industry in favour of this archaeological origins of knowledge. Nabudere holds that the current thinking as emanating from the dichotomous thought ethics of Greek philosophers have created a divided human community and engineered the underlying crisis of thought where dualism has become an enduring method of knowledge. But this dualism can only lead to fragmentation with suppressive and oppressive ideals in the culture of the intellect. Thus there in the need to seek a rational and epistemological wholeness by a unitive culture of thought and this can only be founded and achieved through recourse to the African origins of thought as can be found in Ethiopian tradition of thinking. It is on these grounds that:

> *Afrikology* seeks to retrace the evolution of knowledge and wisdom from its source to the current epistemologies, and to try and situate them in their historical and cultural contexts, especially with a view to establishing a new science for generating and accessing knowledge for sustainable use.(Nabudere,2011:4 as cited in Osha,p.26).

Nabudere's notion of knowledge thus demands retracing knowledge to its human source- that is – the evolution of knowledge from the heart and at the moment that heart defined the direction of the head. This notion of knowledge then amounts to what can lead to trans-disciplinary

universalism that would act as integral and integrating epistemology with unitizing and humanising potential.

III

A Contrast of the Knowledge Potentials of the Ideas of Chinweizu,Kwasi Wiredu and Nabudere in Decolonising African Education.

A reading of Chinweizu and Nabudere would show that both scholars appeal to the ideology of Afrocentricism- that is, African centered paradigm for knowledge production and consumption. In doing this, they appeal heavily to the African past and seek for the application of the resources embedded in this aspect of African life to valourise and rework knowledge in Africa. Here Nabudere appears to have a more rigorous option in the sense that he suggest an epistemology that could overhaul the entire knowledge architecture of modernity. His view is that knowledge emanated from Africa – from the mind of man in Africa-how are actually the progenitors of the human race and by extension the progenitors of thought and knowledge. However through a misreading of the essence of knowledge and a misinterpretation of the goals of knowledge by Greek philosophers who are the ancestors of western knowledge academy knowledge has turned divisive and destructive. Thus we see in Nabudere a thinker who seeks for what can be called a pan-historical review of knowledge in favour of its source as an option for decolonising knwoledge.Thus an educational curriculum emanating from Nabudere would be (i) pan-historical curriculum,(ii) with a transdiscplinary potential and with (iii) trans-historical gains and potentials.

Chinweziu on the other hand seeks to create a parallel knowledge paradigm that will severe and save Africa by positioning the African mind to overcome epistemic conquest. His interest is on African self-liberation irrespective of whether this has any gain for anyone else outside Africa or not. Chinwezu makes no pretence about being singularly focused on black mental liberation and what he does in *Ubuntology* is an extension of same ideas he canvasses in

many of the works of his (Chinweizu 1975,1987,2010,etc).A critical reflection on the *Ubuntology* of Chinweizu would show that he provides grounds for a parallel culture of thought that would lead to a self-defensive form of education. This pattern of education would then lead to retreating the African mind form undue embrace of colonial education. In this process education would stand to defend the idea of ideology of blackism. Thus here we should expect an educational curriculum that favour blacks in a black community. The question of black outside the black community appears ignored by the recommendations implied. Secondly there is the desire to ensure that all knowledge are foregrounded on the ideals and demands of black civilisation and ethos.

On a another note the ideas of Kwasi Wiredu suggest an option that implies a sharper and closer focus to the concepts that have inserted themselves in the curriculums of knowledge device in Africa and an effort to thinks through them and seek an endogenous options to them especially those that do not have any import and meaning within the African thought scheme. From Wiredu's perpective therefore the curriculum that should emerge to decolonise the African mind should be one that harps on the key concepts that have served to distort African thought. Through a rethinking and an overhauling of these concepts then a definitive form of education that can decolonise the African mind can be achieved. This can then play a role in creating the forms of worldview that can create a decolonised attitude among Africans. Wiredu's option finds yet some collaboration in the ideas of Chinweizu who has also harped on the need to cause for an alternative worldview that can negate colonialism .As he puts it:

> A worldview is a cognitive coordinate system (CCS), a framework of concepts which together structure how one sees the world. A CSS is any structure of concepts whereby the flux and chaos of experience is organised, ordered to "make sense"; it imposes a pattern by which reality is perceived and interpreted. Each culture normally supplies its own structure and constantly reinforces a pattern by which reality is perceived and interpreted. (*Ubuntology*, Chinweizu 2004: 19)

Thus in a way we see some striking similarity with Chinweizu. The difference however is that Wiredu engages philosophical concepts for this reason. But Chinweizu does not engage the need for conceptual overhaul even as he recommends as one of the options to be considered for the purposes of decolonisation. On the whole the three scholars discussed in this paper presents some worthy options that can be in the effort to seek the forms of knowledge that can be applied in drafting a curriculum of education that can cause for a decolonised paradigm shift in education in Africa.

Conclusion

The effort in this work has been to explore the options search for a decolonised knowledge and curriculum paradigm in Africa. The work therefore mapped out three options in the effort to provide alternatives for a fresh knowledge paradigm- Afrikology as suggested by Dani Nabudere (2011), Ubuntology as suggested Chinweizu(2008)and Conceptual decolonisation as suggested by Kwasi Wiredu (1995).It is hoped that this work would lead to more options and that by engaging the theoretical options of these scholars more options can be considered on the how to achieve a curriculum where by gaining knowledge through them a secure, sure and autonomous attitude can emerge through the knowledge industry in Africa.

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