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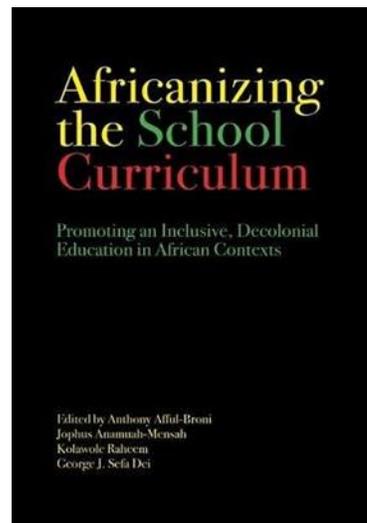
**Afful-Broni, A., Anamuah-Mensah, J., Raheem, K., & Sefa Dei, G. J. (Eds.). (2020). *Africanizing the school curriculum: Promoting an inclusive, decolonial education in African contexts*. Myers Education Press.**

**Pp. 170**

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According to Khalifa (2019), “Westernized Eurocentric schooling serves as a tool of imperialism, colonization and control in education.” White supremacy, colonialism, and racism have been woven into the fabric of school board policies and practices, as well as individual attitudes towards particular marginalized groups. More recently, as diversity and inclusion have become pillars of public education, efforts to decolonize education emphasize the need for school leaders to be more responsive to the needs of marginalized and racialized students. The exclusion of African ontologies and epistemologies contributes to further social marginalization, which negatively impacts self-esteem, sense of belonging and identity, student engagement, and academic performance for these students. The contributions in *Africanizing the School Curriculum* join this conversation about the imperative for change, a move away from pedagogical practices that dismiss the voices of African students.



Stemming from discomfort related to current Black and African education, *Africanizing the School Curriculum* addresses concepts around enslavement, genocide, segregation and continued exclusion in academic spheres. Collectively, the chapters delve into the meaning of Africanization, Indigenization and decolonization, followed by a discussion of how colonialization impacts students on a day-to-day basis and the strategies and solutions to overcome

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them. Through narratives of lived experiences, the contributors highlight the complexities of decolonization, but also offer “possibilities for building new relationships and harnessing local and global community connections” (p. 205).

This 10-chapter volume brings together 17 contributors, including prominent scholars, professors, education experts, teachers, PhD candidates, lecturers, and policy advisors, who offer their analyses and critiques of Black/African education. The book is organized thematically, covering topics of inclusive design, resistance towards neoliberal policies, critique of curriculum policy reform through an anti-racist lens, the importance of decolonizing curriculum, the contributions of African philosophies as pedagogical tools for education, the importance of embedding spirituality in curriculum, and exposing the media’s role in the unfair portrayal of Black students. While each chapter is unique, bringing in various perspectives and examples from across the African continent, the similarities lie in the stories told and how they highlight the urgent need for decolonial education.

The editors set the stage by asking *how do we ensure that education is not simply available and accessible, but that it is also fundamentally equitable for all?* (p. 2). Accordingly, the purpose of this volume is two-fold: (1) to understand the significant relationship between colonization, capitalism and education, and the impact on sovereignty and autonomy of peoples; and (2) to assert African ways of knowing as legitimate and valid. Collectively, the contributors propose that these can be achieved by reframing curricular, pedagogical and instructional practices in schools and classrooms to align with a collective pursuit of relevant and responsive education and scholarship; and reclaiming Black and African (used interchangeably in the book) intellectual traditions through the use of Indigenous languages.

Decolonization is the process of undoing colonizing practices. Within educational contexts, this process involves confronting and challenging the colonizing practices that have influenced education in the past, and which are still present today. Decolonizing African education is not merely about de-Westernizing educational policies, practices and approaches; it is about reasserting Africa at the centre of knowledge, discovery, validation and dissemination. Creating this space is imperative to having an inclusive curriculum. Further, for decolonization in education to occur, a whole school approach is necessary, in which all stakeholders resist Eurocentric Western paradigms deeply rooted in systems, structures, policies and actions.

Building on critical education pedagogy and anti-racist and anti-colonial scholarship, the contributors assert neoliberalism is a new form of colonialism within education. They urge a greater interrogation into conventional knowledge production, which plays a significant role in how capitalism and racism work in schooling and education. Since decolonization is a deeply-rooted practice tied to global capitalism, the contributors argue that a focus on accountability, quality, standards, excellence and competencies in education promotes colonial education. A decolonial approach to education would constitute “a life-sustaining source for Black and African students and communities,” which would speak to their lived

experiences, strengthen local knowledge and cultural resources, and challenge school practices that continue to reproduce colonial hierarchies of knowing (pp. 5, 18). To develop such a framework, the authors recommend (1) fostering a critical understanding of the self, sense of place, culture and history, and the relationship to laws, governance systems, autonomy and sovereignty (2) being self-reflective, ensuring teaching is geared toward structural transformation and (3) enabling Indigenous, oppressed and colonized peoples to narrate their own experiences, stories and truths.

Janelle Baptiste-Brady's chapter, "Rethinking Curriculum through Critical Blackness and African Indigenous Knowledges" left a lasting impression on me. The contributor highlights the denial of racism in schools, and the damaging effects on the Black/African student experience. I see this all too often, where educators affirm that racism simply does not exist in schools. If racism does not exist, it is not named nor addressed and students fend for themselves, leading to poor academic outcomes as well as lasting effects on their mental and social well-being. Presenting Indigenous knowledges as a theoretical framework for decolonial and anti-colonial praxis in education, Baptiste-Brady offers practical examples for rethinking curriculum, through the lenses of community rootedness, humility and reflectiveness, mentorship, ethics of care, storytelling, and bold acts of disruption.

Other noteworthy chapters address topics such as the role of media in perpetuating racism, self-identity, experience, knowledge and critical thinking. For example, in contributor Patrick Radebe's chapter on Jamaican, Canadian sports hero, Ben Johnson, he brings to the fore the role of media in the perpetuation of racism, sexism, classism, and ableism in schools and wider society. Mainstream media representation has immense power in informing public attitudes and assumptions. Thus, Black/African learners need to be equipped with "critical media literacy skills...and critical thinking and subversive skills" (p. 23) in the fight for social justice in schools. In another chapter, contributors Isaac Nortey Darko, Paul Banahene Adjei, and Chloe Weir push for incorporating African epistemologies and ontologies found in folkloric and cultural productions (such as spoken word poetry, role playing and drumming) into mainstream curriculum. Cultures bring with them rich narratives and experiences. These cultural nuances are passed down through generations and help students reconnect to their histories. It not only contributes to student identity, but also academic outcomes.

*Africanizing the School Curriculum* challenges readers to think about actively resisting colonial paradigms. By asking readers to think critically about the relationship between colonization and capitalism, and its impact on education, the book serves as a call to action. The volume includes narratives from various African contexts (South Africa, Ghana and Uganda) that shed light on the exclusion of lived experiences, voices, histories and cultures of African educators and learners. Some contributions also explore the notion of spirituality, a key component in African ways of knowing, in education. Woven throughout the chapters are thought-provoking questions, which strongly urge educators, educational leaders, and policymakers to reflect and

become active agents in the decolonization of educational practices. For example, *How do we critically analyze text and materials for omissions, bias and exclusions of experiences around social differences, and ensure teaching practices are making a difference in terms of real structural transformation?*

I particularly appreciated the editors' framing of "inclusion" as more than being granted entry to the classroom, but having the power to shape what happens in the classroom. Inclusivity brings every learner into the fold and promotes the view of racial/ethnic, class, and gender differences as strengths rather than weaknesses. The contributors hold educational leaders accountable for the perpetuation of injustices in current school policies and practices, and demand that they think through viable solutions from a critical African-centered ontology. In particular, they encourage education leaders to examine the transactions between teachers and learners, to allow opportunities for learners to draw on their own sociohistorical and cultural knowledges, and to create policies and curricula that give learners a voice.

Despite a strong critical race and social justice tone, this book lacks a human rights lens. Human rights is a pathway to racial justice. We have an intrinsic legal right to be free and live with dignity. Therefore, a focus on human rights, self-determination, and sovereignty may have strengthened the text. The basic tenet of human rights, as it pertains to education, is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn with dignity and have equal access to services and opportunities without discrimination or harassment. Educational institutions have a moral, ethical, and legal obligation in preserving human rights and ensuring education is accessible to all students, and including this legal element would underscore the responsibility of educators to respond to the growing calls for equity, inclusion and justice in schools.

Colonial legacy is deeply embedded at the core of formal education systems worldwide. The time has come for leaders, educators, practitioners and policy makers to acknowledge and address the oppressive actions, attitudes and policies that continue to infiltrate education systems. *Africanizing the School Curriculum* offers insights into decolonizing education as a form of critical praxis, moving from theory to action. With strategies and solutions to achieving equitable and accessible education for all, this book would be beneficial for any teacher, equity liaison, school leader or researcher who believes in the transformative power of education, and in the fundamental right of all students to *access, participate* and *benefit* from all aspects of the educational experience.

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## References

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### About the Reviewer

**Shezadi Khushal** is a PhD student in the Educational, Leadership and Policy Program, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. Shezadi is committed to the principles of equity, inclusivity, justice and human rights, and is working towards transforming educational policies, which have historically excluded specific members of society. Her research focuses on decolonizing education through disrupting Euro-centric Western paradigms and epistemologies.



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