



African Indigenous Educational System through the Lenses of John Deweh

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Abstract: The call to indigenize African educational systems is present on the tables of almost all fields of academic pursued in African literature. It aims at aligning curricula with African traditions and values; a process some scholars have termed “Africanization” or a “return” to ancestral knowledge. What this means is that, education should be brought in broad view in terms of engaging local, community and off-school knowledges rooted in the African indigeneity in both formal and informal sites as part of the process of a re-reading the ‘school curriculum.’ The goal is to take the learner to the entirety of African epistemology, in terms history, culture, tradition, past, and identity, contested, concrete and meaningful to how we come to decolonize the school curriculum in other to create social/community and academic excellence. The call is to have authentic African educational system for the African learner, a system which remains true to the African learner, rooted as indicated already to the African history, past, culture, tradition with African identity. The place of educationists especially curriculum designers and higher education/universities is primordial in achieving this objective

There isn’t any further gainsay that in rethinking the African educational system especially in the context of university studies and specifically, indigenizing the curriculum, the question of how contemporary learners can be assisted in using African local and indigenous knowledges to solve everyday problems is important. It is easier and there are merits learning from and working with knowledge one is familiar with. Therefore, bringing on board an African-centered interpretation of knowledge particularly in the universities to achieve excellence will be most useful for local community development (that is, in solving pressing social issues) using African knowledge and values.

As the strive towards indigenizing the African educational systems is gaining more and more momentum, it must be acknowledged that there is much skepticism as to the extent and trend at which African cultural norms, identities and local languages can be developed towards cultural and curriculum homogenization to meet with international standards (Brock-Tune, 2003; Barasa, 2009, Knight, 2008; Jowi, 2009; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). This is a legitimate worry because of the influence of western cultural values and languages upon indigenous knowledges and languages (Assie-Lumumba, 2006; Dei 2011a). Talking about indigenizing the African educational Systems, the question of how learners can be assisted in using African local or indigenous knowledges to solve everyday problems is inescapable. The thoughts of John Deweh on community education can be useful. Deweh’s conceptualization of education on community and social interaction, collaboration and democratic participation touches on the very nature of the African as an incurable social being (Mbiti, J, 2004). His focus was on creating an environment that favors collective learning, democratic values, and real-world learning are seen. This can only be done in a culture and language the learner is most familiar with. This concept is simply an idea or thought of Dewey on how a community can grow by means of education. Education as communication or transmission of values (Dewey, 1916) can according to Deweh be effectively done in and as a community which itself is a group of individuals sharing “common” interests, values and goals and who work together to achieve these goals (Dewey, 1916). The African concept of community is often rooted in its cultural values. If education is to effectively take place in a community, it cannot but be indigenized.

Key Terms: African, Indigenous, Education, Community, System.



Introduction

Education, in its broader sense, is the means of a social continuity of life (Dewey, 1916). The purpose of education differs as much as different philosophical tradition. Some argue that the purpose of education is to transmit values from one generation to the next (Shang, 2023). This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the elders to the young. Without this transmission, social life will not survive (Dewey, 1916). In various societies, discussion on education tend to lead us to think that education is just the preparation for employment and not also for the establishment of living well in the community. In the African setting, the transmission of values is in the process of living as community, through oral tradition, apprenticeship with experience elders on skills that are useful to them like craftsmanship. Education is a living force in the life of every community (Dewey, 1916). A community's growth and development depends on whether its educational curriculum corresponds to the community realities.

In this light, John Dewey (Dewey, 1952) in his famous work, *Democracy and Education*, focuses on a community-based education. His approach emphasizes the importance of real-world learning, where students authentically engage with problems and issues of their community. Dewey's concept of community in education also emphasizes the importance of social interaction, collaboration, and democratic participation in the learning process. He encourages the creation of environments that favor collective learning, democratic values, and real-world learning. This concept is simply an idea or thought of Dewey on how a community can grow by means of education.

According to Dewey, a community is a group of individuals who share "common" interests, values and goals and who work together to achieve these goals. Etymologically, the word education means a process of leading or bringing up (Dewey, 1916). Dewey famously states that education is life. In a broader sense, education is a means of social continuity of life in a given community (Dewey, 1916). Dewey also considers, education as communication or transmission of values (Dewey, 1916). A curriculum is a formal and informal content from which learners gain knowledge, understanding and value to promote the intellectual capacity, personal growth, social development (Doll, 1996).

The African concept of community is often rooted in its cultural values. However, there is an eclipse of African values in the Cameroonian society. The use of Western values (French and English languages, France CFA in economy, lesson contents like Fishing in Norway) in the educational system is gradually overshadowing the African values (Sense of community, human relation, Ubuntu, hospitality, sacredness of life, respect for elders, hard work and close to nature, reconciliation and forgiveness, sense of religion, sharing, dialogue and more) in the Cameroon community. This is leading the community into chaos, with little or no skills for problem solving within the community. This work therefore raises questions in this regard and seeks to examine the following: what is the peculiarity of Dewey's concept of community in education? What is the contribution of other philosophers on this concept? and to what extent can this Deweyan perspective of community in education be a solution to this problem?

This article is very important for our African contemporary society because it is a call to awaken especially those who take decisions in educational programs to be more critical in favor of the African realities and needs when setting or designing the educational curriculum. As a result, community-based education will inspire the learners to reflect better on the causes of the societal problems and underdevelopment in Africa, to prioritize their cultural values and identity by means of real-world education.

In this article, we employ the interpretative and analytic methods to lay bare our thoughts. The article is divided in three chapters: The first chapter is an understanding of Dewey's concept of community in education; the second chapter is a critique of Dewey's conception of community in education; the third chapter deals with the relevance of community in the education in Cameroon, followed by a conclusion and a selected bibliography.

Chapter One

1. The Peculiarity of Dewey's Concept of Community in Education

Central to Dewey's concept of community in education is the idea that men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common (aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge among others) (Dewey, 1916). A community in education communicates its values to the younger ones by way of transmission or education without which the community will end its existence. Life denotes a whole range of experience, it covers custom, constitution, beliefs, recreation, occupation, and more (Dewey, 1916). Dewey views the classroom as a microcosm of a democratic community, where students not only learn academic content but also engage in social interactions, participation, collaboration, and shared experience and mutual respect (Dewey, 1916).

This chapter explores Dewey's concept of community in education, examining how it shapes his views on the role of schools in fostering social cooperation, democracy, and the development of individuals and the community. The following will therefore be examined: Dewey's Philosophy of education, Features of community in education, Real-world Education and Community-Based education.

1.1 Dewey's Philosophy of Education

To Dewey, community stems from the word "common"; community is a group of individual or societies that share common interests; aims, values, beliefs, experience, knowledge, and goals. The continuity of each community is based on the transmission of these common interests. A society exists by means of transmission (Dewey, 1916). Dewey sees education as the best means of community continuity. In this light, his philosophy challenges rigid educational systems and advocates for a more flexible, democratic, student-centered approach (Dewey, 1916). Moreover, he stresses that education should be based on the needs and interests of the learner, with a focus on experiential learning, problem-solving, critical thinking and community-based experience. Therefore, to Dewey, a community can consider various means through which education can maintain its existence beginning from a classroom.

1.1.1. Classroom as a Community

Dewey argues that the school should not be an isolated institute that only focusses on transmission of information but rather a

vibrant “form of community life” (Dewey, 1916). Dewey also argues that the teacher’s role is not to impose knowledge onto students, but rather to guide them in constructing their own understanding through experiences and social engagement. Dewey highlights that the teacher should facilitate an environment where students actively engage with their peers and the subject matter. The teacher-student dynamic, for Dewey, should be rooted in mutual respect, with both parties contributing to the learning process (Dewey, 1916).

According to Dewey, the classroom is not a place for passive reception of knowledge but a space where students actively participate in shared learning experiences. He asserts that “education is a social process; education is growth; education is not a preparation for life but is life itself” (Dewey, 1916). By positioning education as a communal activity, Dewey emphasizes the importance of social interactions in the development of knowledge and character.

Talking about the role of a classroom as a community, Lev Vygotsky in his theory of cognitive development, also aligns with Dewey’s idea of community in education, that social interaction plays a crucial role in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Like Dewey, Vygotsky believes that education should be a social process where learning happens through engagement with others, learning is not an isolated individual activity but is deeply rooted in the interactions between learners and the community. Therefore, schools should work in partnership with the community.

1.1.2. The School as Reflection of Society

Dewey asserts with firmness that the school should be an integral part of society, reflecting its values and contributing to the development of a democratic community (Dewey, 1916). William Kilpatrick’s ideas on curriculum also affirms this idea. He holds that learning should be organized around projects, which allows students to explore and solve real-world problems. In this approach, the curriculum is not a fixed, pre-determined set of knowledge, but a flexible, student-centered plan that encourages inquiry, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Kilpatrick, 1918). For Dewey therefore, the school community is a vital part of the broader democratic community, and it should function as a space where students learn to work together, share responsibility, and collaborate in problem-solving. Thus, Dewey’s Democracy enhances interdependence between the individual and community.

1.1.3. Interdependence of Individual and the Community

One of the most important aspects of Dewey’s concept of community in education is the interdependence of the individual and the community. Like Dewey, the African Philosophy of *Ubuntu* stresses the value of interconnectedness of people in the community. *Ubuntu* is often translated as “I am because we are, we are because I am” (Eze, 2017). An individual’s well-being is linked to the well-being of others in the community. This aligns with Dewey’s notion of interdependence which focuses on mutual respect, and shared responsibilities in the community (Eze, 2017).

Dewey rejects the notion of the isolated and autonomous individual, instead he believes that individuals grow and develop within the context of social relationships. In *The Ethics of Democracy*, Dewey argues that individual rights and freedom must be balanced with social responsibility. He asserts that, “Democracy as a way of life is rooted in the belief that individuals can only realize their full potential through their active participation in a

social community.” (Dewey, 1918). For Dewey, therefore, the community is essential for the development of the individual, and education plays a crucial role in fostering this interdependence in the community (Dewey, 1918). The role of education is not simply to produce individuals who can think critically to solve problems on their own but also to form individuals who can collaborate effectively with others, contribute to the common good and can contribute to the democratic process.

1.1.4. Education as a Democratic Process

Dewey stresses that education should also promote the development of democratic values (Dewey, 1916). To him, Democratic process in education is about cultivating the capacities of individuals to interact with others, to respect diverse viewpoints and to make mutual decisions based on social need and responsibility (Dewey, 1916). He believes that the classroom should be a microcosm of democracy, where students engage with each other, collaborate, and learn to make decisions which correspond to daily experiences.

Other thinkers like Paulo Freire share this view with Dewey in education as a democratic process. Freire in his work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argues that education should not be a hierarchical system where the teacher dictates knowledge to passive students (Freire, 2000). Instead, it should be a dialogue between teacher and student, allowing both to learn from one another. This interaction fosters a democratic process where both participants are empowered to think critically and overcome injustices (Dewey, 1916).

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey articulates that education should not merely be about preparing individuals for work or personal success but should foster an environment for critical thinking, cooperation, and social engagement, which are essential to a functioning democracy (Dewey, 1916). Dewey like Paulo Freire argues for education as an active, participatory, and transformative process that prepares individuals for democratic life. Education should nurture democratic values. Schools must serve as communities where individuals collaborate and engage in discussions, preparing them for community participation and social responsibility (Dewey, 1916).

1.1.5. Education for Social Responsibility

Dewey asserts that education should prepare students to be active and responsible members for the societal development (Dewey, 1916). In this same light, Henry Giroux, a key figure in critical pedagogy, builds on Dewey’s emphasis asserting that education must foster critical consciousness and social responsibility among students (Giroux, 1997). In Giroux’s view, schools should be sites of community engagement where students are encouraged to critically analyze social structures and contribute to transformative social change. Giroux emphasizes the creation of learning environments where students can question and challenge societal norms and encourage active participation in the community as a means of fostering social justice (Giroux, 1997). For Dewey, therefore, a classroom community must provide students with the opportunity to learn about social responsibility, civic engagement, and ethical decision-making for the community.

1.2. Features of Community in Education

Community in education is a community that is being educated in itself and for itself. From the standpoint of community and its relationship with education, Dewey considers the school as a

miniature community where the social life is embodied. It is a place where the interest of diverse groups is balanced and the cooperative inquiry can be found among students and teachers. It has various characteristics as seen below.

1.2.1. Social Nature of Learning

Dewey holds that learning is inherently social. He rejected the traditional notion of the individual learner as isolated from others, asserting that students learn through interaction, discussion, and collaboration (Dewey, 1918). In this same spirit, Howard Gardner stresses that intelligence is not a singular trait but a collection of different modalities, such as linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, and interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

In the context of education, Gardner advocates for creating environments where students' individual strengths are nurtured within a collaborative, community-based framework. This approach encourages community learning that values diverse contributions and promotes shared knowledge. In this view, the community plays a central role in the educational process (Dewey, 1918). Dewey argued that knowledge is not a fixed set of facts to be memorized, but something that develops and evolves through shared experiences and dialogues within a community. He proposes that students should actively engage with each other to solve problems and explore ideas, fostering collective thinking and understanding (Dewey, 1918).

1.2.2. Democracy and Education

Dewey is the foundational figure when it comes to the role of community in education. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey emphasizes that education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but a process that prepares individuals to participate in a democratic society (Dewey, 1918). Democracy, according to Dewey, is not a form of government but an environment where students learn through interaction, collaboration, shared experience and problem solving. Dewey argues that schools should act as democratic communities where students learn through active engagement with one another, promoting mutual respect, shared goals, and collaboration (Dewey, 1918).

For Dewey, education must foster a sense of community that extends beyond the classroom to the broader society, ensuring that students develop the social and intellectual capacities needed to contribute to democracy (Dewey, 1918). Thus, Dewey believes that democratic education should reflect the values and principles of a democratic society, thus making the community essential in shaping students' moral and social development (Dewey, 1918).

1.2.3. Learning Through Experience

The quote: "Experience is the Best Teacher," is rooted in the broader cultural tradition of wisdom literature. Francis Bacon in his essay: "Of Studies", discusses how experience teaches better than reading or studying alone (Bacon, 2000). Dewey's philosophy of education therefore, is grounded on experiential learning. He proposed that education should be based on real-world experiences that engage students in practical, meaningful ways. He argued that schools should connect classroom learning to the community, so that students can apply their knowledge to real-life situations (Dewey, 1918). According to Dewey, this experiential approach to learning fosters a deeper connection to both the subject matter and the community in which it is situated, thereby creating a more holistic educational experience. By engaging with the community,

students see how their learning has value and relevance beyond the classroom (Dewey, 1918)

1.2.4. The Role of the Teacher

According to Dewey's thought, the teacher is a facilitator and a guide who helps students explore social interactions and collaborative learning within the community. Rather than being the sole authority in the classroom, he holds that the teacher's role is to create a supportive environment where students can learn from each other, share ideas, and work together (Dewey, 1918). The teacher fosters a sense of belonging within the community, encouraging active participation and inquiry. As such, Dewey believes that the teacher's ability to nurture the social and intellectual climate of the classroom is central to the development of students as engaged and thoughtful members of society (Dewey, 1918). He considers education as a continuous process throughout life.

1.2.5. Education as a Continuum

There is a popular literary phrase that "*Learning Never Ends*." This looks common but deeply meaningful. Similarly, Dewey emphasizes that education is not limited to the school years but is a continuous process that extends throughout life (Dewey, 2000). In this connection he argues that:

Learning is connected to the community, as students learn from the people and institutions around them. Hence, schools should prepare students to engage meaningfully with their communities, and learning should be seen as an ongoing interaction with the world (Dewey, 2000).

For Dewey, education is not only about acquiring knowledge but also about participating in and contributing to the development of society. The community for him is therefore a dynamic part of the lifelong educational journey and resources for personal and societal growth (Dewey, 1918).

1.3 Real-World Education

Real-world education refers to the idea that learning should be directly linked to practical, real-life experiences. Dewey advocates for education that prepares students to engage with the complexities of the world beyond the classroom, encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Dewey, 1918). Dewey defines real-world education as learning that occurs through direct engagement with the environment, where students are given opportunities to apply knowledge to real-life situations, rather than just theoretical or abstract tasks (Dewey, 1918).

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey also emphasizes that education should be an active, experiential process. He argues that the best way to prepare students for life is to involve them in activities that mirror real-world challenges. For Dewey, schools should be places where students can engage with their surroundings, explore practical problems, and learn how to make thoughtful decisions that have real-world consequences (Dewey, 1918).

1.4 Community-Based Education According to John Dewey

Community-based education, according to Dewey, is a form of education that takes place in and is connected to the local community. It involves students learning through engagement with real-world issues and local social contexts. Dewey's concept of

community-based education involves integrating students' learning with their local communities, enabling them to engage with real-life problems, interact with community members, and develop a sense of social responsibility (Dewey, 2000).

Thus, in his book: *The School and Society*, Dewey explains that schools should not be isolated from society but rather should work in partnership with the community. He argues that the school curriculum should reflect the life of the community and should prepare students to participate in and contribute to the social and civic life around them (Dewey, 1918). This approach helps students learn practical skills while fostering a sense of citizenship and social awareness.

In conclusion, John Dewey's contributions to educational philosophy have reshaped our understanding of how education can be structured to foster both individual growth and social responsibility. Through his emphasis on community, experiential learning, and real-world connections, his philosophy firmly advocates for an education system that is dynamic, democratic, and responsive to the needs of both the learner and society, whether it is through the lens of community-based education or real-world learning. However, Dewey's work continues to influence contemporary educational practices and the way we think about the purpose and structure of education.

His ideas propose that education is most effective when it involves collaboration, practical engagement, and a focus on the broader society in which learners live and participate. Thus, the peculiarity of Dewey's concept of community in education is indeed very necessary for a communal life, the system of real-world education and democratic process is a means of transmission of community values in the Cameroon community. However, some Philosophers challenged Dewey's notion of community, holding that communal education alone cannot solve real-world problems. This will be our focus in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

2. Indigenizing African Educational System: An Anthropological Perspective

Introduction

In an attempt to drive the education agenda in order to restore the African mind to its *sane state* and to discourage brain drain, President Thabo Mbeki popularized what is today called the African Renaissance theory. The theory advocates a revival of African past values and norms in order to apply them in current and future endeavors (Rabaka, 2022). Key factors in the African Renaissance theory are, growth, social cohesion, and economic rebuilding (African values, norms, and traditions that promote Ubuntu and foster development) (Muxe Nkondo, 2007). The first step to achieving this goal as indicated earlier is through education that reflects the values, norms, traditions, in essence, the reality of the African youth. Thus, the colonially established systems of education and Constitution ought to be indigenized.

Although the use of indigenous knowledge in Africa dates far back to the history of Africa as a continent, its current application in education and other spheres of community life and development is a recent phenomenon (Horschemke, 2004). However, most African researchers underscore that the African educational system on the most part, remains very much academic and distant from the

developmental challenges of African local communities, because it is still western centered (Kaya H & Seleti, O, 2013). Thus, indigenizing the educational system in Africa, from an anthropological perspective would mean integrating indigenous knowledge, values, and practices into the formal educational system, particularly recognizing their value and relevance to African contexts (Kaya H & Seleti, O, 2013).

This approach seeks to address the limitations of colonial-era education by creating a more relevant and culturally responsive learning experience for the African youth. It acknowledges the richness and validity of African knowledge systems, which aims to foster a sense of identity, belonging, and empowerment among African learners (Kaya & Seleti, 2013). The holistic, community-based nature and approach of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and its integration would be best in the higher educational system which would greatly improve its relevance.

By underscoring the importance of indigenous knowledge or education and insisting that it be included in the African educational system or school curriculum, we are in no way overlooking the importance of formal western education (Ramadikela et al., 2020). Western educational system is fundamental but to some extent cannot adequately meet the needs of Africans. It does not address or resonate with day-to-day realities of sustainable livelihood. (Ramadikela et al., 2020). It is unfortunate that African indigenous skills and knowledge that empowered its products for sustainability were excluded in the formal education during the period of colonization. How do you explain the fact that indigenous education was replaced by western education and administered to indigenous people to prepare them for a life within their indigenous communities? Scholarly analysis showed that those who were homeschooled in indigenous education and are running indigenous enterprises did better within indigenous cycles than those who received formal western education (Moerane, 2016; Reyhner & Eder, 2017).

For a better understanding and flow of thought in this article, two fundamental and unavoidable questions are addressed in this chapter; what is the meaning of the concept indigenous knowledge? And what are its objectives with regard to making education especially higher education in Africa and Cameroon in particular, relevant?

2.1. A Brief Overview of Indigenous Knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge or African knowledge, often used interchangeably, like many gnoseological theories is experiential knowledge based on a worldview and a culture that is basically relational. It is "Knowledge" based on Africa's own history of ideas and intellectual development. Indigenous education is openly defined by some as informal relevant skills, experiences, values, and knowledge used by African communities to construe their realities within their environment. (Bhuda, 2021; Seroto, 2011). It is knowledge or education that is passed from one generation to another orally and through experience replaced by formal education during the colonial era.

Summarily, Africa Indigenous Knowledge System refers to a holistic system that Indigenous people use to guide their knowing and doing. It is not a homogenous system that applies to every Indigenous population, rather a network of systems, meaning that every Indigenous population in Africa has its set of epistemological, belief, value and cultural systems (Olaitan, 2024).

T. D. Mdhuli, S. Mokgoatšana and others sum up the concept of African Indigenous Knowledge and Education thus,

African indigenous education (AIKS/E) focuses on molding one's career, orientating oneself to community life holistically with all necessary responsibilities for the sustainability of self, others, and the environment. AIKS/E bakes in a legal subject of integrity and who possesses fundamental skills for survival of self, the community, and the environment. It was never meant to prepare one to be a servant and/or worker of another but to champion life). AIE is arguably said to be community-oriented and never designed to ignite competition but complement others (Mdhuli et al., 2021).

To the true African scholar and the indigenous peoples, education never ended. One was forever learning. Life and education in Africa are inseparable. Years of accumulated tested experience become the traditions, values, and norms of the community. The outcomes are then passed down through practical teachings and word of mouth (Daswa et al., 2018).

2.1.1. Indigenous Knowledge Based on History

To say that African indigenous knowledge is "based on its history" signifies that African knowledge systems are deeply rooted in the continent's past experiences, cultural values, and historical events. This includes oral traditions, community practices, and indigenous technologies that have been passed down through generations. It emphasizes that African knowledge is not abstract or disconnected from the lived realities of its people, but rather emerges from and is shaped by their unique historical trajectory (Sarpong, 2002; Sarpong, 1991).

From a cultural-political perspective, it involves historical information about how Mansa Musa (1312-1337) developed Timbuktu as a commercial city and center of learning where scholars learned theology and law at the mosque of Sankore that subsequently laid the foundation for the University of Sankore which became a learning center not only for Africa, but also for the 'Middle East', with eminent scholars like Ahmed Baba (DeGraft Johnson 1954: 98) who authored more than forty books on diverse subjects, and owned a 1,600 volume library in the sixteenth century (Jackson 1980: 217).

2.1.2. Indigenous Knowledge as non-western Knowledge System

African indigenous knowledge, when defined as a non-Western knowledge system, refers to the unique and diverse systems of knowledge, practices, and beliefs that have been developed and passed down through generations within African societies. It is distinct from Western knowledge systems, which are often associated with modern science, academia, and documented evidence. African knowledge systems encompass a holistic approach, integrating spirituality, community, and the environment, and are often transmitted orally and experientially.

Indigenous knowledge has generally been propagated to incorporate non-western beliefs, practices, customs, worldviews, including informal forms of education. Indigenous African education and knowledge have generally been understood as a simplistic process of socialization involving the preparation of children for work in the home, the village and within a selected ethnic domain. It should be noted that the spirit of the African worldview includes wholeness, community and harmony which are

deeply embedded in cultural values. A person becomes human only in the midst of others and seeks both individual and collective harmony as the primary task in the process of becoming a true person (Sarpong, 2002; Sarpong, 1991).

2.1.3. Indigenous Knowledge Based on Community and Social Responsibility

In the context of African knowledge, "community and social responsibility" means that knowledge is viewed as a collective resource, shared and maintained by the community, and used to benefit all its members. This is in sharp contrasts with individualistic perspectives, where knowledge is often seen as personal property. African knowledge systems emphasize interconnectedness, interdependence, and the importance of social harmony in the acquisition and application of knowledge.

In examining indigenous African knowledge and education we see that it involves understanding education as: a means to an end; social responsibility; spiral and moral values; participation in ceremonies, rituals; imitation; recitation; demonstration; sport; epic; poetry; reasoning; riddles; praise; songs; story-telling; proverbs, folktales; word games; puzzles; tongue-twisters; dance; music; plant biology; environmental education, and other education centered activity that can be acknowledged and examined.

Finally, indigenous knowledge and education apply to a variety of livelihood situations in Africa such as, food security, environment conservation, health, natural resource management, conflict transformation, education, governance and leadership (Odora-Hoppers 2001 and 2002).

2.2. African Indigenous Knowledge in Making the Educational System Relevant

Integrating African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK) into the educational system is crucial for making it more relevant to African learners and communities. This approach acknowledges the value of traditional knowledge systems alongside formal education, promoting cultural relevance, and enhancing the practical application of learning (Kaya H & Seleti, O, 2013). Here's how African Indigenous Knowledge can be integrated.

In addition to the supposedly global languages, students and learners need to be taught using their indigenous languages. Such a move holds water in decolonizing the mentality of the students and learners while restoring and preserving indigenous languages in the modern dynamic world. It is argued that indigenous languages give precise and concise expressions of their culture; thus, eliminating the language entails eliminating the cultural norms and values. We argue that some of the colonial narratives of citing African names when referring to peasant farmers and people of low life and/or criminals ought to be reviewed to generate a thinking that Africans matter and that they can do anything that is good and above average. The use of indigenous languages also makes it easier for learners to capture concepts easily without struggling with the language first (Kaya H & Seleti, O, 2013).

2.3. Key Aspects of Indigenizing Education and Benefits

Indigenizing education involves integrating Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and practices into the curriculum and learning environment to create a more relevant and empowering educational experience for all students. This process goes beyond superficial additions of cultural elements and requires systemic change, including revising curriculum, valuing Indigenous languages, and

fostering collaboration with Indigenous communities. Benefits include promoting equity and inclusion, enhancing learning experiences, supporting reconciliation and decolonization, and fostering a holistic approach to education (Kaya H & Seleti, O, 2013)

2.3.1. Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into the Curriculum

The basic problem is that educational structures inherited from colonial imperialists are based on cultural values different from those existing in most of the African indigenous societies. The lack of relevance is perpetuated by the continuous social, economic and technological ties between African countries and their former colonizing powers.

Integration of indigenous knowledge is nothing other than modernizing the educational system currently in place. This is to be done by maintaining cultural integrity while integrating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. The inclusion of indigenous language, practices, and values in the curriculum smooths the way. Such a move to integrate can be initiated within degrees, subjects, and modules wherein indigenous knowledge carries valuable insights. It is fundamental for example to comprehend the roots and routes of the Indigenous peoples of South Africa to have understanding how the suzerain education affected them by pushing their practices and values away. Integrating indigenous knowledge would be judicious in redressing past injustices and imbalances (Kaya H & Seleti, O, 2013). This would include incorporating traditional knowledge systems, practices, and perspectives into the curriculum, recognizing their value and relevance to African contexts.

2.3.2. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Shifting from solely Western-centric teaching methods to approaches that resonate with African learning styles and cultural contexts. African indigenous education is to be defended and promoted so that children and societies can be empowered to use indigenous solutions to address local challenges while having a global outlook. African indigenous education skillfully advocates themes across various disciplines such as education, child-rearing, governance, conservation, heritage, and development. The potency and quality of this education is a testament to the great smiths, potters, hunters, weavers, and medicine men that produced prolific and outstanding outputs (Kaya H & Seleti, O, 2013). A generous look at African indigenous educational products reveals variety, flexibility, and practical dexterity, as evidenced by the various experts within the surviving African spaces. With these things on the verge of extinction, we provide a different narrative of African indigenous education with the intention to advocate for its revival within the mainstream of education. We stress that its revival is indispensable and should not be viewed as inferior but be apportioned the respect and honor it deserves.

2.3.3. Decolonization of the Curriculum

Western intervention in the African continent brought with it a negation of Africa's originality. Its package was nothing other than a belittling of the continent's authentic experiences, meaning that all of Africans' environment, lived experiences, way of life, cultural values, belief systems, and educational structure and curriculum (among others) were considered not only backward, unscientific but barbaric, fit for their dustbins. This misconception led to the superimposition of the European psyche over that of the African, often strategically orchestrated through the colonially

established, or post-colonially controlled education systems (Chika, 2019). Indigenous knowledge systems, which are supposed to be a product of the environment and should ideally, form the foundation upon which the formal education system of any society is constructed, has been consistently and intentionally relegated to an inferior position for their advantage (Bassey, 1999). As if that was not enough, the African educational system and structures inherited from the colonizers remain tailored on cultural values that are different from those existing in most of the African indigenous societies. Most of them are out of touch with the African reality. Students are being taught foreign concepts that do not yield authentic results in the unique environments. Decolonizing the African educational curriculum to reflect the reality and needs of the African is nothing other than indigenizing the system. The attempt is thus a second glance at their indigenous philosophy to recalibrate solutions that are fit and proper (Chika, 2019).

It must be acknowledged that the major setback in the struggle for indigenizing education in Africa as mentioned already is the fact that African leadership finds it difficult to dissociate themselves from western dominance. The lack of relevance is perpetuated by the continuous socio-economic and technological ties between African countries and their former colonizing powers. We understand that higher education in particular is one of the means used to foster this bond, rather than reduce it. Reforms in African educational system in most African countries are still conceived and implemented within the framework of this relationship (Smith, 2002; Walter, 2002). Here, we still find an inexplicable marginalizing of African cultural values and indigenous languages into the education system at all levels (Smith, 2002; Walter, 2002). Thus, moving away from the dominance of Western knowledge and promoting a more balanced representation of African history, culture, and perspectives will help in indigenizing African educational system.

2.3.4. Holistic Approach to Learning

Holistic approach to learning will mean the formation of a curriculum that will embrace all Indigenous peoples composed of diverse, unique, and distinct cultural values within a geographical location. This will not only affect the curriculum but would require that teachers be well-versed in many different knowledge systems in order to cater for the needs of all learners. Recognizing the interconnectedness of knowledge, spirituality, community, and the environment, as emphasized in many African knowledge systems would help bridge the gap. It should be made clear that this process of holistic approach or integration and/or inclusion would be challenging. It will certainly require patience, collaboration, openness, and resilience, as they are real hurdles that can block such a stupendous initiative. African indigenous education and Western education are founded on different worldviews and complex epistemologies hinged on different social, cultural, historical, and political positionalities. Stephen R. Stoer and Luiza Cortesão submit that viewing this web of holistic learning which involves diverging and delicate matter calls for both indigenous and international perspectives to form an intercultural dialogue and learning process (Stoer and Cortesão, 1999).

2.3.5. Community Involvement

Indigenous education from its very foundation was cherished and was at the core of all African societies in preparing the younger generations for the future. Various institutions within the African society were designed to ensure that communities were taught on

the things they would be doing at home and in the community. (Lekoko & Modise, 2011). This alone showed the relevance of indigenous education within the community. Thus, African indigenous education gave direction to community development and was closely attached to the life lived in the indigenous communities. John Tharakan confirmed this position when he intimated that the success of the life of the indigenous communities was accredited to the congruencies of the indigenous education and the lived lifestyle of communities (Tharakan, 2015). Extrapolating from the latter, Stewart Lee Kugaraa and Tsetselelane Decide Mdhuli, argue that indigenous education sufficiently prepares the young generation for experiences that they encounter daily (Stewart Lee Kugaraa and Tsetselelane Decide Mdhuli, 2023). With the advent of colonialism, indigenous education was discarded in preference for Western education (Ramadikela et al., 2020). Indigenous education was replaced by Western education and administered to Indigenous people to prepare them for a life within their indigenous communities. This caused serious paralysis. The reason was simple. Why train non-westerners with western education for life within indigenous communities? Perpetuated by colonialism, such was said to be devious, damaging, and creates useless people who cannot give any palliatives to the community in which they live (Stewart Lee Kugaraa and Tsetselelane Decide Mdhuli, 2023). Such an educational system is meant to alienate Indigenous peoples from their heritage and their existence (Brock-Utne, 2002; Hammar et al. 2021; Situmorang et al., 2021). Infusing the African values and norms within the curriculum offers the opportunity to bridge this gap. Therefore, engaging African scholars, educationists, local communities and elders in the design and implementation of educational initiatives to ensure relevance and cultural appropriateness is the purpose of this article.

2.3.6. Emphasis on Practical Skills and Lifelong Learning

African scholars and learners should come to the realization that learning is not confined to formal education but is a lifelong process embedded in daily life and community activities. Therefore, African Indigenous Knowledge System and Education should be featured in discussions on how to improve the systems that guide the everyday lives of Africans. African educational system ought to be tailored in a manner that learners apply indigenous knowledge-based practices into governance structure, agricultural system, education, medicine etc. Scholars must move beyond fighting for the recognition of African Indigenous Knowledge System as a legitimate frame of knowing to adopting it as a way of life (Situmorang J., Sahman A., Suryanto T., Gani Z. (2021).

Promotion of African Languages

One of the ways to indigenize the African educational system is to encourage the use and revitalization of African languages as medium of instruction and cultural expression. In line with this vision and aspirations, the National Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) office and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) were created. Also, the University of Kwazulu-Natal in partnership with the National IKS Office began the AIKS programme in South Africa.

In the same light, S. Mmola conducted a study on Students' and Lecturers' perceptions towards the IKS program at North-West University (Mafikeng Campus) (Mmola, 2010). The results were very revealing. They showed that more than 80% of the respondent students had the opinion that lecturers who incorporated

indigenous African cultural elements, especially the use of the local language, that is, Setswana into their teaching practices were highly appreciated by students. They also indicated that such lecturers made them experience a feeling of autonomy by getting the opportunity to learn university education using their own language. Again, the same study revealed that the lecturers who used Setswana in their teaching and interaction with students, did incorporate local community practices into lessons and utilized culturally relevant material which was highly appreciated by students (Mmola, 2010).

The same study showed that when AIKS was systemically and holistically included into the university curriculum, students' achievement improved. The reason was that students were able to relate what was taught with their own home and community experiences (Mmola, 2010). Respondents who were academic leaders also revealed that the building of strong relationships between students, researchers, lecturers with student families and local communities created meaningful and positive learning outcomes for students because of AIKS (Mmola, 2010).

When asked about the benefits of introducing the Indigenous Knowledge Systems into the university curriculum, student respondents said (in order of most commonly mentioned benefit) that they gained new multi- and trans-disciplinary knowledge and skills, especially cultural skills, which could assist them to fit into a wide range of career choices, developing networks for future employment opportunities, and helped them to increase self-esteem or self-worth. It also made them sensitive to the challenges of community livelihood and development (Mmola, 2010).

Interviews with parents and community leaders showed that their involvement in the IKS programme and curriculum made them feel needed by the educational system as they were actively participating in the higher education of their children (Mmola, 2010). This is due to the fact that the IKS Programme at North-West University often used Indigenous Knowledge Holders and Practitioners from the surrounding local communities and beyond as resource persons in specific teaching and learning fields such as African traditional medicine and healing systems, African traditional governance and leadership systems, indigenous natural resource management, etc (Mmola, 2010). This provided the students with an opportunity to learn across generations hence making them appreciate and respect the knowledge of these elders and community members (Mmola, 2010).

2.3.7. Collaborative efforts by diverse stakeholders

The authors argue that there is a need to bring diverse fundamental stakeholders to harness their collaborative efforts to foster continuation of African indigenous education. Key stakeholders include African indigenous communities, governmental, non-governmental, and academic institutions (Mmola, 2010). A critical look at the stakeholders shows that African indigenous communities top the list, as they are the victims who desire to have their educational system preserved and set to be passed on to future generations through formal systems of education (Mmola, 2010). Their desired hopes can find expression through legislation, policy, funding, curricular incorporation, and advocacy.

2.3.8. Enhanced Self-Esteem and Identity

Indigenizing education, which involves incorporating indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and practices into the curriculum, can significantly enhance students' self-esteem and identity. By

validating and celebrating students' cultural backgrounds, it fosters a sense of belonging, pride, and self-worth, leading to improved academic outcomes and overall well-being. Therefore, indigenizing education can foster a stronger sense of cultural identity and pride among African learners.

2.3.9. *Promotion of Sustainable Development*

There is so much potential that African Indigenous Knowledge System can offer for the socio-economic development of Africa. Chikaire, J., Osuagwu, C.O., Ihenacho, R.A and a host of others talking about *Indigenous Knowledge System: The Need for Reform and the Way Forward* highlight that the concept of sustainable development is viewed more broadly as an offshoot of Indigenous knowledge (Chikaire, et.al, 2012). Thus, integrating indigenous knowledge can contribute to more sustainable and culturally appropriate approaches to development. G. Dei, B. Hall and D. Rosenberg on *indigenous knowledge in global contexts* underscore that the epistemological capacity of African Indigenous Knowledge System, diverse ways of knowing, various understandings of the world, its past and present challenges and successes are essential components of the post-colonial transformation process, as well as the rediscovery of Africa's history and its historical awareness (Dei, G., et.al, 2008). African scholars have emphasized the need for the present generation to consider future generations and honour ancestors because there are plenty potentials that AIKS can offer for the socio-economic development of Africa. This responsibility recognizes three elements in the human community: those who went before us, those who are with us here and now, and those who are yet to come (Dei, G., et.al, 2008).

Despite decades of self-rule, African scholars have not succeeded in empowering the continent to develop its own educational theoretical and methodological framework for knowledge production and sustainable development. There could be several reasons for this but the argument here is that, one of the key factors, education, especially the higher education in Africa has not been relevant to the needs and concerns of African societies (Chikaire, et.al, 2012). This is in spite of the substantial resources expended to boost higher education in Africa and South Africa. Evidence provided by the South African National Treasury (2012) shows that about 6% of national budget goes to Higher Education and Training (Mmola, 2010).

2.3.10. *Preservation and Transmission of Culture*

Indigenizing education helps to safeguard and transmit indigenous knowledge and cultural practices to future generations. One must be open-minded to see the preservation of culture, empowerment of the indigenous communities, and equity in education that will be brought about by a genuine collaborative endeavor. For far too long now, African indigenous knowledge has been demonized and misrepresented, and this has resulted in it seemingly becoming extinct. Against this backdrop, therefore is the need for serious involvement of indigenous knowledge holders in African communities to assist curriculum developers with fundamental issues to include in school curriculum. Just like experts are given remuneration for such tasks, traditional health care practitioners, indigenous singers, potters, and other indigenous knowledge holders ought to come on board to perform such roles with similar benefits (Chikaire, et.al, 2012).

2.3.11. *Orientation and training of lecturers and teachers*

One watershed challenge encountered when teaching IKSs is that lecturers often (consciously or unconsciously) think and reason from the western perspective. This is because they were or are still trained in a Western system, so trying to adopt the African way seems strange and wicked. The best way to navigate this is to have lecturers and teachers trained with relevant knowledge and skills to allow integration of indigenous views. A workshop on cultural sensitivity is therefore critical to acknowledge and appreciate diverse backgrounds of indigenous groups. A new way of training lecturers and teachers in the teaching of an integrated curriculum ought to be developed (Chikaire, et.al, 2012).

2.4. *Challenges of Indigenizing Education*

It is prudent that any collaborative efforts to allow the continuation of African indigenous education be handled carefully because of the horrendous past that may attract distrust among the African indigenous knowledge holders. Colonial rule inflicted psychological torture through colonial policies that ensured the decimation of African indigenous knowledge. As such, allowing foreign means and strategies that once dehumanized them to come in as a savior leaves much to be desired. This could easily be seen as a jackpot to financially exploit Africans using their resources (Chikaire, et.al, 2012).

2.4.1. *Resistance to Change*

Overcoming resistance from those who favor the existing Western-centric education system. This ought to be convinced that AIK has enormous potential for contributing to development in Africa. To adequately harness this potential, we must fundamentally acknowledge it as a legitimate knowledge system rather than secondary to the Western knowledge system. This acknowledgement allows us to de-center Western knowledge systems and re-center African Indigenous knowledge systems in the knowledge ecosystem. This recentering will underpin the subsequent embrace and application of AIKS as an epistemological framework and a holistic system of life to facilitate development (Chikaire, et.al, 2012)

2.4.2. *Potential for Essentialism and Romanticism*

The first aspect of indigenization of the educational system in African is to ensure that indigenization itself does not lead to a narrow or romanticized view of indigenous cultures. African Indigenous Knowledge System should not be limited to the realm of epistemology as it is meant to guide the way of life and practices of Africans. The goal is that Africans should be able to move beyond the myopic view that AIKS is just an alternative form of knowledge to the conviction that it is an entire system that comprises knowledge, beliefs, practices, concepts, and value systems that can better improve lives and contribute to development in Africa. It is important therefore to move beyond theory, reaction to action, that is, embracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems as a means of knowledge and practice (Olaitan and Oloruntoba 2023).

2.4.3. *Resource Constraints*

Indigenizing African Educational System no doubt requires additional resources for curriculum development, teacher training, and community engagement. Disciplines such as the natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences should be made to include a curriculum on Indigenous Knowledge to teach students

how Indigenous Knowledge System can complement and, where possible, replace Western knowledge systems towards sustainable development in Africa (Olaitan and Oloruntoba 2023). These require funds as well; therefore, governments and academic think tanks should fund research on how Indigenous Knowledge should be included in the curriculum. This will go a long way to enrich the lives of the population with a focus on aspects of life such as finance, entrepreneurship, technology, health, etc. Efforts to build a comprehensive guide on how AIKS can inform practice will further consolidate its legitimacy. There are a lot of Indigenous Knowledge-based practices buried deep, such that they can only be uncovered through alternative means of research methodologies such as orality. Hence, we must embrace Indigenous methodology to gain access to some of the Indigenous practices that can help us advance as a society (Olaitan and Oloruntoba 2023)

2.4.4. Maintaining a Critical Perspective

Avoiding uncritical acceptance of indigenous knowledge systems and ensuring that they are evaluated and adapted as needed should be a call for concern by African government academicians and stakeholders. It is prudent that any collaborative efforts to allow the continuation of African indigenous education be handled carefully because of the horrendous past that may attract distrust among the African indigenous knowledge holders (Chikaire, et.al, 2012). Colonial rule inflicted psychological torture through its policies that ensured the decimation of African indigenous knowledge. As such, allowing foreign means and strategies that once dehumanized them to come in as a savior leaves much to be desired. This could easily be seen as a jackpot to financially exploit Africans using their resources.

Conclusion:

Indigenizing education in Africa is a complex but crucial process that has the potential to transform the educational landscape and empower African learners. By embracing indigenous knowledge, values, and practices, African educational systems can become more relevant, culturally responsive, and effective in fostering sustainable development and cultural preservation.

It is important to underscore that “African issues can adequately be addressed by African people.” What this means is that Africans understand their issues better, they are not judgmental, and will have Africa at heart in such engagements. This does not in any way suggest that, outsiders have no place in African issues. The idea of bringing in an outsider no doubt can bring objectivity. The way forward is engaging with outsiders who are fully aware of the pre-colonial era and the position that the colonizers of the time had in mind when they quelled African indigenous education. The very attempt to indigenize African educational system in the midst of an existing western system for ages unending brings with it the possibility of cultural mismatch between African indigenous education and Western-oriented education system. This mismatch no doubt will breed tension, anger, and resentment in the process, as some things that are not regarded as important will be thrown away and some polished to meet so-called Western standards.

It is no hidden secret that current African studies scholars are products of Western education. Western influence on African indigenous education must be dealt with caution, as it will perpetuate colonial rule as their objectivity is questioned. Working with genuine African indigenous knowledge holders in this issue will bring sanity to capturing the philosophical underpinnings of

Africans before colonization. One must be open-minded to see the preservation of culture, empowerment of the indigenous communities, and equity in education that will be brought about by a genuine collaborative endeavor. Such positivity in the outcome ought to supersede the diverse challenges that will be witnessed in the process. Mutual understanding, respect, and trust are the sure vehicles that can enhance this initiative.

Chapter Three

3. A Critical Evaluation of Community in Education

Dewey's idea of community in education is influential but also controversial. Dewey's concept of community in education has sparked various criticisms over the years. Existential educationists like Jean Paul Sartre, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Martin Buber, Karl Jasper and others opposed to communal education, hold that the idea of education should focus on the individuality of each person and not the group (Sartre JP (2004). Nevertheless, some African philosophers like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Nnamdi Azikiwe align with Dewey, emphasizing the importance of interconnectedness in education. This chapter will therefore examine the critical evaluation of Dewey's concept of community in education beginning with the positive critiques.

3.1. Positive Criticisms

Like Dewey, as mentioned earlier, some African philosophers like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and many others, advocate for the concept of community in education, emphasizing the importance of interconnectedness, collective well-being, and the role of education in fostering social harmony and community values is the African natural way of life, that of togetherness (Allman, 2013). This is empowered by a holistic educational system.

3.1.1. Holistic Education

The African conception of community is often rooted in its traditional values; education is seen as a communal and holistic process. Particularly, scholars such as Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere have expressed the idea that education should not only aim to develop the individual but also promote social cohesion, collective responsibility, and cultural continuity within the African context (Nkrumah, 1970). Nkrumah's educational philosophy stresses the need for a communal approach, where the educational system serves to empower individuals to contribute to the progress of the collective society. For Nkrumah, education is intrinsically linked to the community's development and should reflect communal values of solidarity, unity, and sharing (Nkrumah, 1970).

3.1.2. Education for Self-Sufficiency and Communal Welfare

Dewey asserts that education must provide students with opportunities to learn about social responsibility. Similarly, Julius Nyerere, advanced the concept of “Education for Self-Reliance” (Nyerere, 1967) which emphasizes the integration of communal and educational goals. Nyerere's educational philosophy reflects a vision of education deeply embedded in the community where learning is directed toward serving the common good. In his view, education should be an instrument of nation-building, focused on promoting self-sufficiency and communal welfare. Nyerere's belief in the communal nature of education challenges Western

educational models that often prioritize individual achievement over collective social responsibilities (Nyerere, 1967). Nyerere's ideas therefore stress that the role of education is not merely to individualize students but to ensure that they understand their role within the larger social structure and work for the common good.

3.1.3. Education as Mutual Responsibilities Between Individuals and their Communities

Nnamdi Azikiwe also contributes to the African view of education as a communal endeavor. Azikiwe's vision for education in post-colonial Africa involves developing not only the individual but also the community by integrating African cultural values and communal responsibilities into the educational system (Azikiwe, 1970). Azikiwe advocates for an educational system that fosters respect for communal living, cooperation, and solidarity while simultaneously cultivating the intellectual capacities of the individual. His model of education highlights the mutual responsibilities between individuals and their communities. (Azikiwe, 1970) This reflects the African understanding of social education that seeks to balance individual growth with the collective welfare.

3.2. Shortcomings of Community Education

Existential educationists like Jean Paul Sartre, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Martin Buber, Karl Jasper and others opposed to communal education. They hold that the idea of education should focus on the individuality of each person and not the group.

3.2.1. Existentialism and Individual's Existence

Existentialists such as Jean Paul Sartre, Soren Kierkegaard and others, challenge John Dewey's conception of community in education. They emphasize on individual's role and the importance of personal freedom in the educational process. According to existential educationists, the community grows when learners enjoy the freedom of self-expression and creativity (Azikiwe, 1970).

2.2.1.1. Individual's Freedom

Existentialists challenge Dewey's emphasis on the collective aspect of education. Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger focus on individual autonomy and the importance of personal responsibility in the face of an absurd and meaningless world. Sartre's critique of social structures and norms suggests that education should allow for the full realization of individual freedom, rather than merely preparing individuals to conform to the expectations of a community (Sartre, 1946). This individual freedom stands in contrast to Dewey's more collective vision of education. Therefore, the existentialists believe that Dewey's approach may instead suppress the individuality of the students by placing too much emphasis on social conformity and shared ideas. John Stuart Mill like Soren Kierkegaard draws more light, advocating for individuality as one of the elements of well-being. He lays more emphasis on the individual's choice and happiness asserting that:

The human faculties of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice. He who does anything because it is the custom, makes no choice. He gains no practice either in discerning: or in desiring what is best. The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used. The faculties are called into no exercise by doing a thing

merely because others do it, no more than by believing a thing only because others believe it...He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty (Mill, 1968)

Therefore, human happiness or fulfilment comes from choices that evolve from within and not external influence. He or she must use their faculty to choose what is best for themselves before all else. An individual will live a happy life only when he or she is capable of making choices that suit their personal life and not the choice of the society. Being at the service of the community should be an inner and intentional decision and not an obligation from the community. Therefore, according to Mill, Dewey's community education is not an end for human happiness (Mill, 1968). Even Paul Feyerabend supported Mill's advocating for "the cultivation of individuality which alone can produce a well-developed human-being." (Mill, 1968). Through freedom, one can live a full and rewarding life.

2.2.1.2. Personal Angst

Moreover, Søren Kierkegaard criticizes the educational system's focus on community by emphasizing the role of personal angst (angst is a personal anxiety that arises when individuals realize they have the freedom to choose and must confront the possibility of making significant choices) and the necessity of confronting one's own existence (Kierkegaard, 1980). True education must involve an inner struggle and an individual's engagement. This approach places less emphasis on community-based learning and more on the individual's solitary journey toward self-understanding. He holds thus:

No one, neither philosopher nor priest, can tell us who or what we are, or what we should do. We must discover and decide that for ourselves, in our inner, most intimate place, where we can make our true self come to light, then shine upon our own, singular path. It is important for us to know ourselves, to discover what are really our values, our beliefs, and our *truths* in order to live a more fulfilling life (Kierkegaard, 1980)

For Kierkegaard, therefore, education is not about harmonizing with a community but about embracing personal isolation and the existential confrontation with one's own freedom. It is important to know who we truly are, so that the community pressures should not manipulate us into doing what is contrary to our inner selves.

2.2.1.3. Self-Reliance

The existentialist, Albert Camus also contrasts Dewey's optimism regarding the ability of education to foster social cohesion. For Camus, the search for meaning in life is an individual endeavor, and no external authority, including societal or educational institutions, can provide ultimate answers (Camus, 1991). His concept of the "absurd hero" suggests that students should be encouraged to face the meaninglessness of existence directly, develop their own values and paths rather than relying on a community's shared ideals. Camus views education as a tool for developing critical self-awareness and the courage to live authentically, even in the face of an indifferent world (Camus, 1991).

2.2.2. Over Emphasis on Social Harmony

One significant critique is that Dewey's educational philosophy presumes a unified, harmonious community (Dewey, 2000), that

may not exist in reality, especially in diverse or pluralistic societies. Critics like Nancy Fraser argue that Dewey's ideas on democracy fail to fully address the multicultural and the ideological differences within a community, which are particularly relevant in today's diverse educational settings (Fraser, 1997). Fraser took for instance, in multicultural classrooms, the assumption that everyone who shares similar democratic values or social goals can marginalize students from different backgrounds (Fraser, 1997).

David T. Hansen also challenges the emphasis on unified community. He argues that Dewey's ideal school community overlooks the importance of confronting social injustices, particularly those related to race, class, and gender (Hansen, 2006). Hansen thinks that by focusing on cooperative learning and mutual understanding, Dewey may have underestimated the need for educational environments where conflict is not only accepted but used as a tool for critical social change (Hansen, 2006). For Hansen, therefore, a community must disagree in order to agree.

2.2.2.1. Social Conformity

Critiques like Martha Nussbaum point out that Dewey's notion of a community-based education could lead to a form of social conformity, where the individual's voice and diversity of perspectives might be stifled by the collective demands of the community. For instance, Dewey's focus on group experience and shared learning might not allow for adequate attention to individual needs, especially in heterogeneous classrooms. Therefore, Dewey's theory of democratic education lacks a clear, practical framework for applying this concept in the diverse educational settings (Nussbaum, 1997).

2.2.2.2. Different Realities and Levels of Socialization

Again, Martha Nussbaum argues that Dewey's theories fail to account for how certain groups of students, particularly those from marginalized communities, might not experience the same level of participation or empowerment within a community-focused educational system (Nussbaum, 1997). This critique highlights the need for educational frameworks that actively challenge societal inequalities. Students who found themselves together at school are being brought up from different backgrounds with different realities and experience (Nussbaum, 1997). Therefore, the level of participation in the community education cannot be the same for all groups of students.

2.2.3. The Practical Application of Dewey's Philosophy

Lee Jerome argues that Dewey's educational ideals are aspirational but often unrealistic in practice, especially in schools characterized by overcrowded classrooms, standardized testing, and a lack of teacher autonomy. Lee suggests that Dewey's ideal community-focused education may struggle to take root in environments that are constrained by external pressures and accountability measures (Jerome, 2009). External pressure does not allow the individual to have a good relationship with the inner self.

By way of conclusion, though the existentialists challenge Dewey's vision of community-based education by emphasizing the importance of individual freedom, personal responsibility, and the existential need for self-realization, Dewey's view on community education remains influential in educational experience. Whether in personal or community engagement, education aims at impacting one with knowledge that can enhance critical thinking

which will enable learners to find solutions to life's problems, both for the self and for the community. In order to achieve this, the educational curriculum must reflect the reality of the societal life. Therefore, Dewey's concept of community in education is suitable to the Cameroon's educational situation.

Chapter Four

4. Relevance of Dewey's Concept of Community Education to the Cameroonian Community

Dewey's emphasis on the community's role in education has a critical implication for the Cameroonian society considering the structure, content, and delivery of education to meet the changing demands of the community (Dewey, 1968). At this point, we consider the ideas of Bernard Nsokika Fonlon in education which are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural context of Cameroon as well as other African countries. Fonlon advocated for a holistic educational system that addresses both intellectual and cultural development on the individuals, while fostering social responsibilities within the country (Fonlon, 1999).

Nevertheless, the Cameroon educational curriculum has always been subject to debates pointing the fact that it does not adequately address the community realities. Therefore, in order to explore the relevance of Dewey's concept of community in education to the Cameroonian society, this chapter will focus on four key areas: the need for curriculum reformation, promoting community-based education, promoting education along with moral teaching in the educational curriculum, and maintenance of a favorable learning environment.

4.1. A Need for Curriculum Reformation

According to Dewey, the aim of education is to foster personal growth, self-awareness, and self-actualization in the individuals (Dewey, 1968). This is the idea that education helps individuals discover their potential and become best of themselves. Thus, an authentic community or society begins with the formation of the authentic individuals. In order to build an authentic African society, schools should connect classroom learning to the community realities which will foster critical thinking to solve real world problems (Dewey, 2000). However, the introduction of formal education in Cameroon by the colonial masters aimed at promoting the Western cultures (Yaro, 2020). Nevertheless, Bernard N. Fonlon emphasizes that education in Cameroon should not be a mere replication of western model but should also infuse with local values, practice and wisdom (Ngu, 2002). This includes: a sense of community and collectivity, respect for elders, hospitality, sharing, Ubuntu, dialogue, spirituality and connection to nature, hard work, forgiveness and reconciliation. These values are specific to the African culture.

Our society is ever rich with genuine wise men and women who have solutions to our community needs and problems. For instance, there are wise men and women in most villages with skills that are useful to the community like craftsmanship, midwifery, circumcision, predicting future events, healing with the use of natural herbs, just to name a few. In fact, the community knows who to run to in case of a particular need or problem. These can be done through hand-on-training to the younger ones. Moreover, according to Dewey, education is "Life" (Dewey, 2000) and the maintenance and renewal of this life is by transition from the elders

to the younger ones, without which the existence of a community will cease to be. Therefore, to preserve our genuine identity, there is a need to infuse our authentic cultural values and wisdom to the educational curriculum.

According to Dewey, education in its broader sense is a means of this social continuity of life (Dewey, 2000). Hence, the original African way of education is through oral tradition. This effective and successful method of education is one of its kinds that make the identity of the Africans, Africans. Therefore, the Cameroon educational system should not minimize or consider it inferior but should rather boost and give more value to this system, and infuse it in the Cameroonian education curriculum. Integrating this system in the educational program will help students know and live their cultural values. The implication of this system will also enable the students to easily identify the problem faced by their community and focus their education on those realities.

John Ngwa emphasizes that, Dewey's concept of community in education stresses the importance of a curriculum that is reflective to the social, cultural, and economic realities of the learners (Ngwa, 2019). This perspective calls for a curriculum that goes beyond academics and encompasses the skills and values necessary for active participation in the community. Dewey's approach suggests that an effective curriculum should incorporate local realities where there is a diverse range of ethnic groups and languages, traditions, and practical knowledge that are relevant to students' everyday lives (Ngwa, 2019). Such a curriculum would not only enhance the learning experience but also promote social cohesion and respect for cultural diversity.

4.2. Promotion Of Community-Based Education

Community-based education encourages the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which can foster greater social responsibility and engagement for the community (Dewey, 2018). Scholars like George Kum Fuh join Dewey's assertion that, community involvement in education is key in addressing educational challenges in Cameroon and the broader African context (Fuh, 2013). An example of the community challenges is the current Anglophone crisis that has been neglected for a period of years, resulting to loss of lives, jobs, destruction, displacement of people and community discomfort. This reality is gradually leading to the loss of community values, identity and authenticity of fellow citizens of the English-speaking parts of Cameroon. Therefore, integrating a real-world education would empower the indigenous citizens with problem-solving skills that can enable them to settle their problems without waiting for the colonial powers to decide.

Moreover, advocates for community-based education like J. Tazem argue that empowering local communities to play a larger role in educational content and delivery could help address the cultural diversity and unique needs of different regions within Cameroon. Community-based educational systems are seen as an avenue to preserve indigenous knowledge and integrate local languages and economic systems into formal education, which could foster a stronger sense of identity among learners (Tazem, 2017).

4.2.1. Community-based Education and Language

According to Francis O. C. Njoku, language is a tool malleable enough to reflect each person's reality (Njoku, 2002). It embodies the spirit of culture, and mediate life and values. Language identifies members of a group, carrying their cultural, political, and

religious truth (Njoku, 2002). Cameroon as such is home with more than 200 ethnic groups, each with its own tradition, language and worldview. However, a real-world education cannot be expressed only in a foreign language. Francis M. Ngefacs suggests that the curriculum should integrate local languages alongside French and English (Ngefacs, 2012).

As a journey of community in education, no culture should be taken for granted. Education in Cameroon could be more realistic if the language of each culture is allowed to be taught in every educational setup that is planted in that particular area. For example, as CATUC is situated in the North West Region, some fundamental values of the grassland/highland people should be part of the school curriculum. Also, well knowledgeable elders could be made to give oral teaching about moral and cultural values. By so doing, each and every citizen would have the knowledge of at least more than two cultures. Focus on community realities will enable the young people to be more authentic and knowledgeable about themselves and their needs, and be able to identify their community problems and develop the skills to solve these problems.

4.2.2. Community-based Education and Economy

According to George. K. Fuh, Cameroon's economy is characterized by a mix of formal and informal sectors, with large disparities between urban and rural areas. The curriculum often fails to address the economic realities that students face (Fuh, 2017). For instance, rural areas may have limited access to modern resources, and the curriculum does not always consider the economic activities (agriculture, trade, and craftsmanship) that are central to many students' daily lives. There is a need to adapt education to prepare students for emerging sectors such as digital technologies, entrepreneurship, and green economies. These are economic systems that aim at reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcity or not harming the environment.

4.3. Promotion Of Education Alongside Moral Values

Fonlong educational philosophy as quoted by Nkeng Augustine, advocates for a holistic education which includes the development of character, moral integrity and the belief that the purpose of education goes beyond knowledge acquisition to moral and ethical development of the students. The integration of moral character is a means of transmission and preservation of African cultural values through education. "Moral education is generally accepted as a criterion for objective form of education in Cameroon." (Nkeng, 2005). However, this has not been practiced. Only few private educational institutes have taken moral education in to consideration. For instance, for more than ten years today, nearly all activities that promote moral character in students like; moral classes and religious studies, have either reduced or no longer practice in most public or Government schools.

The goal of education should be to cultivate moral character and impact academic knowledge. There must be no doubt that the higher level of criminality, delinquency, jungle justice in some public and private school premises, moral decadence, and loss of respect for human dignity in our society today are partly the result of lesser consideration of moral instructions in the educational curriculum. The promotion of educational activities without formation of good character is like pouring water inside broken vessels. Therefore, integrating moral education into the curriculum can help address the erosions of values and encourage students to engage in activities that promote; social justice, honesty and

integrity, self-reflection, personal growth and social responsibility for community well-being.

Another crucial reason to build the students' mind and heart with moral character is the increasing influence of global culture and modern technology that presents new challenges to the traditional value system. Students are exposed to foreign ideas and lifestyles, which conflict with traditional beliefs (Bana, 2019). The curriculum needs a more crucial approach to balance these influences, ensuring that students can navigate between modern globalized ideas and their cultural heritage.

Moreover, Immanuel Kant plays an important role in this area especially in influencing the educational system. For him, "*man is a moral being par excellence*." (Kant, 1998). Offering, therefore, a practical and pedagogical approach to expatiate his stance on moral education through experiences, Dewey says:

In his classroom, the teacher, at least initially, would try to avoid moral lecturing and discourse and instead ask open-ended questions such as, how do you determine whether "x situation" should be addressed? If you decided to address the situation, how would you go about it? The teacher would encourage students to use their imaginations, relevant data, and reflection to construct their answers, with the immediate goal not to disseminate rules or stimulate explicit ethical theorizing but to promote at least a fourfold classroom orientation: the crucial nature of ethical inquiry, the necessity of understanding the interrelatedness of everyone, the importance of forming imaginative and sympathetic dispositions, and the connection between ethical thinking and action (Simpson, 2010).

Thus, Dewey's philosophy of education is not without morality. Everything goes together. The aim of Dewey's promotion of students' interaction, collaboration, respect, in view of growth and development of the society is ethically for the wellbeing of the individuals and the community. Therefore, any thought or action that destroys human dignity must be questioned. Human destruction has never been the African way of life.

Dewey, *In Human Nature and Conducts*, argues that human beings are inherently social, and that individual development is shaped by social contexts. He says: "The individual's development is a process of interaction with others, and the habits, skills, and knowledge that he acquires are determined in part by the social environments in which he lives" (Dewey, 2008). For Dewey, therefore, moral development is not simply about learning right from wrong; it is about learning to navigate complex social relationships and develop a sense of social responsibility (Dewey, 2008).

4.4. Conducive Educational Environment

A good and conducive learning environment plays a critical role in the educational process and success of students. Modern educational thinkers like Francis Mbondji revive Fonlon's principles in, *The Importance of the Learning Environment in African Education*, advocating for a conducive learning environment that fosters creativity, critical thinking and emotional well-being (Mbondji, 2008). According to Fonlon, a favorable learning environment should not only be physically comfortable but also psychologically supportive. He highlighted the importance of the school atmosphere where students feel valued and respected as well as an environment that encourages dialogue and exchange of ideas (Mbondji, 2008).

Bernard Fonlon's idea of conducive educational environment is very pertinent to the Cameroon educational environment, for instance, for almost ten years today, the environment is not conducive for learning as education is concerned. The ongoing Anglophone Crises in the North West and South West Regions, the terror of Boko Haram in the North Region and human trafficking all over the country create insecurity, fear, and freedom. These hinder students' movements to search for knowledge and skills that are needed for the community development. This results in a high rate of criminality like hacking and scamming in the country. A favorable learning environment will allow the students develop critical thinking, good character and cultural values. A conducive learning environment could also enable the young Cameroonian to acquire more skills in problem-solving and social responsibility.

In conclusion, Bernard Fonlon's educational philosophy is deeply rooted in the African context, emphasizing the development of the whole person, the integration of the African cultural and moral values, and the creation of an educational system that is both relevant and responsive to the needs of the community. His views on the aim of education, the educational curriculum, community-based education, moral and cultural values, and the creation of a favorable learning environment provide valuable insights into how education in Cameroon and Africa at large can be transformed to better serve the needs of society. Therefore, by incorporating Dewey's principles, it is possible to create an educational system that not only prepares individuals for personal success but also fosters a sense of responsibility and contribution to their communities.

General Conclusion

According to Dewey, education is life, that is, the transmission of values from the old to the young in a given community assures the continuity of that community without which it ceases to exist. However, there is an eclipse of African values in the Cameroonian society. The values and realities of the Cameroonian society are overtaken by the Western content in the Cameroon educational curriculum. These have gradually overshadowed the authenticity of the Cameroonian identity leading to a chaotic society with little or no skills for problem solving within the community. This problem is identified through observation.

The aim of this work was to examine the peculiarity of Dewey's concept of community in education and the ways in which the Deweyan perspective can be a solution to this problem in the Cameroon community. In order to achieve this goal, the work was divided in to three chapters. In chapter one, we analyzed Dewey's conception of community in education where he advocated that schools should reflect the community realities, he emphasized on real-world education and how democratic values (collaboration, sharing, social responsibility, problem solving skills) can foster individual's growth and community development. This lead us to chapter two where we had an appraisal of Dewey's concept of community in education. Some African philosophers align with Dewey's interconnectedness while the existentialist philosophers criticized his views. Lastly, the third expressed the relevance of Dewey's concept of community in education in the Cameroon context.

Flowing from above, some of the recommendation and application for educational system include: A need for curriculum reformation, promotion of community-based education, promotion of education along with moral instructions, and a conducive educational

environment. Applying the proposed recommendations with proper follow up will ensure a corresponding educational curriculum to the Cameroon context, which will in turn maintain community values, assure authenticity, identity, and the continuity of the community including the formation of moral character. Moreover, prioritizing African values in the educational curriculum will undoubtedly build students' consciousness to grow up in moral habits at all levels which will also reduce the high rate of hacking, human trafficking, scamming, self-centeredness, and will surely foster critical thinking and problem solving skills as a way forward to solve the current Anglophone crises in the North-West and South-West Region and boko-haram terrorism in the North of Cameroon. Nevertheless, what has been proposed here may not fully guarantee a complete change in education. There is still need for further research on community-based education in Cameroon.

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