



PUTTING AFRICA BACK INTO AFRICAN EDUCATION

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Let's start by stating the obvious: The African renaissance is a progressive vision for Africa and the future of its children. What is less obvious is how our school curriculum reflects the values intrinsic to this agenda.

As an academic looking at curriculum ideology in Africa, I see decoloniality and Afrocentricity as integral to the ongoing debate on educational reforms. This means our South African school curriculum needs to be drastically altered if we want to re-awaken and shape Africa's future in a globalised world.

The African renaissance – or renewal – is an important part of Africa's development. Its agenda fosters renewed pride in identity, new dreams and hope, a burgeoning consciousness, and restoration to a people who have been subjected to centuries of slavery, colonialism and racism. But just how do we integrate it with education?

Africa remains on the periphery in the curricula of most African schools. This simply must change – and much earlier, at basic school level – but for this, we need to reconsider the ideology behind the curriculum. Hence, we need to ask: What should be taught? What should the outcomes be? What is the purpose of teaching?

If we do not ask these questions, and act on the answers, we will not be able to do justice to much-needed African educational reforms.

In [my book chapter](#) "*Education for Africa's Renaissance: A Case of Curriculum Ideology*", the case study of South Africa's Grade 10-12 economics curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) showed a multi-curriculum approach, making it confusing in terms of its processes, intended outcomes and student development as well as the envisioned graduate.

Given that African societies are plagued by dire social ills, the aim of all school subjects must not only be the theoretical knowledge of that subject, but also how it is used to create better societies. In other words, the aim should be to eradicate inequality, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, crime and wars. We need to develop agents and leaders who will actively, and urgently, be involved in transforming their societies.

The content that continues to be presented in African schools has disconnected many learners at school and yes, even graduates at universities and colleges, from the lived experiences of Africans. Content knowledge must integrate with the life experiences of Africans, not only those living on the continent, but also in the diaspora.

Learning is at best a collaborative effort, but the archaic model of an “expert” teacher pouring knowledge into the ears of “ignorant” pupils is, unfortunately, the norm in all too many schools.

More than this, learners should be encouraged to develop a critical consciousness and be seen as full of potential to improve society. This is a complete divergence from how the African child has traditionally been perceived by those who through slavery, racism and oppression, formed or established colonies in the African continent.

I therefore suggest including the following in the school economics curriculum:

- Subject aim: to resolve socio-economic challenges plaguing African societies;
- Content knowledge: to critically integrate African economic history, Africa’s economic development and the African economic renaissance vision;
- Learning process: to help learners develop the critical consciousness needed to identify socio-economic challenges, take action and engage in transforming their societies;
- The student: to be seen, and see themselves, as agents who advance Africa’s economic renaissance;
- The teacher: to uphold the vision of an African economic renaissance and in dialogue communicate this to learners; and
- Assessment: to be made in context and aimed at assisting learners to rebuild their economies.

What is important to take away is that these features fit into any school subject – yes, even maths and science – and at all school levels.

For many of our school subjects, these reforms will be easy to make. The educators are willing, the scholarly material is there and the students have been calling for them.

Why are they not being adopted? That is the really big question – and most definitely a topic for further discussion.

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