

Spaces, Paths, and Discourses towards Educational Development in Africa

Nomanesi Madikizela-Madiya

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4629-2913>

University of South Africa

Madiyn@unisa.ac.za

Introduction

Education is a basic human right that works to raise men and women out of poverty, level inequalities, and ensure sustainable development. Education is one of the most powerful tools in lifting excluded children and adults out of poverty and is a stepping stone to other fundamental human rights. It is the most sustainable investment. (UNESCO 2023)

The significance of education in society is summarised in the above epigraph, pointing to it as a fundamental human right, a vehicle out of poverty and inequalities, a tool for inclusion, and “the most sustainable investment.” In many ways, these assertions cannot be refuted, except that getting to realise them in some spaces is a hustle. For example, the African education systems, at all levels, still battle the negative consequences of colonialism and its violence, which challenge education and development on the continent. As many scholars and community members note, “The African economy was significantly changed by the Atlantic slave trade through the process of imperialism and the economic policies that accompanied colonisation” (Settles 1996, 1). Thus, Africa has a further distance to achieve the ideal contributions of education to development than other parts of the world.

African schools and universities have insufficient and inadequate resources that should support teachers and learners in generating, sharing, and applying knowledge and skills to develop their communities. Many young children (60%, according to UNESCO 2019; see also Aboagye 2021) do not go to school due to the inadequacy of the provision of formal education in some parts of the continent. Teachers are insufficient; curricula are still colonial in many ways (McCullum 2005). This situation relates to Ocheni and Nwankwo’s (2012) statement that colonialism led to underdevelopment in Africa in many ways. Yet, Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012, 51) argue,



International Journal of Educational Development in Africa
#18723 | 7 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2312-3540/18723>

ISSN 2312-3540 (Online)

© Unisa Press 2025



Published by Unisa Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

It is usually argued in favour of colonialism that it brought Western education and, hence, western civilisation to the shores of Africa, which by implication is a positive contribution towards African development.

Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) state that this argument is untrue because (1) colonial education marginalised African culture, and (2) it had no organic linkage to the African environment; therefore it could not contribute to the development of the continent. “Furthermore, colonial education was essentially literary; it had no technological base and was therefore antithetical to real or industrial development” (Ocheni and Nwankwo 2012, 51).

Since colonial education persists in Africa, the above statements can be used in the present tense. The continent still experiences poverty after its resources were and are still looted by the developed world. However, teachers and students from the under-resourced African education systems should socially and economically compete with their counterparts who are in developed and privileged parts of the world.

African educational development is also affected by the rural-urban divide regarding resource allocation. Masinire and Ndofirepi (2020, 5) assert, “There are notable absurdities and overt and covert disparities and inequities between urban and rural communities that continue to invade the provision of and access to resources and social amenities, including education.” Many schools in Africa are in rural and township areas, where they are at the receiving end regarding the burdens of unequal resource allocation. This situation is exacerbated by the notions of inferiority that colonial strategists instilled in African rural people to enslave them in the urban areas. “Yet, education transformation and currently decolonisation attends to other categories such as race, gender, disability, and epistemological access but often precludes rurality” (Masinire and Ndofirepi 2020, 4).

Despite these challenges, researchers continue sharing knowledge about African education—showing both constraints and paths through which teachers and students navigate the systems in pursuit of reducing such challenges for the survival of the African educational fraternity. The *International Journal of Educational Development in Africa (IJEDA)* is a platform for such publications, where scholars can share African-centric knowledge about the burdens of day-to-day systemic oppression and strategies they observe or apply in their various spaces towards the development of education in Africa. The Journal publishes research about all levels of education, primary, secondary, and tertiary, as well as on policies and regulations that administer educational systems at those levels.

Synopsis of Articles in this Volume

This volume publishes valuable knowledge from higher or tertiary education and basic education researchers in various aspects of education development in Africa. The synopsis presents these, starting with those in higher education.

Towards the Development of Higher Education in Africa

The first article by Sakhiseni Joseph Yende, titled “Democratising the Music Curriculum: Integrating Ubuntu-gogy for the Africanisation of South African Higher Education,” highlights the fate of the music education curriculum in the South African higher education system, indicating its persistent entrenchment in Western epistemologies. This is similar to Adeogun’s (2021) assertion that music education in African universities is colonised. “University music education in Africa is noted for being a ‘parody’ of Western models; for forcing predominantly music learning and appreciation of European music thoughts, contents, practices and pedagogy onto Africans” (Adeogun 2021, 467).

In his research, Sakhiseni Joseph Yende explores the possibility of using ubuntu-gogy as a philosophical didactical method to Africanise music education. This article contributes to the body of knowledge towards developing music education in Africa. Also, it does not propose completely disregarding other knowledge systems but centring African ways of knowing in the discipline. Considering that students in higher education will potentially teach in schools, this knowledge, in turn, can revolutionise music education from higher education to school levels in South Africa and the related contexts. It is also relevant to *IJEDA*, whose mission is to nurture African epistemologies and develop African knowledge systems.

Lawrence Abiwu, in the second article, “A Reflective Experience of Postgraduate Education in South African Higher Education Institutions,” contributes a perspective on the internationalisation of higher education, using a case of international postgraduate student experiences. While internationalisation can potentially expand students’ cultural exposure to contribute to their becoming and unbecoming, Abiwu shares his lived experience of being othered in various ways. This way, his aspiration to develop and contribute to the development of others around him is challenged. This experience relates to the view that “[i]nternationalisation can potentially open the world of education by including a diversity of perspectives, yet it can also close the world” (Spangler and Adriansen 2020, 3). While Spangler and Adriansen (2020) make this assertion about the dominance of Western or Anglican education and curricula across the globe, it also applies to situations that Abiwu experienced: the challenges related to access to funding, study and work permits, employment opportunities; xenophobic attacks; research supervision; and cultural shock. Some of these experiences relate to colonialism, which divided Africa into slices of domination and created boundaries that challenged mobility between various countries. This situation slows the pace of development of education in Africa.

Bonginkosi Hardy Mutongoza’s article, titled “Like an Inflatable Raft on Rapid Tides: Barriers to Community-Gown Projects at an Emerging Rural University in Zimbabwe,” identifies the potential role of community-gown projects in reducing poverty in underdeveloped communities towards sustainable development. He defines community-gown projects as university-community partnerships that work towards

community development for sustainability. Thus, community-grown projects are strategic for universities to be socially relevant rather than to remain as ivory towers. Universities, the author argues, are strategically located to develop knowledge for sustainable development and to guide such projects interactively with communities. However, using the case of a rural university in Zimbabwe, he identifies challenges to this possible contribution to social development, manifesting as financial, infrastructural, community-based, and structural. Mutongoza makes recommendations that universities can take forth if they take the matter of socioeconomic relevance for educational development seriously.

Ernest Kissi, Michael Adesi, Alex Acheampong, and Ivy Maame Abu collaborate to contribute to this volume an article titled “Exploring Strategies for Rebranding of Technical and Vocational Education in Developing Countries: A Case of Ghanaian Tutors and Administrators.” Among the challenges that Africa faces is a high unemployment rate among youth (Azu et al. 2021; Donkor 2021; Ogbonna et al. 2023). This situation exacerbates the poverty levels in the continent. Technical vocational education (TVE) is among the channels seen as having the potential to reduce this rate by providing skills to the youth (Muchabaiwa and Chiweshe 2024; Okoli 2022). However, in this article, Kissi and his co-authors note that youths seem not as attracted to enrolling in this form of education in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Their quantitative study saw the rebranding of TVE as a possible way to address this problem, and they explored ways to do this. The study considered a multistakeholder approach in Ghana where the government, training providers, parents and guardians, donor and development partners, and employers could work together and each develop strategies to rebrand TVE. It shares significant findings about how each stakeholder can contribute to the rebranding of TVE in the country. These findings are also relevant to similar contexts, considering that statistics across the developing world record TVE enrolments as low.

Towards the Development of Basic Education in Africa

The first article on the basic education level links well with the one above because it is also about the possible contribution of stakeholders in developing education in Africa, but this is at a basic education level. Endalew Kufi’s article is titled “The Role of Educational Stakeholders in Mitigating Socioeconomic Shocks Causing Students to Drop Out of School in East Shewa, Ethiopia.” Kufi notes the possible role of education in addressing socioeconomic problems in Ethiopia and the role of such problems in students dropping out of school in the country. The author identifies students’ dropout as a problem in Ethiopian schools and stakeholders as having a collaborative potential to mitigate this problem. Kufi contributes to the work of a number of other researchers who have identified socioeconomic factors that lead to dropout in Ethiopia (such as, Destaw et al. 2022; Devonald, Jones, and Yadete 2021; Hussein, Gobena, and Gashaw 2022). The study followed a mixed-methods approach to gather the understanding and possible contributions of teachers, parents, support providers, and administrators to

mitigating students' dropout. The findings of this study can be applied further in Ethiopia and similar contexts to the development of education.

In the following article, titled "Teaching Citizenship Education in Ghana Basic Schools: The Quest to Achieve Patriotism and Democracy," Ruth Donkoh, Wing On Lee, and Josephine Donkor discuss the role of citizenship education in Ghana in nurturing young people to be able to be concerned democratic and patriotic citizens who can reflect, compete, and participate in national development. The relevant ministries have not sustained the necessity of citizenship education in the country. Consequently, the existence of what the authors call pseudo-citizens—people who do not have the interests of the country at heart—has crippled the development of the country's resources. Corruption and other forms of disloyalty are the order of the day at the expense of education and socioeconomic development. The study followed John Rawls's theory for civic education to identify, among others, strategies that can be followed to strengthen citizenship education in the country. Following the mixed-methods approach, the study makes valuable findings that teachers should be trained for this subject and that the teaching and learning materials should be improved if the exemplary role of citizenship education is to be realised. Citizenship education is necessary in Africa and other developing countries for peace and development.

Some scholars have identified the relationship between citizenship and peace. For example, Bevington, Kurian, and Cremin (2020, 155) argue, "Good citizenship begets good peace, and good peace begets good citizens." Similarly, Vuyisile Msila's article, "Peace Studies, Knowledge, and Learners' Achievement," identifies peace as a necessary aspect of educational development that can instil progressive values in learners. In his article, Msila argues that curricula that promote peace are ideal for all nations. If, as Msila argues, learners exposed to peace education can reshape their thinking to better society, then peace education can be associated with citizenship education. Msila's study, however, was conducted to examine the relationship between peace education and learners' achievement in high schools that were affected by violence. The article uniquely contributes to how peace education can lead to positive behaviour among learners and, therefore, success. Such success may contribute to national development and to that of education.

Some contributions contribute knowledge associated with psychosocial issues that affect education development. John K. Simango's contribution is titled "Exploring the Value and Affordances of Psychoanalysis in Teaching English Literary Texts in South African Secondary Education." This subject-specific contribution identifies mental challenges that affect school communities, teachers, and learners specifically. The study identifies a psychological theory that could be applied to assist teachers and learners in critically analysing English literary content and society. Bamidele Segun Donald Odeyemi and Rasheed Ajani Idowu contributed another article related to psychological issues, titled "Grade 9 Learners' Perceptions of the Influence of Peer Relationships on Their Mathematics Performance in Tshwane Municipality Secondary Schools." The

study followed a mixed-methods approach. The last contribution to the volume, by Stanley Makuvaza, is titled “Implications of Ignoring Cultural and Linguistic Needs of Children with Disabilities during Psychological Assessment: A Critical Analysis.” It identifies the exclusion of cultural and linguistic needs when children with disabilities are psychologically assessed. It argues that exclusions may lead to misdiagnoses, such as “inadequate interventions and limited understanding of the individual’s cognitive and emotional functioning.”

Concluding Remarks

This volume of *IJEDA* is one of many published in the Journal to which scholars who are interested in educational development in Africa may refer. The Journal publishes research that critiques, nurtures, and honours local and African traditions and epistemologies. As the volume attests, the Journal accommodates knowledge across educational disciplines if the knowledge is African-centric.

References

- Aboagye, Prince Young. 2021. “Inequality of Education in Colonial Ghana: European Influences and African Responses.” *Economic History of Developing Regions* 36 (3): 367–391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20780389.2021.1921571>.
- Adeogun, Adebawale Oluranti. 2021. “Towards Decolonising University Music Education in Nigeria.” *Music Education Research* 23 (4): 466–483. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2021.1951193>.
- Azu, Nnanna P., Gylych Jelivov, Osman Nuri Aras, and Abdurrahman Isik. 2021. “Influence of Digital Economy on Youth Unemployment in West Africa.” *Transnational Corporations Review* 13 (1): 32–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19186444.2020.1849936>.
- Bevington, Terence, Nomisha Kurian, and Hilary Cremin. 2020. “Peace Education and Citizenship Education: Shared Critiques.” In *The Palgrave Handbook of Citizenship and Education*, edited by Andrew Peterson, Garth Stahl and Hannah Soong, 155–168. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67828-3_51.
- Destaw, Zelalem, Eshetu Wencheke, Samuel Kidane, Mulugeta Endale, Yohannes Challa, Melkamu Tiruneh, Meti Tamrat, Hanna Samson, Dilu Shaleka, and Mogessie Ashenafi. 2022. “Impact of School Meals on Educational Outcomes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.” *Public Health Nutrition* 25 (9): 2614–2624. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980022000799>.
- Devonald, Megan, Nicola Jones, and Workneh Yadete. 2021. “Addressing Educational Attainment Inequities in Rural Ethiopia: Leave No Adolescent Behind.” *Development Policy Review* 39 (5): 740–756. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12523>.
- Donkor, Audrey Elom. 2021. “Africa’s Youth Unemployment Crisis Is a Global Problem.” *Foreign Policy*, October 19, 2021. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/10/19/africa-youth-unemployment-crisis-global-problem/>.

- Hussein, Jemal, Tesfaye Gobena, and Tigist Gashaw. 2022. "The Practice of Menstrual Hygiene Management and Associated Factors among Secondary School Girls in Eastern Ethiopia: The Need for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Support." *Women's Health* 18: 17455057221087871. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17455057221087871>
- Masinire, Alfred, and Amasa Phillip Ndofirepi, eds. 2020. *Rurality, Social Justice and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McCullum, Hugh. 2005. "Education in Africa: Colonialism and the Millennium Development Goals." Accessed January 24, 2024. https://africa.peacelink.org/newsfromafrica/articles/art_9909.html.
- Muchabaiwa, Chipso, and Manase Kudzai Chiweshe. 2024. "The Role of Training and Vocational Education (TVE) in the Context of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)." *Indiana Journal of Arts and Literature* 5 (2): 1–7. [https://indianapublications.com/articles/IJAL_5\(2\)_1-7_65d4610eefe5a2.54084638.pdf](https://indianapublications.com/articles/IJAL_5(2)_1-7_65d4610eefe5a2.54084638.pdf).
- Ocheni, Stephen, and Basil C. Nwankwo. 2012. "Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa." *Cross-Cultural Communication* 8 (3): 46–54. https://www.tralac.org/images/News/Documents/Analysis_of_Colonialism_and_Its_Impact_in_Africa_Ocheni_and_Nwankwo_CSCanada_2012.pdf.
- Ogbonna, Ahamuefula E., Idris A. Adediran, Tirimisiyu F. Oloko, and Kazeem O. Isah. 2023. "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Youth Unemployment in Africa." *Quality and Quantity* 57 (6): 5055–5077. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-022-01600-9>.
- Okoli, Constance Ifeyinwa. 2022. "Achieving Inclusive TVE through Digital Resource Applications in Skill Development of University Undergraduates in Nigeria: Implications for Covid-19 Era." In *Attaining Sustainable Development Goals in Families, Companies and Communities*, edited by Felicia Azuoma Anyogu, Cecilia Amaoge Eme and John Agbo Ogbodo, 39–50. Awka: Nnamdi Azikiwe University.
- Settles, Joshua Dwayne. 1996. "The Impact of Colonialism on African Economic Development." University of Tennessee, Chancellor's Honors Program Projects. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/182.
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). 2019. "Education in Africa." Accessed January 14, 2025. <https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/education-africa>.
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). 2023. "The Right to Education: Every Human Has the Right to Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities." Accessed January 14, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/right-education>.