




Chapter 2

Academic Imperialism: Colonial Pedagogy and Africa's Development

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Introduction

The scramble and partitioning of Africa through the instrumentality of The Berlin Conference of 1884 – 1885, established unequal power relations between Europe and the African continent demonstrated through underdevelopment, de-culturation and de-industrialisation of Africa (Amin, 1977; Rodney, 1972). The decolonisation and the attainment of political independence from the mid-1950s was seen as a landmark and freedom of the continent from foreign control. By 1977, 50 African countries had gained independence from European colonial powers as sovereign states. However, decolonisation coincided with the Cold War rivalry between the United States (US) and the defunct Soviet Union. The foreign policy of the US was primarily concerned with the 'containment' of communism within its borders and the recruitment of client states became the major goal of the superpowers.

To achieve these objectives, Western Social Science scholarship was weaponised in the struggle against communism as Western episteme became a tool in promoting the interests of capitalism in the developing nations by propagating capitalist values and serving capitalist interests. This chapter therefore focuses on the role of academic imperialism in the propagation of Western interest; and seeks to answer two interrelated questions: How do misconceptions of Africa still persist since



the end of colonial rule? How do Western episteme construct social identities and maintain unequal power relations? The chapter is divided into five parts. First, I highlight the theory on intellectual imperialism. Second, I evaluate colonial episteme and power relations. Third, I review the role of Western episteme and academic imperialism during the Cold War competition, and the role of colonial pedagogy, theories of modernisation and neoliberal policies and ideologies in reproducing a misconceived understanding of Africa's development. Fourth, I espouse the need for decolonising the academic space. The final part concludes the chapter with recommendations.

Intellectual imperialism

This section elaborates on the “theory of intellectual imperialism”, popularised by Alatas (2000). He offers an interesting insight that the political and economic structure of imperialism generated a parallel structure in the way of thinking of the subjugated people, which is the product of intellectual imperialism. While the classic definition of ‘imperialism’ refers to the subjugation of people for the benefit of the dominant group in the political, economic, and social cultural spheres, intellectual imperialism refers to domination in their way of thinking (Alatas, 2000). This theory is premised on the existence of an intellectual division of labour, which places the Global North as the Centre of scientific knowledge and discovery, upon which valid knowledge flows to the South and the rest of the world (Hountondji, 1997). In this uneven division of labour, Africa (in particular and the Global South in general) exists as sites for hunting and gathering of raw data (Hountondji, 2002). Europe and North America remain the key sites of professional processing of data for the purposes of formulation of social theories. These theories are then disseminated and consumed in Africa and other developing countries of the South. What are considered to be prestigious and international peer-reviewed journals that easily earn African scholars’ recognition and promotion are based in Europe and North America. The concept of academic imperialism was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s to describe the economic, political and cultural forces

which produce uneven development of academic disciplines and social research in the newly independent societies in both Latin America and Africa (Sanghera et al., 2007). Intellectual imperialism creates power dynamics inherent in knowledge production, dissemination and validation. It thus involves the imposition of Western ideas, theories, and methods as the sole legitimate forms of knowledge, marginalising indigenous and local knowledge systems, which exacerbates the erasure of diverse epistemologies and the suppression of non-Western-centric perspectives.

Since education is a *sine qua non* of development, it provides the milieu in the conceptualisation of academic imperialism as a variable of intellectual imperialism; wherein, academic imperialism pays particular attention on unequal power relations within academia, intellectual imperialism includes it and goes beyond the scope of academic institutions, involving all forms of mental domination, resulting from direct imperialism or indirect control originating from imperialism. In the colonial era, the colonialists established academic systems in their colonies that reinforced misconceptions of Africa. In the contemporary era, Western-centric academic systems have often marginalised non-Western perspectives, perpetuating unequal power relations. The production and circulation of knowledge perpetuate metropolitan dominance and peripheral marginality in Social Science (Phiri, 2021; Connell, 2008). Intellectual imperialism midwived academic dependency as the education system of non-Western scholars, including curricula, evaluation process and the like, are dependent on the Western education system. This creates an asymmetric power relationship where Western scholarship often determines the research agendas, methodologies and publishing norms. The stock and flow of knowledge, thinking process, academic information and orientation, and also the dimensions of Africa's problems and the suggestions for their possible solutions are based on western theories and journals published by a few multinational publishing companies (Ghosh, 2001). These asymmetric power relations perpetuate misconceptions in order to maintain the international status quo.

The literature on imperialism is prolific and has garnered much interest in the academic community leading to much intellectual debate. Bracking and Harrison (2003) argue that the most incisive way of using the notion of imperialism is to maintain a strong sense of historical location and to understand the contours of economic and political intervention as part of that historical process, which is the couplet that makes the notion of imperialism a useful starting point to understand Africa's global relations; structures of inequality reproduced through a capitalist system of both political and economic power. This is corroborated in Okon and Ojakorotu (2018), that imperialism is not restricted to the economic sphere alone which is characterised by capitalist expansion, but it is demonstrated in the economic, politico-military and social cultural sphere and it is manifested by a subordination of countries and people that help to maintain a relationship of unequal exchange. The subordination may be military, economic, political, cultural or intellectual and even some combination of these.

Colonial Episteme, Social identities and Power relations

Hard power was corollary in the domination of the African continent under the transatlantic slave trade as well as its eventual colonisation, while soft power was the instrument of entrenching the values of the colonial empire and these required European-style education in the territories that they colonised (Bolt & Bezemer, 2008:13). Africans had their own system and history of education, but this changed with the incursion by missionaries, educators as well as conquest and colonialism (Malisa & Missedja, 2019). The drivers for colonial educational policy depended on what the colonialists wanted. They needed to create African Christians or African workers that would be more useful on the land and contented tradesmen or educated subjects who would maintain the status quo and mirror Westernisation (Lugard, 1922) or be assimilated in the case of the French colonialism. This policy influenced the way and manner that pedagogical instructions and curriculum were designed by multiple European actors at different historical phases. While

the emphasis was on industrial education, in reality the major design of the curriculum was based on vocational trades or skills and were taught from a colonial perspective, even from elementary education (Malisa & Missedja, 2019).

The major aim of British colonial schooling was to provide Africans with some minimal level of education, and to build administrative capabilities of traditional chiefs (Bolt & Bezemer, 2008:15). However, education was not designed to empower and integrate the Africans into the ruling colonial administration. Since the British wished to avoid an indigenous educated elite, colonial officials discouraged general education beyond the primary level (Bolt & Bezemer, 2008: 16). On the other hand, in the French colonies, most positions in the colonial administration were to be filled by French nationals, trained in France, the colonial government selected those who received advanced schooling. Pupils in the French colonial schools received training in basic skills only (Lloyd et al., 2000), as the colonial curriculum was designed to educate Africans to assume subordinate roles and be subservient.

Colonial episteme was also an instrument in the reconstruction of social identities in the colonies as indicated in Hunt's (1990) article on foyers in the Belgian Congo which demonstrates how educational institutions outside the public schools were used by colonial and missionary authorities to refashion gender roles. Schulman (1992) showed how colonial ideas about women and domesticity were promoted by the French and later embraced by an emerging African bourgeoisie. The dominant language of instruction was English and other European languages which served to marginalise the African culture by portraying African countries as traditional and backward while portraying Europe and North America as modern and developed. As Salazar observes, "In the third grade, I desperately wanted to be White. My teachers privileged whiteness through the English language and U.S. culture, and they excluded all that was native to me; hence, I ascertained that White children were smarter, more attractive, and affluent. As a result, I became a connoisseur of whiteness when I was eight years old" (Salazar, 2013:122).

The British did not introduce one centralised educational policy in their colonies but instead largely left it to missionaries to provide the population with education and to decide whether to educate also in the vernacular (Bolt & Bezemer, 2008:16). This is because from the early sixteenth century, missionaries had brought European-style education to Africa and during this period, the British colonial government was primarily occupied with maintaining law and order and missionaries remained the only party active in providing formal education to African people in the British colonies (Bolt & Bezemer, 2008:18). Another factor for leaving education to the missionaries was the British desire to contain the cost of colonial administration (Lugard, 1922). In contrast, France had a very tight grip on the development of education systems in its colonies. In 1922, France put forth a decree which further limited missionary activity in education. According to this decree, the establishment of a new school in the colonies required government permission, government-certified teachers, a government curriculum and the exclusive use of French as the language of instruction (White, 1996).

There is a copious amount of literature detailing the relationship between religious and political authorities in fulfilling the agenda of constructing social identities to maintain unequal exchange (Porter, 2004; Stanley, 1990; Frankema, 2012; White & Daughton, 2012; Watson, 1982; Kallaway & Swartz, 2017; Carnoy, 1974). In British colonies, the churches became partners with the state in promoting the national interest of the ruling colonial governments (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2001). Matunhu (2011:69) contends that for the metropolis to succeed in the impoverishment operation, they had to destroy the traditional, pre-capitalist structures of Africa in order to pave the way for super expropriation and appropriation of surplus value. He contends that the missionary education curriculum was the main instrument used to destroy the pre-capitalist social structures in Africa. Didactic pedagogies which was the way that knowledge was transmitted, lacked the necessary ingredients to transform a student to a creative being as it relied only on a one-way knowledge system from teacher to

student, which lay more emphasis on rote learning and passive instructional method than critical exploration.

Colonial pedagogy marginalised the indigenous knowledge system by emasculating African ancestral wisdom in the production of knowledge. Thus, the knowledge industry was not democratised to accommodate the participation of Africans but was aimed at mental impoverishment by deemphasising the importance of African values and culture at the same time glorifying that of the white people. The basic idea was to disorient the minds and reproduce an identity of inferiority in the Africans, thus perpetuating misconceptions and reinforcing unequal power relations.

Western Episteme and Academic Imperialism during the Cold War

Throughout the period of the Cold War (1945-1990/1991), World politics was characterised by the bipolar competition because the world was polarised into the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc, but the role of pedagogical coloniality in this competition is often under scrutinised. The Western Bloc was led by the US with its capitalist allies made up of “First World” democratic countries while; the Communist Soviet Union claimed leadership of the Eastern Bloc. The US envisioned a democratic world order with the global spread of capitalism, while the Soviet Union wanted a socialist world order governed by communism. This led to the strategy of ‘containment’ by the US, whereby the US resisted the new states moving politically towards Soviet-inspired communism rather than the American-inspired doctrine of capitalism.

The concept of containment originated from George Kennan’s telegram which was published on 1 July 1947 in his anonymous Foreign Affairs Article *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*, better known as the ‘X Article’ (‘X’, 1947). Kennan argued that the primary goal of the US should be to stop the spread of communism to non-communist nations; better known as the ‘containment policy’ (“X”, 1947). The Truman Doctrine also aimed at this goal and containment was one of its key

principles. The motivation for containment was the “domino theory”, which held that allowing one regional state to fall to communism would threaten the entire region, similar to a series of dominoes toppling. Containment further became the overriding objective of United States National Security Policy approval by President Truman in November 1948. All subsequent US presidents after Truman, both Republican and Democrat, adopted the Doctrine of Containment as being the focal point of US Cold War strategy (Merrill, 2006).

The carrot and stick approach was adopted as a strategy for recruiting client countries as the US supported right wing governments and uprisings across the world, while the Soviet government funded communist movement’s revolutions around the globe. The superpowers mobilised these new countries which were referred to as the “Third World States” (developing nations) by generous granting of financial and military aid, cultural and technological assistance. Despite the aid regime, the ‘most potent strategic tool’ of recruiting client countries was Western episteme, especially in the form of pedagogical coloniality which continues to perpetuate colonial legacies, ideologies and practices including misconceptions about Africa through the education system. Western Social Science scholarship was weaponised in the struggle against communism and logically the newly independent countries became the primary targets, as Western episteme became a tool in promoting the interests of capitalism in the “Third World” by propagating capitalist values and serving capitalist interests. This was achieved through modernisation theories of Political Science, Sociological and Economics scholarship on “Third World” countries. The rhetoric revolved around the transition from one type of society to another. The society whose state of being has to be changed is the ‘traditional or primitive society’ or ‘underdeveloped country’, while the society which is the model for this change is often referred to as the ‘developed country’ (Rostow, 1960; Almond & Powell, 1966; Almond & Coleman, 1960). These scholarships on “Third World” countries revolved around the central issue of how to bring about economic and political development in the guise of

theory of 'modernisation' which Ake (1982) aptly describes as imperialism of Western Social Science.

Western imperialism at every historical stage has its instrumentality. During the pre-independence era, militarism was the dominant instrument for establishing sphere of influence in the colonies. During colonisation, some level of education was required from the Africans to complete the imperialistic process, so the best instrument was the missionary colonial education system that provided the platform in dominating the thinking of the colonial subjects. The educational curriculum was designed to make the colonial subjects more subservient. The post-colonial era provided the milieu for these newly independent countries to be integrated into the global capitalist world order which would enable capitalism to expropriate surplus value. Western Social Science episteme became the main tool of imperialism. Western episteme such as the modernisation theories posit very strongly that "Third World" countries should follow the same development path as that followed by "First World" countries (Ake, 1982).

Developing countries, according to this episteme, should embrace Western standards of government such as bureaucracy, multiparty democracy, liberal democracy and a vibrant civil society. According to political theories of modernisation, liberal democracy is the only path to development, because it protects the right to own private property or business. Moreover, liberal democracy is perceived to be promoting free enterprise which is supportive of capital and its maximisation of profit (Breakfast et al., 2018). To Tikly (2004), this "New imperialism is presented as the incorporation of low-income countries and regions that were previously subject to older forms of European imperialism into a new regime of global governance which serves to secure the interests of the United States of America, its western allies and global capitalism more generally". The instrument of this new imperialism is World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) with its episteme of 'development', espoused in neoliberal ideology. Neoliberalism as a Western episteme promotes the ideology of unfettered capitalism which includes

the wholesale adoption of Western economic policies in African countries.

Despite the campaign of poverty reduction, debt relief and economic stabilisation, these countries must still implement neoliberal policies that inflict severe injuries on the poor. These reforms often include the following:

1. Reducing government expenditure by making the public-sector redundant, freezing salaries and making cuts in health, education and social welfares.
2. The privatisation of state-run industries, leading to massive layoffs with no social security provisions and the loss of inefficient services to remote or poor areas,
3. Currency devaluation and export promotion, leading to the soaring cost of imports, land use changed for cash crops, and reliance on international commodity markets;
4. Raising interest rates to tackle inflation, putting small companies out of business,
5. Removal of price control, leading to rapid price rises for basic goods and services (Lewis, 2013)

Unfortunately, the neoliberal ideology is found wanting, because the results of these reform programmes were disastrous. Escalating balance of payments problems, mounting foreign debt, domestic political unrest, mounting social problems stemming from unemployment in shrinking economies, de-industrialisation as local companies folded in the face of unmitigated competition from long-established and well-heeled multi-national companies, and a debilitating brain drain. These have been the results of IMF and World Bank-inspired economic structural adjustment programmes in African countries.

While governments in African countries are held responsible for the social and economic outcomes of these policies, the external economic and political forces remain largely invisible (Tarabinah, 2010). So, the neoliberal ideology articulated in the 'Washington Consensus' has failed in delivering net benefits to African countries. According to Fine (1998:1-9), a proclamation made in 1998 by Joseph Stiglitz, a former senior vice-president, and senior economist at the World

Bank, stated that the “Washington Consensus” had failed; and, that a “post-Washington Consensus” was needed and should encourage both the state and market forces to work together for economic development.

The neoliberal ideology is premised on political development theories of modernisation, that African countries were expected to follow the economic approaches of Western countries, which implied that the imperialist countries were once at the same trajectory at some point in history; a claim which contradicts empirical evidence (Ake, 1982:176; Breakfast et al., 2018). Unfortunately, this episteme has framed the “belief perseverance” of Western policymakers and their intellectuals in the ivory towers about Africa, to the perception that Africa is a continent that is inherently designed for Western exploitation, domination and manipulation. To Western countries, maintaining such Western-centric knowledge and perceptions of Africa helps to sustain capitalist privileges, an argument which corroborates a core strand of cognitive theory on why people cling-on to discredited beliefs, as articulated in Savion (2012:81-92).

So, despite the realities on the ground in the area of socio- cultural and economic performance of several African countries since post-independence, pervasive misconceptions about Africa still abound. This is also attributable to African social scientists and policymakers who accept uncritically the epistemology of Western scholars. African intellectuals earnestly seek validation from these foreign institutions and thus are unable to produce African indigenous Social Science that will address African development challenges. Alatas illuminates on this in his concept of “Captive mind.” The captive mind phenomenon represents the extension of colonial mentality or categories by the recipient country in relation to the application of social sciences from the developed countries or the West, without adaptation or critique of the adopted concepts and methodologies, with whole nations been subjected to ill-conceived planning with serious consequences suggesting the continued domination of Western ideas (Alatas, 1972:9-25; 1974).

This scenario in turn produces networks and collaboration between internal forces (states' agents, local politicians and business merchants) with foreign agents (multinational corporations, multilateral institutions and foreign government officials) to undermine home-grown development for the interest of international capitalism.

Decolonising The Academic Space

Decoloniality as a concept has been defined as “the dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender and geopolitical hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world” (Silova et al., 2017). Le Grange (2016) conceptualises decolonisation as uncentring, displacing, deconstructing a critical engagement with knowledge to offer a renewed understanding of history, culture and language, and a process of ‘forever becoming’. Pedagogical coloniality ensures the misconceptions of Africa as it continually projects Eurocentric biases in educational content, curricula, and teaching methods. So, even though there are structural changes and transformations on the continent, misconceptions of Africa provide the enabling environment for the West to control Africa’s perception of their world and framing of their development paradigm, thus maintaining the existing international order. Africa’s development therefore lies in overcoming academic imperialism and decolonising the academic space. Decolonising Africa’s academic space would involve, amongst others, a redesign of our academic curricula from primary education to the university system and their pedagogical approach in a way that it would promote critical thought and social and industrial transformation.

The concept of Critical Pedagogy, which encourages students to challenge Western epistemic assumptions should also be incorporated in the curriculum. This is possible by incorporating African literature, indigenous knowledge systems, and various narratives into the curriculum. Addressing the biases and Eurocentric viewpoints that frequently pervade educational resources and curriculum is critical. With a broader

perspective, African students can have a more accurate and empowering learning experience that reflects their distinct identities, histories, and realities.

African philosophy and theories should be developed and accorded their rightful place in the academia through integration into existing courses across disciplines. Existing courses should be modified to incorporate specialised courses which focus solely on non-Western perspectives. Strategies for decolonisation should include African research methodologies, acknowledging that Western research methods are not universally applicable. This would deemphasise the monopoly of Western publications and validations in the knowledge production industry, thus restructuring the unequal power relations between the Global North and Global South. Empowering local languages in education is a vital strategy for the decolonisation of African education. Acknowledging and including indigenous languages within the curriculum, has the capacity to enhance cultural identity and pride amongst African students. Successful implementation of this approach requires investment in language resources, teacher training, and curriculum enhancement. Active collaborative partnerships with African academics and universities from non-Western regions should be promoted. This would include facilitating student exchanges to promote cross-cultural learning. By fostering a collaborative environment, researchers from both African and non-African origins can jointly bring their unique outlooks, skills, and experiences to approach the multifaceted nature of decolonisation. Through these partnerships, African scholars regain authority and shape the research agendas, ensuring that they are deeply rooted in their local context and preferences.

The adaptation of the dialogic method of learning as against the didactic pedagogy should be encouraged. The didactic method is teacher-centred and relies on educators to transmit knowledge to passive students, while dialogic pedagogy develops spaces for dialogue where students can share their cultural perspectives. Dialogic teaching thus utilises the power of classroom talks to challenge and stretch students' thinking and, in the process, aid their cognitive, social and

linguistic development (Alexander, 2017; 2020). This method will empower African students by cultivating agency, addressing gender biases, and improving access to quality education aimed at decolonising education in Africa. The attainment of these ideals would require that African leaders and educational policymakers develop a class consciousness and reposition the continent through the instrumentality of a renewed African Union that would challenge imperialism in all its forms as well as eliminating corruption to its barest minimum and devoting an enormous amount of resources to start and successfully finish this revolution.

Conclusion

The history of the world is the history of domination and the struggle for emancipation between individuals, groups, and nation-states. World politics is historically characterised by imperialism and Africa has its fair share. Africa's decolonisation was seen as emancipation of the continent from foreign control and has experienced remarkable transformation in international relations. However, Western concerted effort is geared into transmitting misconceptions about the African continent, its cultures and its people and reinforcing dominance over the continent through academic imperialism. Africa's development therefore lies in overcoming academic imperialism and decolonising the academic space. The chapter recommends a paradigm shift from the episteme of Western Social Science and a reconceptualisation of the African version of development as well as a reconstruction of Africans' identity in a globalised world. This would require a redesign of our curricula from primary to the university system and their pedagogical approach in a way that it would promote critical thought and social and industrial transformation. In addition, since policy is required for its implementation, African leaders must develop class-consciousness and invest more on education and reduce corruption to its barest minimum, as well as strengthening their collective will through the African Union against Western proclivities and imperialism in all its forms.

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