

## **INDIGENOUS AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND THE DECOLONIZATION DEBATE**

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### **Abstract**

The unwholesome influence of colonization on indigenous African culture is well documented and criticized. The most important area this influence has remained overwhelming and very destructive long after independence is the African education system. Hence, there have been calls for the decolonization of African education in recent years. While majority of African scholars agree that there is need to decolonize African education the controversy lies on how to go about the process. Some call for a wholesale return to African indigenous knowledge and others insist that Africa can only develop by fully adopting and implementing the principles of Western epistemology. Using the documentary method and content analysis and the theoretical framework of cultural anthropology this study explores the best approach of decolonizing the African education system. Firstly, the study contends that returning to African past or a wholesale adoption of Western value system is not epistemologically feasible and thus will not bring about the needed change in African education. It therefore, recommended the incorporation of African indigenous languages as the most effective way of decolonizing Africa education and unleashing the full potentials of the continent.

**Keywords:** colonization, colonialism, decolonization, knowledge, education, indigenous language, Africa, West, Afrocentricism, Eurocentricism, culture, man.

### **Introduction**

Many African anti-colonial scholars and activists believed that ending colonization would unleash African development potentials. In fact, it was once assumed that African given sometime after independence would overtake Europe and North Africa developmentally. However, five decades after decolonization of African development still remains a mirage. Africa's mental slavery to colonial values has even deepened and instead of economic development, Africa is today the poverty capital of the world (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013, 45). So contrary to the expectation that end colonization will end African woes, the stranglehold of colonial values and influence in Africa seem to have increased with the passage of time. One area where this negative influence has continued to perpetuate itself in Africa and from where its epistemic influence has continued to imprison the African mind and make Africans docile for exploitation is the education system. In this system African epistemology is not just excoriated and in most cases discarded but Western epistemology is exalted and used as the only valid logic of knowledge formation, knowledge dissemination and knowledge validation.

In the light of the foregoing, this study proposes to interrogate the proposals of African

development scholars on the ways to decolonize African education. Finding their recommendations inadequate, the study proposes the integration of indigenous languages into African education system as what will help Africa to evolve its own value system that is in line with current local and global challenges it is confronted with. To actualize this, the paper is divided into three major sections. The first, the conceptual framework will operationalize some basic concepts in the study. Part two will examine the recommendations made by other scholars while part three will discuss the proposals of the present study before making recommendations.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Colonization and Decolonization**

**Colonizing** is the physical and ideological domination of peoples in order to separate them from their culture and resources, while creating external and internalized assumptions of the supremacy of the colonizer. Conversely, the project of **decolonizing** challenges and disrupts assumptions of colonial superiority. For Smith (2012), decolonization is the revitalization of the ways of being and knowing prior to colonization, while unearthing the manner in which colonization was achieved. It is not enough to simply reconnect with the past; in order to pursue decolonization; we must also untangle the complex web of internalized oppression created by Colonization. Furthermore, decolonization requires the colonizers to recognize and challenge their own socialized presumptions of superiority. Looked at from this backdrop, decolonization therefore becomes a liberation struggle by the colonized to free himself from these identified colonial impositions. When this is seen in the context of Africa, it becomes the long struggle by Africans to liberate the continent from political and cultural imposition by the West.

### **Coloniality/Neo-colonization**

Scholars often make distinction between colonization and neo-colonization or coloniality. Ndlovu-Gatsheni in an interview with Omanga (2020) captures this where he distinguished colonization from colonialism (coloniality). According to him, colonization is an event—that is in terms of people (colonists) coming, conquering, and dominating other people at a particular moment, and administering people colonially, until the colonized fight and push them back. This definition of colonization can be dated, in terms of when it started and when it came to an end. However, colonization institutes colonialism. “A very complex power structure that transforms a people's way of life”, colonialism is the invention of asymmetrical and colonial inter-subjective relations between colonizer (citizen) and colonized (subject); and it economically institutes dispossession and transfers of economic resources from those who are indigenous to those who are conquering and foreign.

The project also creates institutions and structures of power that sustain colonizer-colonized relations of exploitation, domination, and repression. Even when you push back colonization as a physical process (the physical

empire), colonialism as a power structure continues as a metaphysical process and as an epistemic project, because it invades the mental universe of a people, destabilizing them from what they used to know, into knowing what is brought in by colonialism, and it then commits 'crimes' such as *epistemicide* (where you kill and displace pre-existing knowledges), *linguicide* (killing and displacing the languages of a people and imposing your own), *culturecide* (where you kill or replace the cultures of a people).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni's claim here is that if you remove colonialism physically without removing it epistemically, it will not disappear and this is exactly what many African anti-colonial nationalists failed to understand.

In 1965 Kwame Nkrumah introduced the concept of “neo-colonialism” to name the continuation of exploitative economic relations long after attainment of political independence (the sought-after political kingdom). Later, Walter Rodney articulated how Europe underdeveloped Africa and this intervention also underscored the continuation of exploitative relations, which made it possible for development to materialize in the Global North and mal-development to ensue in the Global South. And to reverse such a process, carrying a gun is not sufficient. It requires dealing with the consciousness, the psyche, because colonialism (neocolonialism) is internalized and routinized. Frantz Fanon warned that colonialists are not satisfied by mere physical domination, but they go on to destroy the colonized's history, making the colonizer's history the colonized's, with the consequence of making the latter lose confidence in one's language, one's names, one's cultures, one's histories, etc.

This situation is aptly captured by an Indian psychologist Ashis Nandy (2009) who posits that colonialism operates like an intimate enemy; it sits within you, like a parasite. He suggests that perhaps something that starts in people's minds must end in their minds in the first instance. In other words, if you remove colonialism physically without removing it epistemically, it will not disappear. As already observed, one area where colonization has continued to perpetuate itself in Africa and from which its epistemic influence has continued to endure and make Africans docile for exploitation is in African education system and the research is an investigation on how African education can be freed from unwholesome Western influence.

## Education

Education like decolonization is not easy to define as theorists tend to approach the definition from the limitations of their disciplines. However, one way of circumventing the controversies associated with these partisan conflicts is by approaching the definition etymologically. The word education in Igbo etymology is linked with the Igbo word *nkuzi* – “teaching”. A teacher is therefore *onyenkuzi*, - one or a person who teaches. The verb form of *nkuzi* is *ikuzi* which means “to teach”. The two words are used in the context of craftwork, especially carpentry where *ikuzi* literally means “to fix by knocking

together or chiseling”.

Etymologically therefore, the Igbo see education as cultivating or more specifically carving someone into what he should be. The background of this understanding is the assumption that there are certain features, values, skills etc. or an ideal which education prepares those who go through it to become. This also entails that man is incomplete at birth, as such education prepares and equips him with the necessary facilities he needs to become a useful member of the society.

One pertinent outcome of Igbo concept of education is the holistic nature of education, including especially, the aspects of skill acquisition and value inculcation. It also highlights its environmental and cultural dimensions. In the first place, education prepares/cultivates one for life in a particular environment with its specific environmental and value related challenges. In order words, education furnishing knowledge required for problem solving. However, irrespective of the fact that men all over that world have similar problems relating to how to provide for their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing, the differences in condition and environment make ways and mean of solving these problems to vary from people to people. Thus, education seen as the processes of equipping individuals with skills and knowledge for solving problems that arise in their environment is the concept of education that will be used in this study and this includes both formal and informal education.

### **Language**

Man is a symbolic being. As such beyond the mechanical instruments he creates to dominate the environment, he also creates symbolic instruments to communicate with his fellow human beings. Of these symbolic instruments, the most important is language, which is the totality of written or vocal signs with which man puts himself in communication with his own peers (Mondin, 2011, 129).

Martin Heidegger (1973, 27) identifies language as the unique element that distinguishes man from plants and animals. According to him, the symbolic dimension of man is so proper to man that he always carries it with him and never ceases to exercise it. “Man speaks”, he writes, “we speak when we are awake and when we dream. We always speak, even when we do not use the word, but listen or read, dedicate ourselves to a job, or lose ourselves in idleness.” In fact Heidegger claims that speech is not borne of a particular act of will.

It is said that man is by nature a speaker, and it is true that man, diversely from plants and animals, is the living being capable of words. Saying this, we do not only intend to say that man possesses, besides other capacities, also the one of speech. We intend to say that it is exactly language that makes of man the living being that his is in as much as he is man.

Heidegger's point here is that language is specifically, the essence that defines man, distinguishing him from the plants and animals. This study shall return to this point when it shall discuss the role of language as medium of cultural transmission. For the meantime, it shall examine the two major theories of African decolonization and their shortcomings.

## **Theories of Decolonizing the Decolonized Africa**

As already accentuated, there is some sort of consensus especially among African educationists that there is need to decolonize African education. However, problem arises when it comes to mapping out how this decolonization should be pursued. Basically, there are two advocacies in this regard: the Africanisation theory and the modernist theory.

### **The Africanisation Theory**

The Africanist theorists call for delinking Africa with modernism, especially globalization which they see as the instrument of imposing Western hegemony on the rest of the world. Some in this group affirmed that with the racist distortion of the African humanity, by the western colonial Anthropologists and philosophers, Africa was inflicted with a stigma and has been the “Other” of humanity who required liberation and caused to have a marginal place among peoples and nations.

Furthermore, many who advocate this position are not ready to concede that Africans have gained or achieved the often proclaimed material prosperity said to have been triggered by the westernization modernity as most of Africa continues to wallow in grave socio-economic and political crisis and paralyzing dependency, created by her appendage to the Western world.

They argue that this attempted westernization and Europeanization of Africa tried and will continue to squander the African original and indigenous civilization and obliterate the unique historical riches and genius of the African people. They blame the today's abysmal and prostrate state of Africa to an externally induced paradigm of development and conceptualization which Africans have followed since the eruption of the Whiteman in the African world. This made African destiny in the world to be tied to that of the European, where Africans have no weight or relevance and which condemned Africans to imitation and dependence through which Africans lost their originality and in which the seed of inferiority complex was sown and continued to flourish. The further consequence which is equally paradoxical is that the more Africans tried to be more European, the more they have been alienated from themselves and also the less European they have become, only to assume a condition that is at best confused, producing a society that is chaotic and rudderless and a quality of life which in general has been less progressive or more depreciative. Westernization for the critics shortchanged Africans proper destiny in the world and substituted for it an imposed destiny, and lost its self-directed destiny and her proper freedom.

What has emerged is a culture of slavish imitation of the western world and because it is an imitation, it lacks originality and because it lacks originality, it will always at best be a second best and a second rate. This is second best and an imitation which robbed Africa of its dignity and identity and turned her into a slave of an alien world with an alien way of thinking, naïve and consumption-oriented. This alienation constitutes a basic disorientation which Franz Fanon calls Black skin white mask. A situation which makes Africans neither good photocopies nor authentic originals: a state of double corruption and double jeopardy and hence double disorientation. Thus, westernization through the

agencies of colonialism and neo-colonialism did damage to the African psyche especially in herself-confidence and self-appreciation. Africans were turned into copycats, echoing the master's voice in all spheres of life. Some call it mental alienation, or enslavement of consciousness, the consequence is a beggarly mentality of the elite and almost the worship and adulation of everything European among Africans no matter the rank and the level of education, the elites rejection of everything Africa leading to a dependency mentality. Lamenting on this self-depreciation of the African occasioned by colonialism and her ideology of westernization, Nyasani (1997, 29) said:

We have adopted and assimilated wholesale whatever the west has to offer. The end result is not just a cultural betrayal but a serious case of self-dehumanization and outright subversion both in terms of dignity and self-esteem. Indeed there is no race on earth that abhors its own culture and is so easily prepared to abdicate it and flirt with experimental ideas which promise no more than vanity to a large extent like the African race... African is simply overwhelmed and decisively submerged by the never-receding tide of cultural imperialism.

Westernization then has been described by Chinweizu (1978, Xiv) as a rampaging hurricane of barbarism from Europe which struck the African people and which swept through the continent disrupting and destroying many things, especially the people's culture in all its dimensions both material and cognitive. For him we are where we are today because the strong African cultural, religious scientific, educational system and cosmogonies were destroyed or kept in state of suspended animation.

Thus, it is claimed that African indigenous knowledge systems suffered for years from the several strategies of disinformation embedded in the Western (Eurocentric) colonial and post-colonial education, western religion, science and technology, as Africa was declared almost as a "terra incognita", cleaned the mind of Africans of any inherited knowledge in the name of reformation of the African mind and because of the brutal neglect of whatever belong to local genius and knowledge, inhibited the development of indigenous technology in Africa. It equally destabilized some of the existing process of technical growth, and indigenous manufacturing capacity was deliberately undermined to facilitate European productivity.

The crux of the contention of the critics here is that westernization has created the syndrome, in which having been dazzled by the wonders of the white man's creativity, the African seems to have surrendered their own mental capacities, declaring it as irrelevant or incapable or superfluous, forgetting, it is argued, that if only Africans could regain their intellectual courage, self-belief and call of destiny, they can make their own unique contribution from their own unique situations, gifts and endowments to invent an African modernity. In essence, westernization took the African intellectuals and elite captives and made them what some have called mental clones of the west or cultural "zombies". Historically, intellectuals of any civilization are the voices of that civilization to the rest of the world, as instruments of the development of the higher culture. Hence some hold that the tragedy of Africa is that her intellectuals were conquered by the west and by and large

absconded and abdicated their roles as developers of African civilization, of which the grave consequences are the abysmal lack of creativity and originality in their thinking.

This means the need for a thorough review and re-invention of African mental ecology, philosophies and human cultural rationalizations which were hitherto neglected, or condemned as irrational and backward. In other words, Africanists solution to the problem of the colonization of African education is a call for a reinvention of African values in African education system. However the question they failed to answer is how? We shall return to this.

### **Eurocentricism**

The advocates of this position equate westernization project with the inevitability of human progress. Thus, the Eurocentrists and their African converts argue that for African education system to survive and develop, it must embrace the revolutions of European modernity: the intellectual revolution of materialism, the political revolution of equality and above all, the scientific and technological revolution. In a warning to cultures and societies which would fail to follow this western epistemic, socio-economic and developmental paradigm. C.E. Ayres (1944, 2) said:

. . .the technological revolution is itself irresistible, the arbitrary authority and irrational values of the pre-scientific, pre-industrial cultures are doomed. Three alternatives confront the partisans of traditional values and beliefs. Resistance if sufficiently effective though it cannot save the tribal values can bring on total revolution or ineffective resistance may lead to sequestration like that of the American Indians. The only remaining alternative is that of intelligent voluntary acceptance of the industrial way of life and the values that go with it.

The problems of Africa today are therefore laid on the door of the unfinished project of westernization. They claim that African problems must be blamed on the relics of traditional culture which has continued to disorientate the African mind making it impossible to adopt or face the realities of our world today.

Most of the African intellectual converts have tested the Western life style and called for the adoption of western culture and mental categories and even language as the authentic African way. These Western-oriented Elites who still constitute an overwhelming majority of the African Elites today and those who direct affairs in the continent came to represent a mentality that would not like to identify with most of the African ways which for them symbolized the state of savagery. MwhiteMugambi (1998, 11) said it all:

Colonization and westernization have brought a permanent and irreversible change in Africa . . . As long as we continue talking of Africanity and going back to the root, yet we remain quiet on the reality of modern society, we will sound foolish, outdated and out of touch with reality . . . what African writers and scholars should do is deal with

issues that are afflicting our society . . . than waste time on the issue of Africanness ... then the effects of westernization are here to stay and the faster we adapt to living with them, the better for us and the generations to come.

This fascination and longing for whatever is western still remains the dominating attitude and mentality of the African Elite and the aspiration of the younger folk. This manifests their conviction that African cultures and epistemic categories are far inferior and cannot meet the standards of a high culture. The white man himself is almost regarded as a spirit, the model and quintessence of a true human being whose values, mannerism and even his mistakes must be assumed without much ado. Corroborating the above, ThembaSono (1994, 17) declared: “Our intellectual environment is deformed”. He goes on to say that this deformity is based on “traditional forms of superstition, intolerance, sloth, indolence....”

For these African westernizing modernizers, the extirpation of tradition is the first step towards freedom. Through such changes they argue, Africans are fortifying their universalist abilities to the detriment of particularism and getting ready to embark in a similar process of empowerment which makes them unexploitable and uncolonizable(Masolo, 1994, 107-167). Thus for a true progressive march in Africa, it is then proposed that Africa has to adopt hook, line and sinker, the values of Eurocentricism.

### **The Vacuity of Afrocentric and Eurocentric Proposals**

To appreciate the shortcomings of the two theories discussed above, it is necessary to underline the irreversible nature of colonization. The argument then is that, there is some way in which we can talk of some irreversibility of some aspect of our human world today. Talks of any configuration and modern web of primordial, idyllic and original Africa in which one can work out an African modernity untouched or untainted by western modernity, belong to the mythic mind, and completely disconnected from reality. There is no pure African primordiality and pure African man that has not drunk some dosage of westernization. Thus, a big chunk of the African world has been affected or changed irreversibly, for there is no way, Africans can undo all the historical encounters and influences of the western interventions in Africa, religiously, politically, intellectually, culturally and economically. Some of these have been permanently engraved within the structures of African society, culture and consciousness. Modern technology has come to impose its imperatives.

It must equally be asserted that the westernizing influences have not obliterated all of the African past, all about her culture and all about her indigenous endowments and genius. Some culturally, socially, technically and epistemic way and modes of doing and interpreting things are still very much alive in many segments of African society especially among the rural populations who had no access to formal education. In this respect C. Acholonu(1995, 125) said:

Africans must harness her indigenous resources... through promotion of research and rural literacy drives, collation and

organization of materials from the remotest rural areas focusing on the lifestyles of rural people – their farming, hunting, crafts, healing, cooking, techniques. For these are the people, who still possesses the wisdom of our ancestors: the wisdom of the ancients.

Even among a big chunk of the educated, one notices the influences of traditional beliefs, prejudices and world views in their actions and attitudes to things, peoples and events.

The truth however about the promotion of knowledge growth and the reinvention of the African mind and a progressive orientation for the future lay neither in a westernization process that de-Africanizes the indigenous worth, capacity, and capabilities nor in a combative world-view, full of rancor and hatred and wellentrenched anti-western rhetoric, venting anger on Western objects which results, in an off-handed dismissal of all that is western and which hinders the African mind from engaging in a somewhat impassioned and honest analysis of the issues and events about the western world and her contributions, to humanity. What then is the way forward, how may African education system be decolonized?

## **The Role of Indigenous Language in the Decolonization of African Education System**

### **Theory of Cultural Anthropology**

This section will use the theory of cultural anthropology to propose the incorporation of indigenous African languages into African education system as the most effective way of decolonizing the African education system. Before this, it is pertinent to examine the relationships between culture, theory of cultural anthropology and language.

Culture is a widely used term which historically and currently has three meanings and three principal usages, which we can call elitarian, pedagogical (educational), and anthropological. In the elitarian sense culture signifies a great quantity of knowledge, either in general or in some particular sectors. Thus, for example when it is said that a person has vast scientific, philosophical, artistic literary culture or when it is simply said that he is very cultured (Mondin, 2011, 145). In the pedagogical sense, culture indicates the education, formation and cultivation of man: it is the process through which man (the child, the youth and the adult) comes to the full maturation and realization of his own personality. Finally, in the anthropological sense, which is the one that has been consolidated in our century, culture signifies that totality of customs, techniques, and values that distinguishes a social group, a tribe, a people, a nation: “it is the mode of living proper to a society” (Taylor, 1972, 27).

The last two meaning of culture are the ones are of interest in this study, in particular the third. But, the second and the third are closely bound to each other: in effect, culture is a dimension, a property of man as such. In this context, the theory of cultural anthropology sees man as a cultural being. Saying that man is a cultural being here is used in two senses: first, that he is the artifice or product of culture and second, that it is he himself who is the prime receiver and greatest effect of culture (Mondin, 2011, 148).

The principal assumption of the theory of cultural anthropology as seen above is that culture has four elements: customs, techniques, values and languages or tongues; however of these elements, tongue takes primacy. According to Coreth (1978, 58) tongue is not only necessary but it is exactly what constitutes the primary fundamental element of a culture. Where there is no tongue, there can be no society, a people cannot be formed, nor can a nation (and consequently a culture) develop. The tongue is the prime element that makes the individual go beyond himself and put himself in communication with others. Social grouping occurs first of all on the basis of a tongue: The French make up a nation on the basis of French, the German on German, the Polish on Polish, etc.

B. Mondin (1977) also corroborates the importance of tongue in the formation of a people when he contends that the tongue is not only the carrier element of a culture (since it is the first condition of the constitution of a social group, which is the carrier of determined culture), but it is also that in which the social group immediately reflects itself, its own culture. "A tongue, in all the architecture of its grammar, renders visible to fundamental will that keeps a people alive and gives them the force to speak a tongue which belongs to them." Thus, as an instrument of the unification and characterization of a Social group, the tongue is also the source from which cultural development begins "Once controlled, the instrument of communication leads to the progress of the group. Man, in fact immediately becomes a carrier of information susceptible to developing itself independently from the natural morphogenesis.

Also, the tongue (like all other fundamental elements of culture) is not an invention, the creation of an individual but rather the creation of the entire social group: it reveals the personality, the genius, the interests, the ideals, and the sentiments of the artist that produced it, inasmuch as the author makes up the tongue for the entire social group. The social group reflects itself, its own soul, both in the material, physical aspect and in the spiritual, symbolic aspect of the tongue (Cassirer, 1968, 230).

On the whole, the theory of cultural anthropology is based on the following principle (Mondin, 2011, 155): a) that the culture of a social group takes its own path in the moment in which the group invents its own tongue; b) that the tongue grows together with culture c) that culture the soul of the people reflect itself entirely, even if not completely clearly in the tongue. The tongue is the principal and fundamental symbol, as well as the primary instrument of every culture.

### **Colonization and Decolonization through Indigenous Languages**

The colonizers understood the importance of language in the constitution of a people. That is why they initiated colonial processes that worked to undermine the language traditions that served as the roots of education for Indigenous communities. Because languages embody cultural knowledge and are integral to community identities, forcing children to speak the colonial language was a powerful form of ontological and epistemological domination. This was done, for instance, by forbidding children in formal schooling from speaking their languages. Canadian scholars invested in improving Indigenous education state that "until very recently, the concepts of education embedded in the languages and cultures of Aboriginal peoples of Canada have been little

known or appreciated by professional educators” (Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000, xi).

In this context, the imposition of the English and French languages on many indigenous African communities carried broader implications for the loss of culture transmitted through language and ways of knowing (Battiste, 1998; Cajete, 1994). At the inception of the residential school era, Hector Langevin famously envisioned the danger of familial influence: “If you leave them in the family they may know how to read and write, but they will remain savages” (TRC, 2015B, p. 161). The assumptions of White supremacy practiced in Indian Residential Schools are tacitly supported in many forms of contemporary African education that overlook the persistent oppression caused by stripping Indigenous students of their language and connection to culture. The deliberate repression of Indigenous languages may have been the most efficient mechanism of colonizing education (Miller, 1996); however, the focus on extinguishing language through corporal punishment was cruel as well as effective. As American scholars from the Arizona State University and the University of Arizona McCarty, Romero, and Zepeda (2006) estimate, approximately 84% of Indigenous languages in North America will disappear with the current generation. Similarly, Australian Indigenous peoples have endured assaults on language through colonial schooling (Marmion, Obata, & Troy, 2014). In Canada, internalized oppression has resulted in generations of residential school survivors rejecting the resurrection of traditional languages because of the indoctrination of shame and a perceived need to protect the youth from similar indignities.

Traditional models of education relied upon language as the basis for distinct worldviews. Due to the colonization of education, generations of African students were irrevocably harmed through the further implications of language loss. One such example is the distinctive use of storytelling as a means of knowledge transmission and education. Stó:lo scholar Jo-ann Archibald (2008, 7), in her writing on “storywork” in education, contends that colonization has degraded traditional storytelling in education and social transmission, resulting in “weak translations from Aboriginal languages to English, stories shaped to fit a Western literature form, and stories adapted to fit a predominantly Western educational system.” The retelling of stories designed to model and affirm ontologies and axiologies became corrupted when Western pedagogical approaches became the default lens. In their emphasis on storytelling as a necessary element in language learning, McKeough et al. (2008, 147) assert that “oral narrative or storytelling fits with Aboriginal epistemology—the nature of their knowledge, its foundations, scope, and validity.” Schooling, which systematically undermined language, oral narrative, and storytelling, ultimately eroded the core of Indigenous life and the essence of an effective means of education. Cajete (1994, 25) argues that education for Indigenous peoples “is transmitted or explored through ritual, ceremony, art, and appropriate technology.” Participation in ritual and ceremony are impeded without the foundation of language to inform shared knowledge. For many Indigenous people, the denial of traditional languages is indistinguishable from the denial of humanity. As Battiste (1998, 18) asserts, “languages are the means of communication for the full range of human experiences and critical to the survival of the culture and political integrity of any people.” Therefore, the

best way to decolonize African education system lies neither in Africanisation nor in modernization but in the aggressive implementation of the use of African indigenous languages in African education system.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In recent years, there has been call for decolonization of African education system. This study explored the role of indigenous languages in the decolonization of African education system. The work was structured into four major sections. While the first section examined the key terms in the study, the second and third sections discussed and critiqued the dominant theories of African decolonization. Particularly, the third section discovered that in colonization, Africa walked through a door that cannot be re-entered. Therefore, it impossible to have either a pure African or Western culture in Africa, Africa would always be a mixture of tradition and colonial influence. In the light of this, the work proposed the use of indigenous African languages in African education system as the most viable route to decolonize African education system. From the forgoing, the work will like to make the following recommendations:

1. Policymakers all over Africa should make the indigenous language(s) of where a school is located compulsory and the official language in the school
2. At homes, African parents should encourage their children and wards to communicate in the indigenous languages
3. States all over Africa should create incentives in the form of bursary awards and scholarships for students and teachers who demonstrate some degree of mastery in their indigenous languages.
4. Abolish all forms of rules compelling students in Africa to speak foreign or colonial languages

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