

A Quest for Decolonizing African Universities

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Abstract

African universities have been largely dominated and shaped by the colonial trajectory and organized in accordance with the Occidental model. By remaining epistemologically subservient to the Western hegemony, they have played a great deal in the practice of epistemicide in the continent. Their history of establishment, as an institute that produces the necessary manpower for the smooth functioning of the colonial enterprise, have still kept defining their essence in another form, i.e., alienation. Characterized by a dismantlement of everything that is local, the universities in the continent pronounced the modernization discourse that made Africa lose specificity rather it appeared an entity that needed to be studied by analogy from a center that already assumed universality. Moreover, for its intrinsically alienated underpinning, the type of university that many African countries inherited and developed anew have only used them for being a periphery

on the global stage of knowledge generation. By analyzing relevant literature and deploying a discursive reasoning approach, this article advances the idea of decolonization in the specific context of the African university. It argues that epistemological decolonization of the continent can only be done via its institutions of higher learning, by finding a discursive space where the universities assure subjectivity that allows them to harness the local context and respond to the demands thereof. To this effect, philosophy, and perhaps African philosophy specifically, despite an endless debate about its existence, have assumed an indispensable role in empowering Africans through articulating philosophical locus by taking into account the context and cultural idiosyncrasies of African society. African philosophy must be further tasked in broadening the horizons of subjectivity, decolonization, and independence of the continent at large.

Key Words: African Universities, Alienation, Decolonization, African Philosophy

Introduction

The knowledge economy of the 21st century makes universities more broadly important across all societies. Unfortunately, the very concept of the university a colonial legacy that does not help all societies advance knowledge in their own local interests

Since the early years of Africa's independence, African intellectuals have been engrossed with the question of how to develop higher education within Africa that seeks a research alternative to the dominant western higher education model which understands the rest of the world as either conforming to or deviating from that model. Accordingly, many African countries, though inadequate, have undergone a rethink of their philosophy of university.

Ubuntu or the African “worldview” of higher education, for instance, is one among the perspectives.

Then there is a more insidious emerging challenge that both entrenches the colonial model and also makes localization of the university much more difficult, and that is the spread of neoliberalism. The World Bank and other Bretton Woods institutions’ impact in Africa is a factor that shaped higher education in many countries. It was poverty, Kariwo (2019) maintains, being exploited in the “credit card syndrome” (p. 4). Even the idea of university reform which has been undertaken for the past decades, as to Bekele (2015) , is essentially not an African initiative. It is an initiative of the World Bank and its stakeholders that undermines African universities' walk to subjectivity.

Africa, in the words of Bekele (2015) “is neither poor nor powerless” (p. 30). The inability to use knowledge that is available locally and internationally in an appropriate manner is what is hindering Africa from using its wealth. The absence of subjectivity as it was pronounced by the Hegelian and neo-Marxist traditions of Habermas and critical theory in general, he adds, is crucial in addressing Africa’s problems. Put otherwise, the issue of an agency that can be entrusted with captivating responsibility for Africa’s future and that has to do with subjectivity. The lack of will and determination are the factors that could explain Africa's enigma if it’s neither poor nor powerless. The African university can play an essential role in contributing to tackling these problems if it is allowed to become ‘university’, in its fullest sense of the term. Both in terms of nurturing the spirit and knowledge required for the development of subjectivity and practical knowledge necessary for development, the African university needs to play an important role.

As is the case of the developing nations elsewhere, higher education in Africa is an artifact of colonial policies and represents the Western model of academic

organization. (Altbach and Selvaratnam 1989; Lulat, 2003). Most of them were established just before the end of colonialism. Training personnel that could be supportive in running the colonial machinery possibly explains their establishment. Their history, Bekele (2015) argues, can therefore “explain their essence” (p. 31). The failure to disentangle themselves from their historical trajectory appears the major challenge that African universities are facing.

The fact that universities in Africa were not independent institutions that were made to tackle real problems of the African peoples is a concern that is still following them like a shadow averting their independence and self-assertiveness. They remained institutions which were “forced to gnaw on bones left by the metropolitan universities” that made them to be ‘extraverted’ by their very nature (Hountondji 2002).

Such a reality has to do with the historical emergence of African universities and continuous pegging to the West, which brought them into existence. Education in general and university education in particular came into existence in one way or another by the agency of the West, particularly at a time when many African countries were colonized. Even Ethiopia which boasts to be the only non-colonized country, established its first college in 1950 just when colonialism was over in African countries too. But even then they were Canadian Jesuit missionaries that were entrusted with the task of establishing and molding an Ethiopian institution of higher learning (Bekele, 2007; Balsvik, 2006; Messay, 2008)

Viewed from a knowledge production perspective, African universities are among the bottom bests. This is the result of many factors. Chief amongst which is the characteristic dominance of a Eurocentric orientation whereby the type of higher education that many African countries developed only enabled them to be marginalized

in knowledge production. This obtained a resultant effect of the education system not to inspire independent thinking and theory building. Moreover, research and teaching in African countries are thought of in such a way that they emulate those of the West which hinders them from addressing the problems of the African countries for which education is primarily designed. Overcoming such a challenge requires redefining the goal of education in an African context with a program that could encourage change. This can be realized, in view of Bekele (2007) is by conspicuous balance between exogenous and indigenous forms of knowledge through an intercultural approach.

Besides this history, one has to be conscious of the content of what was taught, how the curriculum was deliberated, its objective and the knowledge, skills and values that it was anticipated to instill in the 'educated' youth of these countries. These are formidable tasks that need to be answered in order to understand the nature of education and see the condition of alienation as it is.

Alienation

The theoretical basis of alienation has been widely popular in the Marxist reading to illustrate the proletariat invariably loses the capacity to determine life and destiny when deprived of the right to think of themselves as the manager of their own actions; to define relationships with other people; and to own those items of value from goods and services, produced by their own labour. It demonstrates the act of causing someone to become indifferent or hostile: the state of being withdrawn or isolated from the objective world, as through indifference or disaffection. It is used in the African university context as a way of manifesting their extraverted nature.

Taking a look at the material taught in the newly established African universities, one clearly sees its alienated nature. The curricula were designed or directly

copied from those of the universities of the metropole based on which countries the instructors were from. The youth of the African countries thus are expected to be educated on material largely alien to them. It was from the outset designed in a way that can make sure alienating the youth from their culture and identity. It turned out that much of the subject matter that they would obtain both in the theoretical and practical fields were of little or no significance to the objective realities of the country in concern. Hountondji (2009) in this regard writes of African academia as:

Too often do we tend to investigate subjects which are of interest first and foremost to a Western audience ... In this sense, our scientific activity is extraverted, i.e. externally oriented, intended to meet the theoretical needs of our Western counterparts and answer the questions they pose. The exclusive use of European languages as a means of scientific expression reinforces this alienation (p. 8).

Apart from being practically and socially irrelevant, the content of the education was Eurocentric, prejudiced against nearly all the heritage that each one of these countries cherished. The Eurocentric philosophy of education is based on a hierarchy of cultures, in which the home grown values and culture are considered backward altogether. One of its fundamental tasks, Bekele (2007) argues is the realization of detachment - with local values, knowledge and cultures for they are considered to be “backward, particular and even barbarous and invoked a replacement with the progressive and “universal” forms of knowledge and culture” (p. 110). Hence, the mission of such education becomes unambiguous. Predominantly, it aims at mugging the African youth of its identity, pride and confidence when it affirms that your value or identity or culture or history is rather anomalous, not universal. Such

alienation brought what Messay (2008) calls “Cultural Dislocation” among the ‘educated’ youth with reference to Ethiopia. Similarly, strengthening an alienated form of education Balsvik (2005) summed up the nature of Ethiopian education as follows:

Modern education in Ethiopia was imported from Great Britain and the United States, was influenced by various other Western countries, and was not attuned to the country’s needs. Patterns of education, curricula, and texts intended to further the interests of most highly industrialized countries were transplanted into one of the least developed rural countries in the world. There was little relevance to the basic and immediate needs of Ethiopian society. To the average child the school was essentially an alien institution about which his own parents were usually ignorant. What was learned in school could not be related to the environment (p. 9).

Disclosing the alienated nature of the education system in Ghana, Adjei (2007) wrote:

...Western control over what constitutes valid knowledge became increasingly and worryingly noticeable as schools were structured and restructured to validate only Western Knowledge. This knowledge became the cultural capital by which individuals could access employment in both state and private organizations in Ghana”. (pp. 1047-48)

In most Sub-Saharan African states education, Tekeste (2006) argues, “is a phenomenon that has a strong colonial legacy & the curriculum was impervious to local, national or regional specificities” (p. 7). With reference to Zimbabwe, Shizha (2006) has the following to say in manifesting the alienated from of Post-colonial education:

in postcolonial states, like Zimbabwe, the reification of Eurocentric knowledge, which promotes the "superiority" of Western knowledge, is still perpetuated by the education system and schooling practices that negate ideals on cross-cultural education and the role of indigenous knowledge in students' school experiences (p.20).

It is the overall purpose of such an education that ought to be examined. Listening to fascinating statements by political leaders about education is not uncommon in Africa. They often declare the indispensable role of education in development. They unanimously pronounce the fundamentals of education in nation building. Apparently however, nobody thought deep on the kind of education that is suitable for rendering African development possible. The type of education that is exported at best, Bekele (2007) maintains, allows the “young generations to unlearn what they have learned from their cultures and at worst to develop self-hatred that leads to self-denial” (p. 111). It facilitates in the words of Fanon (1967) “epidermalization of inferiority” where colonized peoples participate in their own subjection through internalizing inferiority.

Such an epidermalization of inferiority deprived them of the means and confidence to think independently. Africans committed an original sin when they started to believe that development in a different situation could be helpful as their model, too. This is not undermining the prominence of Western science and technology to Africans. But, a condemnation of the ‘one-size fits all’ approach. It only refers to the weakness of African countries by extension universities, in indigenizing knowledge produced elsewhere to address African problems. This ultimately caused the educational undertaking in the African case largely superfluous since Africans limited themselves to

serving only as Southern garrisons of the metropolitan universities and research institutes. With remaining passive to understand typical problems residing and formulating proper questions regarding the problems, Africans kept on believing that somebody else has already done the thinking and it is only sufficient for us if we could copy from that. With this, African universities kept busy echoing what has been said elsewhere, “something which is not as painful and exacting as trying to find out new methods and approaches to our problems” (Bekele 2007:111)

We are found at a specific juncture with our cultures, languages and the whole breadth of psychosocial attributes that make us what we are. The first expression of imported type of education was an assault on the things and traits that constitute us, as Africans. It was an assault on our very being and we have naively accepted as universal and scientific truth. The uncritical acceptance, including prejudices that others hurled at us, defines the key to our perpetual dependence and economic and intellectual extraversion. With this, Africans started to take important steps towards their alienation and self-denial. African universities remained champions of propagating this alienation, pronouncing the ‘universal’ and ‘scientific truth’ which unduly downgrade the African place.

One of the chief reasons for alienation lies on the fact that African universities' inclination in perceiving truths, the prejudices and abuses of others against Africans, as absolute truths. Following Kant and Hegel, Africans convinced themselves that they were outside of history and humanity. African universities teach that the noble path to achieving history and humanity lay in denouncing the historical heritage and embracing the philosophy of true humanity as the European. The uncritical acceptance led to the destruction of many of our essential attributes. How is it possible then to expect something valuable in a condition where Africa lost its self-respect nor respect for its values

and its essential attributes? This indeed possibly explains, notwithstanding of course other factors, such as economy and other structural issues, the type of alienation in many fields.

The major challenge in this regard is that the elite in these developing countries have not yet realized the importance and development of an independent intellectual discourse. The very education that was received convinced many of them that vital innovations for scientific knowledge have already been achieved. Hence it may not be important to reinvent the wheel and hence possible to catch up by copying from the developed countries. The idea holds water that important breakthroughs have been achieved and that it is possible to reap the benefits of such knowledge as well. But the problem is about the fact that apart from making general statements about the importance of knowledge for development and assuming that what has proved successful in the developed countries would also be useful for African countries, Africans have not seriously thought about indigenizing this knowledge and remold it in such a way that it serves African particular purpose. The universities also took part in the process of indigenization. With this, it seems that we Africans committed a basic error of neglecting the reality in which this imported knowledge was supposed to function.

From the initial process of formulating problem statements, the hypotheses developed, and the data collected along with other attendant issues, African universities Bekele (2007) argues, displayed an avoidance of taking a fundamental departure from the way things were done in the metropolitan universities.

Putting aside the task of actually attempting to formulate the questions that education or science ought to solve in our specific cases we just went ahead to reassert the questions that have already been formulated and for which some answers have already been offered. This is not

suggesting at this juncture that Western knowledge is useless for Africans. For it definitely is useful, but not as a whole package that could be useful. There are undeniably matters that Africans need to copy but there are also others that we should daringly attempt to develop anew.

Apparently universities lack the courage to undertake the things we have to develop anew. It might be right in studying and applying the one or the other principle of Western science and method as well. Africans however should also realize that they have obtained their own idiosyncrasy. What is appropriate in this situation must be the question that all concerned should ask themselves. Normally, the acceptance of foreign curricula, for example, incorporates accepting the philosophy of education of the country from which it has been copied. But a country needs a philosophy of education that takes into account its “specific history, culture, identity, needs and goals. It is without taking into account all these that we have been copying: (Bekele, 2007:114).

There is another dimension of this fact that has always been overlooked naively. Africans have copied and incorporated into their education all the prejudices that the erstwhile colonial powers had against their former colonies. There were theories based on the hierarchy of cultures, “races,” and ways of life. How many of the intellectuals doubted the veracity of the racially motivated negative statements that gave a lower status to the non-Europeans? One only needs to recall among many such thoughts and expressions, Leopold S. Senghor’s widely quoted statement that declared that reason was “Reason was Hellenic as emotion was African”. In philosophy, anthropology and other areas of knowledge, when we deal with what are said to be fundamental questions or concepts or principles we do not dare to ask whether these principles or questions are also fundamental for Africans.

Each one of these in one way or another inculcated among the Africans about the prevalence of only one genuinely universal humanity worthy of mimicry and that is the Western one. It followed that other philosophies, religions, cultures etc. were particulars or simply “others” that eventually ought to catch on to the universal. The colonialists’ claim to universalism in all respects is the assault by which they actually denigrate and dehumanize those who have a different identity.

The colonization of the mind through these different avenues has somehow succeeded in convincing many African elites that the prejudices of the colonialists are scientific truths. African universities are not made way out of the aforementioned predicaments. Owing to their birth defect, they remained the advocates of the universalism discourse.

The need for Decolonization

Decolonization captures a resistance from the distinct but intertwined processes of colonization, to endorse transformation and redress in reference to the historical and ongoing effects of these processes, and to generate and keep alive, Stein, & Andreotti (2016) contends, modes of “knowing, being, and relating that these processes seek to eradicate” (p. 2). Colonization undeniably resulted in both material and epistemic dimensions, which together shape social relations and preserve categories that are then used to justify: occupation of the colonized; expropriation and expendability of African life; claims about the universality of modern Western reason; objectification and exploitation of “nature”; capitalist property relations and modes of production; militarism; possessive individualism; and the very concept of race (ibid).

For a better apprehension of such a conceptual decolonization, Fanon’s (1967) work proves useful. Fanon

writes “the juxtaposition of the black and white ‘races’ has resulted in a massive psycho-existential complex” (p. xvi). His book *Black skin, white masks* is meant to liberate the black man from the arsenal of complexes that germinated in the colonial situation” (Fanon 1968, p.14). Put otherwise, Fanon believes that it is “necessary for the black person to overcome the psychological effects of colonialism” (Oelofsen, 2015, p. 131).

Decolonization includes the disruptive effort of ending colonialism in its all frontiers; liberation and de-caging of the colonized is its pillar. It also involves discourses that envisages acknowledging Africa as one of the regional centers of knowledge generation, having its own developmental intricacies, and as such worthy of being viewed as an equal global partner. The attainment of this, Nyoni (2019) argues “requires dismantling of the colonial mentality and its entire social fabric, upon which control and exploitation are based” (p. 2). For it to have a profound effect, the process of destroying the colonial pathogens that have kept the African mind chained must be instituted.

Decolonization of African universities is an expression of the changing geopolitics of knowledge where the modern epistemological foundation for knowing and understanding the world may no longer be interpreted as universal (Mignolo 2011). Thus, the African critical thought on decolonizing universities needs to strive in addressing questions of genuine transformation, such as how radical education curriculum reform at the academic, cultural and psychological levels. The challenge for African academia is to learn how to teach or facilitate beyond the distorted cultural and/or historical imaginary and impoverished subjectivity of the modern horizon of thought where everything is hierarchically ranked according to Eurocentric concepts, standards and epistemological frameworks. Decolonization assures the way in which African content should be one of the “multiples of global

centers of epistemological origins and underpinnings of social reconstruction of reality and dissemination” (Nyoni, 2019, p. 2)

As explained earlier, the west has, for centuries, developed a body of knowledge that the rest of the universities must copy in compliance with the standards thereof. This in turn resulted in the post-colonial curricula of African universities to largely reflect Eurocentric conceptualization and continue to reinforce western dominance and privilege whereby it has been laced with stereotypes, prejudices and patronizing views about Africa and its people. Thus, a thorough rethink, deconstruction, reframing, reconstructing the Eurocentric and colonial curricula as well as teaching methods at universities, for Africa may not be a matter of choice.

Western institutions in practice are deeply involved in the colonial cataloguing of non-western knowledges and the generation of knowledge in support of scientific racism and other racialized and colonial classifications used to justify forcible assimilation, military occupation, and even annihilation of non-western populations (Said 1978; Smith 2012).

As a consequence, some have suggested that the emergence and eventual dominance of the modern, western, secularized, and supposedly universal episteme was only made possible in the context of Europe’s projects of conquest and enslavement (Wynter 2003). Western epistemological dominance in the non-West is highly reflective, where Western institutions are often viewed as the model for the ideal university (Nandy 2000). This has led many to emphasize the importance of “decolonizing the mind” (Thiong’o 1986) and the pursuit of cognitive justice in higher education research and curricula (Sousa Santos, 2007).

History became the sole product of the West in its actions upon others. It simultaneously displaced, in the

words of Nyoni (2019) those actions “promoting and imposing the idea that modernity was endogenous to the West, and therefore removed the very notion of the ‘other’ in history” (p. 4). By so doing, it also naturalized and justified the West’s material domination of the ‘other’. In fact, mental colonization has its ardent prophets and proponents among the Africans themselves. It is an outcome of one-sided education based on the “superiority” of the West. Africans stayed too innocent with receiving all that the Eurocentric education wanted to tell them, as scientific truths, while in reality what was portrayed as depicted only meant to keep us inferior to the Europeans. The assertion of Western superiority might have not obtained a base unless one wants to argue that their current superiority in science and technology attests to this. A metaphysical superiority of the West as it was portrayed by Kant, Hegel, and Hume, Bekele (2007) argues, “is a self-serving myth” (p. 118). How can Africans accept this and keep on denigrating themselves? It is in this area that decolonization of the academia, specifically universities, is needed most.

Decolonization of African universities is ‘about justice that addresses the epistemic violence of colonial knowledge and colonial thought’ (Pillay 2015). It is also a project that many have rightly interpreted as an act of defiance against all Eurocentrism. Derrida (1982) states that, ‘this act of “defiance” is deconstruction itself’. It therefore matters little, Nyoni (2019) contends, “if one is labelled academically dissonant and dissident, if Africa is locating or claiming its own indigenous or native centre for knowledge production and dissemination” (p. 2). African epistemology and underlying philosophies need to underpin African centered developmental efforts as the focus as well as project Africa as one of the centers of knowledge production.

As Africans and their higher institutions continue to experience polygonal socio political and economic shifts of being as influenced by a variety of global ideologies, their voices stayed in regurgitating western epistemologies consistently and impactful decolonization efforts remain negligible and mentally captured. Concerted decolonial efforts therefore are crucial in managing shifts in these matrices of material-social constructs such that contamination and decapitation of true African education curricula, identities, cultures, values, ethos and principles are prevented. African voices should be allowed to correct the toxic, Western inspired nuances and narratives underpinning Western induced education curricula (Nyoni, 2019, P.4).

A constitutive paradox of the colonial construction of knowledge therefore haunts any effort to decolonize existing institutions: claims about the universality of western knowledge can only be sustained in contrast to the particularity and partiality of non-western knowledge. Today higher education institutions continue to reproduce an epistemological hierarchy wherein western knowledges are presumed to be universally relevant and valuable, while non-western knowledges are either patronizingly celebrated as “local culture,” commodified or appropriated for Western gain, or else not recognized as knowledge at all. Curricula remain dominated by Western epistemologies, especially Western sciences and technologies, and research in these areas also tends to be the most heavily rewarded through grants and other forms of institutional support and validation (Stein and Andreotti, 2016, p.3).

Situating African Philosophy in the quest for Decolonization

For, “race” is still essential in our “place”, as a result of the symbolic hierarchy evident in our societies, inferiority and superiority complexes could therefore still

be evident, and philosophy can do much to heal these pathologies in our societies. As Tabensky (2008) captures

The discipline of African philosophy originates in tragedy, out of pain, confusion and rage stemming from colonial destruction; destruction that is responsible for what Fanon calls the 'negro neurosis' caused by what Biko would describe as the unbearable fusion of colonized and coloniser... [T]he birth of African philosophy as an academic discipline is largely responsible for its character and, crucially, for its distinctive creative possibilities (p. 285).

African philosophy thus has a distinctive aim, namely the quest for reclaiming humanity which Tabensky sees as intimately related to the quest for disentanglement from the colonial past. African philosophy, as a consequence, results in empowering Africans through enunciating philosophical positions which considers the context and cultural specificities of African places into account. This empowerment in turn, (Oelofsen, 2015) contends, “Lead to reclamation of the intellectual space denied to Africa during the racist project of colonialism” (p. 136).

What is usually referred to as western philosophy, according to Tabensky, has as its primary aim the search for truth. African philosophy also aims at truth, but puts the search for truth to work in its main project of the restoration of normalcy. Therefore, projects in African philosophy have as their aim the restoration of African normalcy lost by the colonial heritage of violent oppression and exploitation, through exploring truths articulated within the context of Africa. Philosophy ought to cast new light on old issues rife on this continent, problems which arise and are the effects of the continent having had a rupture with its past when the colonial project so violently, yet

indifferently, carved the continent up into pieces of the pie meant for European consumption.

In addition, viewed from the decolonization discourse, African philosophy also has another central and related feature. As Janz (2004) argues:

...the core of philosophy, [is] its ability to bring...life to the surface and reflect on it, creating new territory, extending the range of life by creating new concepts. Concepts do not so much point to the past (or, not only to the past), but also to the future, as they open the possibility of new forms of expression and new self-understandings. And, they also point to the present, to the place on which we stand and the life that matters (p. 111)

African philosophy thus draws and creates concepts from the place of “Africa”. Consequently, it can be instrumental in the decolonization of the African mind. This is possible through providing an alternative framework for knowledge, which “de-centers” the assumed centers of knowledge. Concepts need to be created through an engagement with the African past and present.

However, arguing that African philosophy ought to focus on African concepts is not advocating a return to a romanticized pre-colonial past and a [re-]”discovering” of old concepts. These pre-colonial concepts may not in a wholesale be relevant unchanged in the world today as a result of the drastic rupture between the pre- and post-colonial states of being. Rather, in engaging with concepts rooted in Africa, we ought to take them as a starting point for reflection. This would mean that concepts such as *ubuntu* should be engaged; “not as a static concept from Africa’s past but rather as a dynamic concept with its roots in the past” (Stein & Andreotti, 2016, p. 137). Concepts should be developed and acknowledged as having meaning

which is fluid and changing in order to take into account present and future situations and contexts.

Conclusion

Yet the university in Africa and higher education in general remain an important part of the overall social, economic, and cultural constitution of societies and nations. Higher education contributes to the formation and deployment of human capital, the cultural and social construction of values and meaning, and the capacity for individual and collective emancipation from ignorance and domination. It provides people with the tools and capacities for their collective and individual self-definition and empowerment, and for interpreting their relationships to themselves, to others, and to nature and their material and other environments. It provides the platform for the advanced study, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge and its products for the benefit of society and its constituents.

For most nations of Africa in particular, given the histories of slavery, colonization, apartheid, and inequitable economic development - often interpreted by some as expressions of collective racial and/or cultural inferiority - genuine intellectual self-determination is a political, economic and cultural imperative. Here, intellectual self-determination refers to relatively autonomous and self-conscious capacities to meaningfully assess one's situation, take positions determined by one's interests and their relevance in particular situations, and to be sufficiently confident about the decisions so as to mobilize and deploy the necessary resources to achieve desired outcomes. Years of colonization, inept and corrupt postcolonial leadership, and different types of collective servitude - and more recently, economic adjustment programs that were neither internally debated nor owned by the citizens - have contributed to undermining and eroding such capacities.

In spite of over a half century of interventions and series of "reforms," today African universities consist of institutions, systems, and practices that lack authentic values and goals, or a mission and vision attaching them to the major challenges of their local and global contexts. What is necessary in African universities, as to Aina (2010) is true transformation, which may encompass practical and epistemological ruptures with the old ways of doing things and a reconstruction of structures, relations, cultures, and institutions.

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