

AFROCENTRICITY AND INCLUSION OF AFRICAN HISTORY IN THE HIGHER LEARNING CURRICULA: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND VOICES

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Abstract

Exclusion of African history in the curricula of institutions of higher learning, particularly in the context of Africa, has been a common concern. Central to this concern are questions relating to how African history can add value to the academic formation as well as critical thinking of students. Drawing from qualitative data collected using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Semi-Structured interviews and documentary research, this paper discusses important considerations in the inclusion of the African history in the higher learning curricula. This was done by exploring and examining perceptions as well as, views of students at the University of Botswana relating to African history and higher learning curricula, in the hope of discovering various factors that have contributed to the exclusion of African history in the tertiary education curricula. Educational background of lecturers, lack of adequate African history documentation and globalization were cited as contributing factors towards the current exclusion of African history. Through the lens of Afrocentricity, we argue that African history, narratives and experiences are determinant factors of the future. This is to say that, meaningful contributions to the development and study of Africa should include Africa's own history, narratives, perspectives and interests. Without their preservation, acknowledgement and incorporation into educational institutions for future generations, graduate unemployment perpetuated by inability to contextualize skills, emigration and continued dependence on the west plus a magnified loss of African pride and culture will continue to exist. A rigorous Afrocentric curricula transformation therefore remains an important matter deserving of attention and interrogation among institutions of higher learning in the continent especially Botswana.

Keywords: *Afrocentricity, African history, knowledge, curricula and higher education*

Introduction and Background

Decolonization of education in institutions of higher learning (tertiary education) has grown to take center stage and become a contemporaneous thought with context based education in academic spaces. The popularity of the idea which has expanded in recent years, fashioned a needed cross regional dialogue among some academics and curriculum developers. The sparked conversation prompted a re-evaluation of post-colonial higher education systems and call for an Afrocentric radical curricula transformation in Africa, as a whole. The heightened interest in this reimagining of education has not spared students instead has motorized student movements discouraging continuation of apartheid and colonial era enthused education in countries like South Africa. The #RhodesMustFall movement is an exemplar of the recently birthed student movements. Ahmed (2019) described this movement as a black student led crusade which pursued the desire to decolonize the University of Cape Town and its Eurocentric approach to education and conduct, by confronting institutional racism and patriarchy. The movement followed a series of disruptive and creative tactics which included protesting against the celebratory statue of Cecil John Rhodes- an apartheid tyrant- on campus. The uproar was and still is, but a mere response to the evident need for curricula change and discontinuance of perpetuated effects of a biased and context ignorant overall education system.

Work around radical curricula change through prioritization and emphasis of African knowledge and history in tertiary education is relatively new to the milieu of Botswana. The infancy of interest on the said matter in the country, does not nullify the existence of the need for an Afrocentric education curricula nor does it exclude Botswana's higher education curricula from the clutches of colonial legacy.

This study understood tertiary education curriculum to be, knowledge and skills harnessed from lessons and academic content of a specific program or subject taught and learnt in an institution of higher learning. A curriculum is guided by a set time frame, learning objectives, units and lessons that teachers teach. The tools of assessment used to impart the knowledge and skills of the course include the books, videos, presentations and relevant readings (National Research Council , 2002). Education as a whole, is supposed to be an all-inclusive entity with a variety of sources and aspects of knowledge which are germane to learners, guided by a curriculum that functions as the pinnacle of an effective learning process. As a social entity, education is subject to change and dynamic shifts, as the curricula which guides it as it evolves.

The uprooting of colonialism in Africa was a call to gain back what was lost and wipe almost all traces of colonialism- imposed Eurocentric education systems included- to afford Africans a fresh start. Be that as it may, majority of the continental education systems remain unjustifiably unaltered. For example, in South Africa, higher learning education systems are still racial and class-based, in addition, do not favor black minority students (Chetty & Knaus, 2016). This realization by some scholars caused a debate around the effectiveness of the education system and called into question the relevance of the material taught at universities, in post-colonial Africa. It has been found out that only 15% of the 60% of black students who survive first year eventually complete their studies in South Africa, rendering the education curricula and system significantly ineffective for black students (Le Grange, 2016). Aligning the point to this paper's research area, the University of Botswana was established in 1982. However, from its inception, only in 2007 was a "revised" curriculum introduced and only in 2012 the first and only complete revision of the curricula was achieved (University of Botswana, 2017). The claimed overhaul

curricula revision was exceedingly of Eurocentric standards hence perpetuating the continuance of an African history and knowledge discriminant curricula. In support of the current state of Botswana's higher education, academics like Keagakwa (2016) proclaimed that, every public higher learning institution is forced to operate from a "global space" regardless of its historical basis. In continuation Keagakwa postulated that, shedding off embedded cultural conservatism in these institutions in the country would aid in attracting more international students as a significant contributor to the sector's revenue base. Such opinions would therefore promote and continue the education culture found at UB and other institutions of higher learning that are subject to Eurocentric education.

In appreciation of early literature Turnbull (1963) contended that, through the colonial system, a limited amount of technical training was provided in order to produce cheap semi-skilled labor. It also barred creativity as well as nurturing of curiosity in natives as the assumption was, Africans would compete with- and eventually overthrow- whites if they attained a self (African) conscious and beneficial worldview through education. Besides, in the academic practice of a post-colonial era, African universities seem to have been trapped by past colonial approaches. Mahmood Mamdani, a public intellectual who has dedicated his works towards decolonizing post-colonial universities, has been a critical voice on how the mode of reasoning in the academic sphere has been occupied by a colonial logic. Interrogating this approach, Mamdani (2018, p. 32) argued that "in exporting theory from the Western academy, colonialism brought with it the assumption that theory is the product of Western tradition and that the aim of academies outside the West is to apply it. If the elaboration of theory was a creative act in the West, its application in the colonies became the reverse: a readymade, turnkey project that simply put itself at the disposal of academics and students." The discrepancy between the modern industrial needs and the classroom model of education might have been a result of maintaining the educational approach inherited from the colonial era. As such, reflecting on this discrepancy, David Magang, a former Botswana Cabinet Minister, expressed that, the education system in Botswana- from the basic education level to tertiary education- more or less aids and abides the poor training of graduates who are not industry ready (Magang, 2015). The exclusion of Afrocentric thought in schools has managed to enable the mass production of increasingly context irrelevant and redundant graduates who contribute minutely to the country's economy therefore stagnating the country's development and growth to a point. Despite achieving impressive records of economic growth, "Botswana continues to grapple with the challenge of high and persistent levels of unemployment" (UNFPA, 2018). The gradual increase of youth unemployment in Botswana can be understood to be one of the evidences of the disconnections that exist between the current education system, supporting curriculum, work industry and students/graduates. According to the United Nations Population Fund report (2018), the current education system is not well adapted to the labor market and sufficient for employment. From 2007 to 2017, the youth unemployment rate in Botswana has increased from 32.25% to 35.6% (Statista, 2018).

Too few African graduates gain the skills they need to find work in the sub-Saharan region, which is infested with unemployable graduates despite a doubled enrolment rate in universities in 2010 (Going Global, 2014). Resources injected into education as a result become wasted and development of the country (and continent) is repressed. Bridget Compton of Britain's Department of International Development upheld the view that, producing university graduates with degrees and skills that have limited practical use in Africa's job markets, constitutes a massive waste of time and money (Kigotho, 2015). It is to be noted that, "Botswana spends" a cumulated amount of 7.2% of its GDP on education"

(UNICEF, 2017) and such expenditure/investment should be meaningful. With an education system and curriculum that prioritizes on knowledge about the continents' problems and their histories, meaningful investment by the country can be tracked and achieved.

Literature continues to suggest that, African history and knowledge in the tertiary education curricula are ominously excluded. Diouf (2012) emphasized that, Africa's knowledge and history have been purposefully forgotten and disregarded in the formulation of archival records that serve as foundations of education and evidence for what is passed as history today. The curriculum was, unfortunately, created from such sources of knowledge which do not accurately account for African history, narratives, knowledge and experience. A decolonized/Afrocentric gaze has the potential to amplify thought processing and understanding in the education of an African student- living in the African continent to solve African problems. Nwanosike & Onyije (2011) observed that, the education system imposed on Africans during the colonial era was a by-product of colonization where the colonizing nation implemented its own form of schooling within their colonies so as to accomplish their purpose. Furthermore, the system was sought to instill a sense of difference towards all that was European and Capitalist. Due to such events, African students were and still are, deprived of an opportunity to learn substantially about other aspects of history and knowledge, specifically their own, which is relevant for their unique contexts. A trickle-down effect from the education attained from such systems is that, it compromises pupils' knowledge capacity and adjustability of skills learnt to solve their immediate political, social, economic and environmental problems. An Afrocentric syllabi encouraging afro-optimism would aid in filling the gaps created by the still upheld education system and flawed curriculum of the colonial era.

Overall, in this study we discuss important considerations in the inclusion of African history in the higher learning curricula. To achieve this, we examine perceptions and views of students relating to African history and higher learning curricula, in the hope of discovering various factors that have contributed to the exclusion of African history in the tertiary education curricula. The specific objectives of the study were to; identify the possible factors students perceive as contributory to the exclusion of African history in the education curricula, capture students' understanding of the process of exclusion of African knowledge from the syllabi, interrogate students' perceived effects resulting from the exclusion of African knowledge and history in the education system and lastly to analyze students' expectations of a relevant curriculum in an African university.

Theoretical Framework

Our main argument for inclusion of African history and knowledge in the higher education curricula is informed by the conceptual framework of Afrocentricity. The notion of Afrocentricity emerged as an innovative concept in the 1950's which was later popularized and institutionalized within the scholarly circle over three decades ago (Chawane, 2016). The main purpose of its creators and proponents is, "to liberate the research and study of African peoples from the hegemony of Eurocentric scholarship, whose concepts, history, and traditions have been the absolute yardsticks against which all other cultures are evaluated" (Abarry, 1990, p. 123). Through the hegemony of Eurocentric scholarship, African history is not only misrepresented; it is also dislocated. While the paradigm itself has been considered as part of the postcolonial movement of African scholarship, scholars are generally in agreement that Afrocentricity involves re-conceptualizing Africa's social, cultural and historical reality.

Or as argued by the principal theorist of Afrocentricity Molefi Kete Asante (2015) who states that, Afrocentricity is “a paradigm that suggests all discourse about African people should be grounded in the centrality of Africans in their own narratives.” This then means that any meaningful contribution to the development and study of Africa should have Africa’s own narratives, values, perspectives and interests as the center.

Although as a paradigm Afrocentricity has been criticized for having an ideological baggage, however, Midas Chawane (2016) suggests that, as a theory Afrocentricity maintains a number of intellectually stimulating theoretical propositions that inform the uniqueness of Afrocentric epistemology. First, African knowledge and history have been preoccupied by a European model of knowledge and history. As such, any attempt to articulate a local, native and contextual wisdom or tradition has to refer to a European concept, context, text and thinker. The development of Afrocentric epistemology therefore requires transformative decolonization of the mind and African history. Secondly, interpretation of African history, narrative and experience within a Eurocentric mindset has given birth to racism through which Africa is constantly undermined based on the view that it has made no contribution to the world. As such, racism has been invented to justify oppression. Afrocentric epistemology should therefore take into account race as central to the study of African history and an issue in African historiography. Third, since African civilization was intentionally destroyed, the study of Africa and its people requires a new and distinct approach rooted in the acknowledgement that there is an African view of the world and in a distinct perspective of African people as subjects of historical experiences. Any study of African history should involve reopening, “the discussion on everything from race theory, ancient civilizations, colonial and post-colonial, African and European personalities and dislocation in the writing of African authors...” (Chawane, 2016, p. 92). Based on these propositions, having an Afrocentric curriculum would mean placing students “within the context of familiar cultural and social references from their own historical settings” (Asante, 1991, p. 28).

Methodology

Data analyzed in this study stem from an undergraduate final year research project of the first author, funded by the Department of Tertiary Education Funding (DTEF) of Botswana and supervised by the second author. Fieldwork for the study took place between February and April 2018. The study employed a qualitative research approach. This approach was deemed appropriate for this study because qualitative research generally focuses on uncovering socio-cultural meaning expressed through feelings and words (such as, perceptions and voices of students) which cannot be adequately enumerated. Moreover in qualitative research, data are normally viewed as “representations of human acts and utterances” (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 365). By analyzing qualitative data, researchers aim at discovering how meanings are attached to various human acts and verbal expressions. Based on the nature of our research objectives, multiple data collection methods were used. This strategy is known as triangulation of results that “allows the researcher to view a particular point in research from more than one perspective” (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 159). Adopting this strategy, the data for this study were collected using three related methods: first, two sessions of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with eight students in each session; second, semi-structured interviews with eight student interviewees; third, documentary research of scholarly papers focusing on African history in tertiary education curriculum. Participants in the FGDs and semi-structured interviews were selected using the criteria of convenient and snowball sampling, respectively. Lavrakas (2008) defines convenient sampling method as, a type of nonprobability sampling

in which people are sampled simply because they are "convenient" or "available" sources of data for researchers. As for snowball sampling, Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao (2004) define it as, a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who are then used to identify future subjects or participants of a study. These could be from the initial subject's pool of acquaintances.

Analysis and Discussion

Throughout our data analysis, four related themes emerged. These include: factors contributing to the exclusion of African history in the education curricula, process of exclusion of African knowledge, effects of exclusion of African history and knowledge and lastly, expectations of a relevant curriculum in an African university. These identified themes will guide our analysis and discussion below.

Factors contributing to the exclusion of African history in the education curricula

Three main contributing factors were identified in this study: educational background of lecturers, lack of adequate African history documentation as well as globalization and dependence on the West. This paper will expand on and provide explanations for each of the findings.

Educational background of lecturers

Educators, especially those at higher learning institutions, play a significant role in shaping and molding one's world view, perspective and overall education experience. In a study investigating efficacy of lecturers, Long, Ibrahim, & Kowang (2013) found out that, student education achievement is heavily influenced by lecturer quality and manner in which they deliver content to students, than by a student's sole individual characteristics. Teaching and learning exist in a symbiotic vacuum; each has the capability to elicit change in another. The manner in which a lecturer imparts course content and determines the direction of content focus, shapes the attitudes of students towards the course material and possibly overall education. Metzler and Woessmann (2012) discovered that, the teaching quality is directly related to the students' achievement hence it is imperious for lecturers to develop strong teaching competencies in order to deliver quality teaching. Teaching competencies in regards to this study would include the ability to incorporate African history and knowledge into the curricula.

It is to be understood that Botswana has limited post graduate opportunities and most lecturers in local academic institutions obtained their post graduate qualifications abroad, if not, it was through the same- in scrutiny- tertiary education system. One of this study's interviewees said "...most of my Batswana lecturers attained their degrees and Masters qualifications abroad and so, the teaching methods they tend to use are those that are of the west like in the institutions they attended as students." This then reflects the belief that the educational background (and experience) of the lecturer contributes to the manner in which they teach material and give focus of the content taught. The specificity of the words "Batswana lecturers" in the statement reflects the student's belief in the involvement of our very own lecturers in the disregard for emphasis of their own context when teaching students. They are seen to employ western oriented teaching strategies instead of those they could create to fit the context. Although ethically queried, Jane Elliott's Blue/Brown Eyes Exercise delineated in her *A Collar in My Pocket: The Blue Eyes Brown Eyes Exercise* book is a great example of how educators can contextualize content and information as means to impart knowledge to students. The experiment was intended to explain racism and the meaning of discrimination in the U.S.A. following Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's passing in 1968 to a third grade class using the students as the subjects' of the experiment and central to the explanation

(Elliott, 2016). The class was divided into two groups using the children's eye color (brown and blue); and the pupils with brown eyes were told they were smarter, faster and better than those with blue eyes. Elliot managed to apply her teaching skills to the environment of a third grade class in a manner in which they could understand what racism was albeit the method used was scientifically aided. Positioning relativity as paramount to teaching is an element which local educators can learn to adopt and apply in pushing for a content appreciative curriculum.

The above mentioned respondent elucidated further their stance on the matter to state that, some of her lecturers were not of African origin and so, African history or knowledge would not be as important to them as it may be to her. The absence of African history and knowledge is therefore peddled and perpetuated by the educator's background as there is lack of appreciation of African history and knowledge abroad hence less excitement is cultivated in soon-to-be lecturers via current lecturers. Without motivated Afrocentric lecturers, there is a continued absence of Afrocentricity in and less advocacy for an Afrocentric education curriculum.

During a discussion on decolonization of education curricula in South Africa, one student from the University of Johannesburg highlighted that, for curriculum to be decolonized in South Africa, there is need to decolonize the society first (African News Agency, 2016). Lecturers who overemphasize western methods of teaching and content over that of Africa as a whole- in an African institution- are but products of colonized societies that are in need of decolonization. This was a recurrent theme across the sampled population of this study.

Lack of adequate African history documentation

Africa as a continent is one of the most underappreciated and under documented societies in the world. The history and narrative of Africa is usually told and determined by her encounters with the west. As it stands today, the accuracy of most "African history" available is questionable. Smith & MacEachern (2017) in support of the mentioned views have stated that, the African continent has a past; however, knowledge of this past is partial, filtered and sometimes biased. This thought was reiterated by most respondents of this study and so, it is recognized as a contributory factor to the exclusion of African history in the curriculum. A final year Bachelor of Science Environmental Health student participant in one of the interviews indicated that, Africans do not have sufficient historic material as points of reference in regards to pre-colonial Botswana or Africa entirely. He highlighted the prospect reality that, even if one was prompted to change the status quo, they would not know where to start looking because of the under documentation and discrepancies in historical facts that present as problems that prohibit his desired actions. Curtin (1960) reissued Royal Oliver's directive on the importance of African history being African centered by stating that, African history from the archives that exist possess the history of European interests in Africa rather than Africa alone. This serves as a justification of the opinion that African history and knowledge is under documented hence presenting as a factor of exclusion. This is viewed from the standpoint that education systems are conjured and constructed from historical archives that give foundation to syllabuses and curricula.

"Despite my course of study, I am a person who believes in the use of traditional herbs and medicine- which were and still are useful to us; I would like to have been taught more about them in

school to understand what we did before the white man's medicine and about herbs like *Monepenepe*" lamented one of the research participants- a final year Radiation and Health Physics student. *Monepenepe* is a widespread shrub, scientifically known as "Cassia abbrevata" that grows from Somalia to South Africa with important medicinal properties utilized to treat different ailments in people (Mojeremane, Legwaila, Mogotsi, & Tshwenyane, 2005). Education is a tool that can and should be used for archiving material and information for future use and reference. The experiences and wishes communicated by students in UB about education on traditional knowledge systems, is a clear depiction of the actual present practice of disregard of important elements of indigenous knowledge within the education curricula. The student's lamentation reflects Diouf (2012) concern of, the deliberate disregard of Africa's history and knowledge in the education systems.

Globalization and dependence on the West

Globalization and development are concepts introduced by the west to Africa. The magnitude to which Africans understand and attempt to contextualize the terms is in the standards of the west. Globalization in this study was understood to be the spread of worldwide practices, relations, consciousness and organization of social life (Ritzer, 2007, p. 4). It is primarily focused on developing countries' uptake of western culture and practices. Ritzer (2010) argues as per the cultural convergence theory that, globalization pushes for homogeneity and it is a tool used to spread and prompt adoption of western culture by developing countries. He viewed globalization as western cultural imperialism. A study on the decolonization of Pacific studies conducted by Konai Helu Thaman (2003) asserted that, decolonizing Pacific studies is important because it is about recognizing that today, globalization, however defined, concerns the global spread of mainly Anglo-American knowledge, values and practices, rather than indigenous knowledge and wisdom.

In one of this study's FGD's a third year participant majoring in English and Sociology revealed that, she was of the opinion that Africans view development in accordance to the standards of the west hence, they are conditioned to see African history and knowledge as backward. A possible justification for the relegation and perpetuated lack of appreciation of Africanity and minority cultural consciousness by education systems is that, liberation through conscious education has the potential to be a nuclear arsenal to the aforementioned imperialism hence an anathema to the west. In continuation she highlighted that, Africans are dependent on the west for everything- education included- in the process marginalizing the significance and importance of their own forms of education an example being, initiation schools. In support of her stance, another participant in the same FGD session interjected with his opinion by proclaiming that "Africans, particularly Batswana, lack pride in and intentionally exclude their own culture to be accepted by the world and fit into the global village- which is deemed civilized and developed by Eurocentric and Americocentric standards."

The thirst that accompanies the desire to resemble the west contributes to the exclusion of African history in the curricula. Aoki (1999) pointed out that, the current curricula in universities is hidden curricula, which are what students learn about the dominant culture and what values it reproduces and not about their own history. Within the framework of discourse analysis, colonialism and globalization are processes of existing symbolic violence that poses serious threat to the call for a unified African-type curriculum framework (Okeke, 2010).

Educators/lecturers are part of the globalization ripple effect. They are not only influenced by their own educational backgrounds, but are also subjugated to other confounding variables from globalization, which play a role in the content taught in schools, for example economic factors that are at a national scale. Woolman (2001) revealed that, educators attempting to relate school programs to perceived national needs, these including African history and knowledge, face forces of economism, which influences the education policy and system in favor of those with the high economic hand. This incites that the economically dominant (the west in this case) determine the focus of education to ensure continued dominance. One of the interviewees of this study stated that "...our dependence *mo makgoeng le yone* (translates to "on the whites also") has a role to play in this exclusion, taking Botswana as an example, almost on everything important, health and military, we depend on America (USA) meaning that America can have a say in our affairs *akere ba investile* (translates to "because they have invested") and so they control us. When they say jump all we have to ask is how high Master, otherwise we are cut off and become economically crippled and so, we must be taught American things." This speaks to the economic dependence of developing countries (especially African states) on developed countries and how the relationship through globalization is domineered by one party. Afrocentric education curricula has potential to curb such self-inflicted inhibitions as the mindset would be shifted to create one that triggers self (African) belief for African progress and less dependence on the west. Adoption and infusion of black consciousness into the development of the curricula would purvey Africa the ability to break free from the chains of globalization promoted by mental enslavement and colonization. Black Consciousness is "an attitude of mind and a way of life whose basic tenet is that Black people must reject all value systems that reduce their basic human dignity; and seek to incapacitate them as well as their potential to progress their own country and people" (Ranwedzi, 1976). Providing evidence to what emancipation of the mind can manufacture, Onwumere & Egbulonu (2014) highlighted that, independence of some African states was sponsored and driven by Negritude- a cultural movement of self-affirmation by black people premised on pan-Africanism and black consciousness. Hence, an Africanized curriculum has the potential to evoke within learners, "this self-empowering, vibrant, Reconstructionist worldview that emphasizes the budding role of black initiative in articulating the power of the powerless" (Moodley, 1991).

The process of exclusion of African knowledge from the syllabus

The first and only blanket finding of this study was in regards to the process of exclusion of African history and knowledge from the academic syllabus. The debate was centered on whether the exclusion followed a deliberate systematic process or was an act of accidental continuation of an Afrocentric discriminant inherited curricula.

An understanding that resonated with all participants of this study was that, there was no direct and deliberate process of exclusion of African history and knowledge from the syllabi in Botswana. Participants in one of the FGD sessions strongly asserted that, the manner of exclusion in the syllabi was a mere result of continued inherited education system and culture. An additional seconding of the collectives' position, two participants from the business and medicine faculties respectively, highlighted that, 'modern education' was acquired from the colonial era and so, it never had any purpose or reason to appreciate and acknowledge African knowledge systems. Therefore, post-colonial Botswana continued with a flawed system and curricula that was useless to the context. The reasons pertaining to why the colonial syllabi is continued were unfortunately not pondered upon by respondents of this study. One of this study's interview respondents suggested that, institutional racism and oppressive systems like Apartheid served as foundations of the establishment of the sustained processes of exclusion in countries

like South Africa. Although Botswana did not go through a rigorous and robust apartheid era nor does it have amplified traces of institutional racism that perpetuate the dominance of Eurocentric education; it is to be noted that, exclusion of African history in the tertiary education curricula is much of a problem in South Africa as it is in Botswana. Mbembe (2016) argues that, continuation of syllabi designed to meet the needs of colonization and apartheid in the liberation era contributes as a factor (herein procedure) to the exclusion hence a change in curricula is a needed. An Afrocentric curriculum would serve as a solution to this fact as it would, incapacitate the subliminally continued processes of exclusion by driving for inclusion and emphasis. In countries like Zimbabwe, however, the process of exclusion of indigenous knowledge that is still continued to this day can be attributed to issues of power and control by the state. Shizha & Kariwo (2011) stated that, the school curriculum embodied the values, norms, objectives, interests, priorities and directions of the State and the elite (colonizers). The curriculum is then viewed as a highly contested and politically charged coliseum which functions to maintain the colonial order of dependency and elitism (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011). Reforming inherited educational systems to include indigenous knowledge therefore presents as a power relations and status quo threatening exercise. Despite this factor, reconstruction of a beneficial curriculum should be advocated for and be achieved.

Effects resulting from the exclusion of African knowledge and history in the education system

This study uncovered several effects resulting from the exclusion of African history in the education system. These, as they will be discussed further below, include: Loss of African culture and pride, emigration as well as perpetuated dependence on the west by Africa and lastly, the inability to contextualize skills learnt by students.

Loss of African culture and pride

Among African millennials, there is significant lack of appreciation and authentic cultural pride, even at continental level. Colonization and black oppression especially intra continent, has managed to white wash today's generation so much so that, they are debilitated when attempting to cultivate cultural heritage and pride. The African trend that is popular today and consumed by the world is a bastardized, condescending, unoriginal and highly commercialized version of African history. It is propagated and circulated by the west, which then destroys the true African narrative. In a study focused on the decolonization of theological education in Africa, Hadebe (2017) argued in support of the previous sentiments that, commodification of higher education is a global phenomenon that has reduced education into a product that serves the interests of global capitalism and maintains the hegemony of western knowledge. This reality is caused and perpetuated by exclusion of African history from the education curricula hence "an Africanized curriculum constitutes resistance to commodification" (Hadebe, 2017, p. 1).

Busia (1964) stated that, several Africans who experienced colonial education reported that, it had the effect of undermining traditional societies. Through institutions that stand on colonial curricula, the sense of honor and delight in a learner's identity and consciousness of who they are as an African is either, never established or the education system ridicules and debases the Afrocentric thought and history considerably that it disintegrates in students, to leave a void to be filled with Eurocentric thought. To maintain their upper hand, the west, through the education system, labels African culture backward and in some instances barbaric hence inhibiting cultural pride and interest in African students. This is echoed by one of the interviewees' statement of "...kana re a latlhega, ke one mathata one a o, ga re itse kwa re go

yang le kwa re go tswang ntateng ya sekolo sa makgoa” translated “we are losing ourselves (identity) and that is the problem, we do not know where we are going and coming from because of the whites’ school.”

African communities have been known to pass down indigenous knowledge and cultural pride, from one generation to the next through the word of mouth which is known and referred to as oral traditions. However, the introduction of the Eurocentric education system, barred the facilitation of the knowledge transfer and so, history, knowledge and pride dies off with the older generation. In continuation, an avowal view from Busia (1964) was that, colonial education introduced an individualistic western value system that was foreign to African culture and isolated students from their local communities. In the view of one of the interviewees of this study, there is no preservation of African culture by the education system, which could be solved via incorporation of accurate and dense (pre and post-colonial era) African history in accordance to the different disciplines of the university. This statement advocated for an Afrocentric curricula. In efforts to decolonize the pacific studies Thaman (2003) indicated that, western-derived educational developments have destroyed important aspects of Oceanic cultures, including languages, as well as social, political, and economic structures. Her finding on Oceania, evidences and signposts the loss of culture as caused by Eurocentric/ western education. This is thus reflected upon the context of Africa and its indigenous knowledge systems that are not incorporated into the curricula and have since began to disappear.

Emigration and perpetuated dependence on the west

Knowing neither how to adequately perform tasks in an Afrocentric manner nor how they were executed in the past, emigration and dependence on the west to solve continental problems increases. For example, Eastwood et al. (2005) indicated that, in the sub-Saharan region only 24 of the 47 countries have only one medical school; 11 with no medical school at all. The study continued to highlight, a cumulative amount of 5880 of UK work permits in 2003 were approved for health and medical personnel from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Nigeria. With the many health problems the Sub Saharan region is faced with, one would think employment of health professionals would be high and there would be no need for them to emigrate. The number of emigrants as presented by Eastwood et al reflects further that Africa’s dependence on the west is further perpetuated by factors like employment which, in this paper’s view, is heavily influenced by the inadequate capacitation of students premised on context based knowledge and education. Furthermore, scholars like Adepoju (2011) argue that, with a fertility rate that increases at 2.8 % per year the sub-Saharan region requires an estimated 7.5 million new jobs to stabilize employment however regional youth unemployment- increasingly among graduates- stands at 18-50 % consequently creating a pool of ready-to-relocate, destitute and desperate Africans (Batswana included).

Oucho, Campbell, & Mukamaambo (2000) stated that, Batswana had an emigration potential of a cumulated 41%. The previously mentioned Environmental Health student participant alluded to desire to emigrate to “better countries” for “better pay.” He went on to explain the (professional) comfort in relocating by saying, “in all honesty, it is easier for me to solve a western country’s water problem than it is to solve a water crisis here at home; We are not even taught things as simple as *setswana* (traditional) ways of finding water and drill a borehole.” This is then seen as a mirror image of how the curricula and education system, as a whole, creates and produces graduates who are experts on the west than their own context as such corroborating the rates and patterns of migration. The vaccum created by emigration leaves home countries understaffed and professionally vulnerable with destination countries economically

thriving due to such movement. Dustmann & Frattini (2014) validate the latter statement by stating that, immigration has positive fiscal contribution in the destination countries than home countries.

One of this study's interviewees who was a fourth year medicine student made reference to the reality that, without having learnt anything substantive about African medicine history or knowledge, he possesses limited knowledge on ways to solve a problem presenting and manifesting in patients that has traditional origins. He was of the view that, had there been an emphasis on learning more of and about African medicine in conjunction with contemporary medicine in the tertiary education institutions, they (medicine students) would not be limited to western solutions when attempting to solve a problem, "we would be experts of our own societies and people." An Afrocentric curricula has the potential to afford students ultimately the country and continent different and context relatable alternatives to solving problems. The narrowmindedness caused by western education curricula concurrently increases and contributes to the dependency of Africa on the west while eroding our own beneficial knowledge systems as "most learning that occurred in pre-colonial Africa was necessitated to meet the exigencies of the society" (Mosweunyane, 2013).

The understanding this paper puts forth through this finding is that, as more African professionals move to the western countries, Africa remains underdeveloped, stagnated and continuously dependent on the west. The presence of Africa centered institutions with Afrocentric/context based syllabuses to counter the exclusion of African history in the education system would reduce of the need for professionals to emigrate and continued Africa's dependence.

Inability to contextualize skills learnt by students

Skills learnt through an education system that does not appreciate the context can be rendered useless as they do not yield solutions to problems in the immediate environment of students but give solutions to a far and/or past society. Thaman (2003) specified that, in today's world, a reflection on the past helps shape the future, particularly, those whose identities are closely linked to their places of origin. In continuance Thaman argued that, there is need to interrogate the images and the representations that communities have inherited or are creating in beneficence of the region. The statements speak to the importance of contextualization of skills through learning history. One of the interview respondents of this study stated that, the lack of contextualization and continued emphasis of western culture creates a gap in knowledge between the school and the field of practice. He reported that, when on attachment what he learnt in class was insignificantly useful if not completely useless in the field because he was taught about western societies which are distinctly different from local societies. The engagement with other respondents in one of the FGD sessions revealed that, had there been emphasis on the context, students and graduates would effectively be able to contextualize and apply the skills learnt in class at the field. African history would serve as the foundation for understanding the context they live in hence enabling contextualization.

Expectations of relevant curriculum in an African university

This study probed to understand the students' position and expectations on what they thought a relevant curriculum of an African institution of higher learning, like UB, should include/emphasize. The expectations amassed to the following: promotion of relatable information, increased Afrocentric world perspective and emphasis on the practical aspect of education.

Promotion of reliable information

An African University should be imparting knowledge that is reliable to the continent's context. Through the education syllabus and curriculum, learners should be able to relate to and identify with the course content and the context which they are to apply the skills learnt. Foreign concepts that are not thinned and altered to fit the classroom, present as a challenge in comprehension to some students. This study uncovered that curriculum reliability as well as inclusion and emphasis of African history and knowledge could help bridge the gap in question. An interviewee mentioned that, "an understanding of history and knowledge of the context is very important to how we relate to our immediate environment as prospective professionals; it is for us to effectively apply our skills". He went on to liken education curricula to a dress design in a dressmaker's store. The dress design is altered to the body type and preference of the customer; it must have an allowance to cater for possible shrinkage or increase of the body. The essence of such an expression was to highlight that the skill is important but it becomes felicitous if it is applicable to the context. A context's history and knowledge is what the dress design is to the customer, it makes sense to the customer and their intention of expression. Northrup (2001) indicated that students are expected to be more satisfied if the course materials are relevant, useful and involves real life examples, facts, and cases. Due to technological advancements and the evolution of development thus far, it is becoming apparent that Africa cannot regress to use traditional knowledge systems in education today. The suited alternative as argued by Mosweunyane (2013) would be, to generate new continental perspectives and relevant information by encouraging African scholars' intra continent to salvage what is left of the African knowledge systems through conducting research.

Increased Afrocentric world perspective

Nurturing an African worldview in the curricula of higher learning institutions has the potential of broadening the perspective of African students, given that absorption and application of skills acquired from tertiary institutions generally influence the productivity in the field of work. In an envisioned response to the proposed initiation of African-centered schools in the United States of America, The Uhuru Collective pamphlet (2018) highlighted that, African centered schools would produce full graduates, in possession of a broad cultural intelligence which is useful in all aspects of education. It continued to state that, that kind of intelligence is also highly sought after in post-secondary education in the world of work. A Geology third year student in one of the FGD sessions stated that, "we have been programmed and still are getting programmed to think like the white man in America and UK; we need to increase African ways of thinking and doing things, a curriculum in an African institution like UB should be more Afrocentric to promote our way of doing things in our societies." To validate the importance of Afrocentric curricula as mentioned by this study's participant, Vann & Kunjufu (1993) confirm that, a predominantly Eurocentric curriculum will not and does not adequately prepare students for a successful future in a multicultural world. In addition, they stated that an Afrocentric, multicultural curriculum is beneficial to both white and African-American students, because both would learn that all cultures have made outstanding contributions to the world and it would embrace the different perspectives of many cultures.

Emphasis on practical aspect of education

Although this study was fixated on exclusion (and inclusion) of African history and knowledge in the curricula and was not a general inquiry on education, an additional finding was uncovered. This finding was reflected in majority of the interviews conducted. The opinion that, there was limited and in some instances a lack of practical courses in the different disciplines that were represented in this study within the University of Botswana, was highlighted. A relevant curriculum according to the students would include and emphasize the practical aspect of a discipline. The less emphasis on practical aspects and more emphasis on the theoretical aspect create a problem of adaptation at the work place. It is worth noting that, Mosweunyane (2013) stated that, pre-colonial African education combined both intellectual and manual labor which gave students a learning balance and caused the teachers to impart skills that were put to immediate use. The call for more hands on curricula features as communicated by students reflects the gaps in western education systems created by the disregard of indigenous knowledge and education systems.

For those who go on internship as part of the program requirements revealed that the duration allocated for attachment was too short to learn anything essential. One of the interviewees reflected on this point by saying, “The three months we are given for attachment in the four years of my degree to practice what I learnt in class on the field is not enough. The practical side should be as important as the theoretical side; I would want it to be a 50/50.” This observation speaks not only to the fact that the curricula in UB lack an Afrocentric element but also to another important facet when it comes to job training. The practical aspect helps in facilitating a smooth transition from classroom to the work field. This prompted a call for the re-evaluation of the entire curricula not only for the purposes of including more African history but other imperative aspects as highlighted.

Conclusion

This study suggests that education background of lecturers, globalization and lack of documentation are some of the contributing factors towards the exclusion of African history and knowledge from the curricula. It can be said with confidence that our higher education system and supporting curricula in Botswana has room for improvement and transformation especially in regards to African history and knowledge. An appreciation of the significance of history and self-knowledge, as Africans, is needed in understanding-to-solve continental problems. History is a determinant of the future; without its preservation, acknowledgement and incorporation into social institutions like education for future generations, graduate unemployment perpetuated by inability to contextualize skills, emigration and continued dependence on the west plus a magnified loss of African culture and pride will become persistent effects turned problems as highlighted by this study.

The literature brought forth by the analysis of data, reflected that, the issues raised existed on broader and global scales and not just within the confines of the University of Botswana. This study observed that, the process of exclusion of African history and knowledge in higher education curricula was inadvertently carried out and continued to exist in various forms. A rigorous curricula transformation remains an important matter deserving of attention and interrogation in Botswana. A curriculum that promotes relevant and relatable information, has the potential to increase Afrocentric perspectives and puts a great emphasis on the practical aspects was found out by this study as expectations students had of relevant curricula. Such curricula have the capability to graduate and produce seasoned students and

professionals. These graduates ultimately would help catapult Botswana and Africa as a continent to the great heights of development through self-sustained ways of solving the problems.

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