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## EXTRAVERSION AND THE GOAL OF EDUCATION IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

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**ABSTRACT** The article explores the nature of extraversion as it manifests itself both in the economy and intellectual activity, pervading the educational activity. Based on a Eurocentric philosophy, the type of tertiary level education that many African countries developed only enabled them to stay on the periphery, since the education does not encourage independent thinking and theory building. Overcoming this requires redefining the goal of education in an African context with a program that could encourage change. This can be achieved by striking a balance between exogenous and indigenous forms of knowledge through an intercultural approach.

**Key Words:** Extraversion; Euro centrism; Decolonization of the mind; Goals of education; Science and technology; Indigenous knowledge.

### INTRODUCTION

In this paper I discuss extraversion in its different manifestations in the context of Africa. Basically the concept refers to a situation where economic and intellectual or educational activities are organized to imitate external goals and forces rather than internal interests. The goal around which the economic activity is structured tries to primarily address the interests of the economically dominant North, i.e. Europe and North America. As an extension of this the intellectual activity also is anchored around the ideas of universality. While this may not be wrong on its own, it is the degree to which such an approach could address the educational goals of the South in general and the African countries in particular that is questionable. Research and teaching in African countries are thought of in such a way that they imitate those of the North. This hinders them from addressing the problems of the African countries for which the education is primarily designed. After looking at extraversion in its various manifestations the essay will conclude by suggesting that cultural and civilizational centres must work interculturally. All civilizations and cultures despite their levels of development are of value to those who have developed them. They are also important and valuable to humanity at large. On this basis an intercultural approach that will try to strike a balance between what can be learnt from the exogenous and the indigenous can constitute a proper goal of African education.

## ECONOMIC EXTRAVERSION

It is necessary to start by explaining extraversion. Extraversion refers to a situation where many activities are meant and designed in such a way that they cater for the interest of the outside world. They are designed and attuned to the aims and interests of the outside world, precisely the North when we consider them from the point of view of Africa.

Extraversion has perhaps its best expression and example in the economy. African countries and the so-called developing countries largely have an economy whose primary aim is to cater to the interests of others rather than those of its own people. It can be lamented that this is not done willingly by whichever country it may be, since the key to the economic activity and the formula for development lies not with the concerned African country.

In order to corroborate this, one only needs to consider the various initiatives undertaken by the international financial institutions including the IMF, the World Bank and the governments behind them with regard to the development of the developing countries. Within the last twenty to thirty years or even more, there were initiatives such as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), Poverty Reduction Strategy and many more, if we take into account the initiatives at different regional and continental levels. Many of these initiatives are either initiatives of these institutions or some other country supporting them rather than of the leadership in Africa.

Every time these initiatives are undertaken, they are presented as a sort of a panacea for the countries' economic problems, and it is assumed that if the prescription were put to practice development would be realized. The leaders of the countries that are supposed to implement these programs accept the projects without scrutiny, and there are reasons for this, having to do with a whole range of factors concerning the essence and legitimacy of the leaders of developing countries.

In any case, what has to be underlined is that through these initiatives what the African countries are advised to do in effect are recommendations that they should restructure their economies in such a way that they produce mainly cash crops for exports, such as coffee, oil seeds, and flowers. These are products that have much demand in the developed countries.

It may be argued that there is nothing wrong with this in a globalizing world. But the point is that from the perspective of Africa, we are forced to take an alternative we ourselves have not chosen. The experts of the World Bank or the IMF, or some similar organizations had made the decision. The important issue in this is that an African country forfeited its rights to make decisions on its own. What is important and necessary for a given country is thus not chosen nor decided by the concerned people but by outsiders. One only wonders here, who knows about the best interests of the African, the African or the expert in Washington or New York? Is every country not able to set its priorities and structure its economy according to its own needs? Here it is essential to underline that the economy is structured to meet the interest

of others outside the concerned African country. This is one essential feature of extraversion. According to P. Hountondji:

...the underdeveloped economy is entirely turned to the outside, organized and subordinated to the needs of the ruling classes in the industrial capitals. ...extraverted economy – an economy that aims above all to furnish raw materials to and secondarily, outlets for the manufacturing industries massively located in the centre (Hountondji, 2002: 224-225).

A very recent example of a variety of this phenomenon is the negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which among other goals aims at liberalizing trade. Here, the rich countries tell the poor countries to liberalize their trade and “compete” in the world market with the few agricultural products that they have. The rich industrialized countries have much to sell, on top of which their agricultural products are subsidized. How can one reasonably accept such a competition unless one simply wants to destroy the livelihoods of the poor peasants in the developing world? In essence, the drive for liberalizing trade, in a situation where the basis of the competition is so unequal and unjust, is none other than shaping the economies of the developing countries in an extraverted manner.

The driving motive behind how the economy is organized and run shows that it is extraverted, or in other words aims at satisfying primarily the needs of the developed economies. Thus, it leaves aside the immediate issue of satisfying the interests and needs of its population. Instead of wheat, it produces flowers for export. In a way it is the land, which could be used for the production of food that is short changed into the production of flowers. Of course, since many African countries are unable to produce sufficient food for their population they have to be either imported or must come in the form of food aid. This is just one example of economic extraversion. It cannot be contested that this is a phenomenon driven not by the developing countries but the countries of the North and their powerful financial institutions. The African governments are usually passive recipients of the initiatives. The SAPs were the initiatives of the World Bank to which African governments subscribed willy-nilly. It can also be added that these governments do not have their own plans of how they want to develop their countries. This is a highlight of the extraversion. Later on when the World Bank abandons the SAP and introduces the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the same story is replayed. Very recently there was what was called the Blair Initiative in which some African leaders were made commissioners, prepared a report and tried to convince the so-called G-8 to support Africa to make poverty history, as the author of the initiative, Tony Blair said. The African leaders who were members of the Commission were too happy for the recognition and undertook the task of underlining the importance of the initiative. I think that this is an evidence for the point that the economies of the African countries are extraverted. A similar pattern is to be observed with regard to intellectual activity (education) and I turn to that here.

## EXTRAVERSION IN THE REALM OF EDUCATION

The extraversion of intellectual activity in Africa has to do with its historical emergence and continuous pegging to the North, which brought it into existence. Education in general and tertiary education in particular was brought into existence in one form or another by the North, particularly at a time when many African countries were still colonized. Some were provided by the metropolitan universities, such as the University of East Africa or Ghana, both outposts of the University of London. Even Ethiopia which boasts to be the only country in Africa not to have been colonized, established its first college in 1950 just about the time colonialism was to leave the other African countries. But even then they were Canadian Jesuit missionaries that were entrusted with the task of establishing an Ethiopian institution of higher learning.

At that time none of these countries had either the trained manpower or the knowledge or the infrastructure to start tertiary level education. But that does not warrant its continuous pegging to its Northern centre. This only explains the establishment of the institutions. Besides this history, one has to look into the content of what was taught, how the curriculum was designed, the objectives of the education and the knowledge, skills and values that it was expected to instil in the youth of these countries. These are the questions that need to be answered in order to understand the nature of the education and see the condition of extraversion as it is.

If one looks at the material taught in the newly established African universities one clearly sees its extraverted nature. The curricula were designed or copied from those of the universities from England, Canada or France depending on which countries the instructors were from. The youth of the African countries therefore are expected to be educated on material largely alien to them. The purpose of the education is to alienate the youth from their culture and identity. It turned out that many of the subject matter that they would acquire both in the theoretical and practical fields were of little or no significance to the country. Apart from its practical and social irrelevance, the content of the education was Eurocentric, prejudiced against nearly all the heritage that each one of these countries cherished. The Eurocentric philosophy of education is based on a hierarchy of cultures, thereby considering the home grown values and culture as backward. One of its cardinal tasks is to do away with traditional values, knowledge and cultures since they are considered to be backward, particular and even barbarous and to replace them with the progressive and "universal" forms of knowledge and culture. Hence the mission of such education becomes clear. Primarily it aims at robbing the African youth of its identity, pride and confidence when it declares that your value or identity or culture or history is not the universal.

Balsvik summed up the nature of Ethiopian education as follows:

Modern education in Ethiopia was imported from Great Britain and the United States, was influenced by various other Western countries, and

was not attuned to the Country's needs. Patterns of education, curricula, and texts intended to further the interests of most highly industrialized countries were transplanted into one of the least developed rural countries in the world. There was little relevance to the basic and immediate needs of Ethiopian society. To the average child the school was essentially an alien institution about which his own parents were usually ignorant. What was learned in school could not be related to the environment (Balsvik, 2005: 9).

It is the purpose of such an education that needs to be questioned. It is very common to hear very high-minded statements about education. Leaders of African countries often declare the importance of education in development. Having seen firsthand the role of education, particularly science and technology, in the developed countries some probably even might have attributed magical powers to education. But apparently nobody thought hard about the kind of education that is suitable for rendering African development possible. The type of education that is exported at best enables the young generations to unlearn what they learned from their cultures and at worst to develop self-hatred that lead to self-denial.

This seems to be the way education and research began in many African countries. At the initial stage, it could be argued that probably it was impossible to make a better start in lieu of a number of difficulties. Decades down the line though, it cannot be claimed that there has been much change and improvement. In fact there have been many attempts to make education and research relevant to the concrete African situation. One can mention the various attempts at reforms of curricula and research agenda with the view of replacing the education that alienates and uproots the youth from their bases.

Despite these attempts, it can only be lamented that such attempts also failed, due to a variety of reasons. The North-South relations and the dependence to which the Africans have become accustomed to hardly enabled them to disentangle themselves from the North and start to think and produce knowledge independently. The African countries with few exceptions have largely remained dependent on the North. This dependence robbed them of the means and confidence to think independently. We committed an original sin when we started to believe that development in a different situation could be helpful as our model, too. This is not to undermine the importance of Western science and technology to African countries. I refer to the weakness of African countries (universities) in indigenizing knowledge produced elsewhere to address African problems. In fact this act made the educational undertaking (teaching and research) in the African case largely superfluous since we limited ourselves to serving only as southern outposts of the metropolitan universities and research institutes. Instead of trying to understand our problems and formulating proper questions with regard to the problems, we kept on believing that somebody else has already done the thinking and it is only sufficient for us if we could copy from that. We kept ourselves busy echoing what has been said elsewhere, something which is not as painful and exacting as trying to find out new methods and

approaches to our problems.

We were not able to grasp why and for whom we have to produce knowledge. In fact we did not venture to produce knowledge, for we found it comfortable and easier to echo what others already produced with the assumption that knowledge is universal. Ours is the particular and hence it cannot be an object of knowledge, just as it is told against us by the proponents of domination in the North. If any situation better than the one in which we are now is expected, then it is only in vain for we have, by keeping on echoing others, made it impossible for ourselves to act independently. Hountondji shed a light on this as follows:

...the research institutions at the periphery are very often only annexes to the mother institutions situated in the centre. Finally and above all, whatever the performance of the researchers in the periphery and their institutions, their work aims at giving answers to questions that are of prime interest to the mother institutions or industries that sponsor them. Yesterday like today, the theoretical demand comes from elsewhere just like the economic demand. Theoretical demand here means the set of questions that determine and shape the collection of data, the theoretical tradition from which at a certain point in time emerges, as a result of many complex factors, this set of questions (Hountondji, 2002: 229).

Indeed this has to do not only with what takes place in the universities but also the situation in the entire country and how each one of these independently emerging countries plan to realize their independence. This questions the level of readiness among leaders and intellectuals to make the independence a genuine one. This has to be a task that can be mastered if African countries are ready to do at least two things. The first one is to gain the readiness to learn from others what is appropriate, wherever they may be. Education in general and scientific education in particular has to take this seriously. The advances made by science, which can be considered as the achievement and treasure of the whole of human kind are important and from which every country stands to benefit. Establishing relations with the metropolitan universities, learning from them or in fact copying from them including the relevant curricula creates the opportunity to use the accumulated knowledge and experience. But if we think that since they have already developed and refined knowledge, and our task remains to tap it, we forget the reality. And in this we failed to accomplish a second and probably more important task.

The second task requires each country that it realizes that it is neither England, France, nor Germany but Ghana, Ethiopia or Burkina Faso. This means that the education in each one of these countries cannot repeat what is done elsewhere. What are the specific problems of a country? What is the role of education in overcoming these problems? What type of education and theory are capable of this? What kind of knowledge, skills and values do we need to master our problems? What role does the indigenous knowledge and culture have in this situation? Is it possible to master the situation by relying



on imported ideas alone or do the indigenous knowledge and experience have no role in education that takes place in their midst?

Our endeavours to educate the young largely ignored the second important issue with the assumption that the borrowed system of education alone can bring about the required changes. The basis of this undertaking and assumption is that we easily gave in to the civilizing mission of the North. The North assumed the existence only of a singular humanity thereby also assuming a singular and homogeneous culture all around the world. The acceptance of an assumed singular and homogenous culture and essence denies our very being, and what must be asked is how we could accept this and work toward such realization.

We are found at a particular juncture with our cultures, languages and the whole gamut of psychosocial attributes that make us what we are. The first expression of imported type of education was an assault on the entities and attributes that constitute us, as Africans. It was an assault on our very being and that is what we naively accepted as universal and scientific truth. The key to our perpetual dependence and economic and intellectual extraversion lies in this phenomenon of uncritical acceptance, including prejudices that others hurled at us, we started to take important steps towards self-denial.

One of the reasons for extraversion is this. We believed as absolute truths, the prejudices and abuses of others against us. We convinced ourselves that we were outside of history and humanity, following Kant and Hegel. The royal path to achieving history and humanity then lay in denouncing our historical heritage and embracing the philosophy (of history) of true humanity as the European. Through the acceptance of this we destroyed many of our essential attributes. How can then we expect something worthwhile in a situation where we had no self-respect nor respect for our values and our essential attributes? This in my opinion explains, notwithstanding of course other factors, such as economy and other structural issues, the type of extraversion in many fields.

...the science practised in the former colonies remains dependent – right up to its problematic and the questions that it raises – on the scientific concerns and by extension on the technological and economic needs of Europe. Research in the areas of agronomy, for example is directly in the service of an export economy. ...theoretical extraversion finds its ultimate explanation in economic extraversion. ...it teaches us something about the economic origin of the most complex scientific questions, the material genesis of theoretical questions. ...even the most “abstract” disciplines are not exempt from this constraint. Any scientific problematic, any set of theoretical questions, is linked, directly or indirectly, to theoretical and extra-theoretical condition of possibility, and it always ends up revealing, as soon as it is interrogated, its complex links with politics (Hountondji, 2002: 230).

It is important to ask why both intellectual and economic activities remain extraverted. It can be said that during the initial phase many requirements to



function independently were not available. So many years have elapsed since then, but why and how long is it bound to continue?

The main problem, I believe is that the elite in these developing countries have not realized the importance and development of an independent intellectual discourse. The very education that was received convinced many that important breakthroughs for scientific knowledge have already been achieved. Hence it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel and hence we can catch up if we copy from the developed countries. It may be true that important breakthroughs had been achieved and that we can reap the benefits of such knowledge as well. But the problem lies in the fact that apart from making general statements about the importance of knowledge for development and assuming that what has proved successful in the developed countries would also be useful for African countries, we have not seriously thought about indigenizing this knowledge and remould it in such a way that it serves our purpose. In this it seems to me that we Africans committed a basic error of neglecting the reality in which this imported knowledge was supposed to function.

Right from the point in which the questions are formulated, the hypotheses developed, the data collected along with other attendant issues, we did not want to take a departure from the way it was done in the metropolitan universities. Instead of actually trying to formulate the questions that education or science ought to solve in our particular cases we just went ahead to answer the questions that have already been formulated and for which some answers have already been given. I am not suggesting here that Western knowledge is useless for us. It may be useful, but not as a whole package that could be useful. There are matters that we need to copy but there are also others that we should daringly try to develop anew. Apparently we lacked the courage to undertake the things we have to develop anew. We may be right in studying and applying the one or the other principle of Western science or method. But we should also realize that our African situation is different. What is appropriate in this situation must be the question that all concerned should ask themselves.

In fact the acceptance of foreign curricula, for example, incorporates accepting the philosophy of education of the country from which it has been copied. But a country obviously requires a philosophy of education that takes into account its specific history, culture, identity, needs and goals. It is without taking into account all these that we have been copying.

There is another dimension of this that has always been overlooked naively. We have copied and incorporated into our education all the prejudices that the erstwhile colonial powers had against their former colonies. There were theories based on the hierarchy of cultures, "races," and ways of life. How many of us doubted the veracity of the racially motivated negative statements that gave a lower status to the non-Europeans? One only needs to recall among many such thoughts and expressions, Leopold S. Senghor's widely quoted statement that declared that reason was Hellenic as emotion was African. In philosophy, anthropology and other areas of knowledge, when we deal with what are said to be fundamental questions or concepts or principles we did not dare to ask

whether these principles or questions are also fundamental for us Africans.

We want to modernize through education. Without trying to adapt an appropriate approach to modernization, we began accepting the prejudices of the West against us, assuming that if we did so, we would be able to modernize. It appears that, in the particular case of Africa, we believed that modernizing presupposed self-denial. Why is it that, in the case of Africa, it was thought that all modernization can only begin with self-denial? Why should we start with an assault on our very being, culture and achievements in order to modernize? While we could have thought that modernization has to begin from where we are, unfortunately what we have been doing is declaring that our way of life, our home grown values and knowledge are backward and that we had to start from scratch if we wanted to modernize. What actually took place here was the denial of the plurality of human experiences which placed primacy on the European essence or experience as the only appropriate experience for human kind. One of the causes of extraversion and the resultant stagnation has to be sought in this act of self-denial. It is important to have a look at the experiences of Japan and other south-east Asian countries in this regard. The south-east Asian nations and particularly Japan made it a point that science and technology can find their place along with their cultural, historical and other heritages. In the case of Asia it is self-assertion rather than self-denial that spearheaded modernization.

Hence looking at the way our African education is mostly organized I say that from its very inception it was not meant to be an education that could help us modernize. The initiators probably did not think beyond establishing outposts of the metropolitan universities. As Mkandawire wrote:

One task of ideas in both the enslavement and colonization of Africa was to dehumanize the enslaved and the colonized by denying their history and denigrating their achievements and capacities. The colonialists' claim to universalism for their culture and values, and the demotion of other cultures to only particularistic and exotic significance, could not but provoke response and resistance (Mkandawire, 2005: 5-6).

When an African fails to realize the significance of such dehumanizing ideas and instead of rejecting and criticizing them, accepts them as true, the damage is done to the African mind. The education and institutions instead of serving as vehicles of change become vehicles of denigration against the very people it is supposed to help out of the situation. Besides, this education is elitist. Its aim is to produce few who are good at imitating their teachers from the West. There were not many instances of challenging the denigrating ideas. The Western education did not take note of how the overwhelming majority of the rural population could make use of this knowledge.

## LANGUAGE AND EXTRAVERSION

The language of education itself is another testimony to the misplaced belief in the Western world. It was largely given in the language of the erstwhile colonial country. The small number of schools, the language of instruction and the attitude of the educated towards the majority of the uneducated people made knowledge inaccessible to the people who needed it most. Those who received the education eventually ended up alienating themselves from their roots and cultures, developing contempt for the way of life of their compatriots. In the case of youth in the large urban areas they eventually lost the language of their fathers and forefathers.

I believe that the issue of language even after many years of independence has not been given serious thoughts. There are countries that have introduced instruction in local languages in primary schools. But the language in which tertiary education is conducted, research undertaken and knowledge produced, is still the language of the colonizers and the language of the elite leadership. It appears as though we are convinced that a few languages have a monopoly on cognitive vocabulary. Unless this is changed and unless we realize that without this change we cannot make progress by enabling the people to share from knowledge so important in transforming life, our African education would not have any significance. If knowledge is not brought to the people in their own language, if it is not produced in their own language how do we expect to transform? We should realize that the issue of language is serious if education has to have any meaning for the overwhelming majority of the people. Mkandawire rightly argued:

The issue of language is not merely an expression of cultural chauvinism or romanticism. The interest in language is not only because it is a vehicle of regaining Africa's memory but also because the language medium is crucial for harnessing human resources and grounding scientific knowledge in African realities. It is the only way science and technology can become part of the common sense and world-view of the wider African public and underpin the scientific and technological knowledge required for the development of the continent (Mkandawire, 2005: 7).

I emphasize language with respect to achieving the decolonization of the mind. It is common to hear some people declare the instrumentality of language in education or life. It is said that language is a means of communication. This would enable some to assert that language belongs to nobody and hence the emphasis to use one's mother tongue in education, for instance, is taken only in the political sense. But beyond that it is important to understand the implications of a decision in favour of some language of the colonialist from the point of view of identity. From a mere scientific and linguistic point of view it has long been established that there is no language that would replace the child's mother tongue in providing her/him with a proper education. Chumbow argued;

Linguists, psychologists and anthropological linguists agree, however, that the use of the child's "mother tongue" as a medium of instruction in the school system has significant advantages over the use of exoglossic or foreign language, where "mother tongue" is defined as the language in which the child first learns to express his ideas about himself and about the world in which he lives (Chumbow, 2005: 170).

We have to think in the African context taking into account the colonial history. Moreover, we have to also take into account the very purpose of education. Its aim in the African context is to change, modernize and transform ourselves through ideas that are now secluded in a few ivory towers, not properly accessed even by those who go through it, since the educational language itself is a barrier. The way education has been conducted with the colonial language on ideas that have little or nothing to do with the African reality, kept education a secret, even a mystery to the overwhelming majority of the African peoples. An important aspect of the decolonization of the mind is to change this fact that education remains largely mysterious for the overwhelming majority of the African rural population, but rather bring knowledge directly to the people who want it to change their lives. The change in the language of instruction, of course, has to be accompanied by a change in the content of the knowledge itself. Without taking into account the language factor, not much change can be expected. Without effective communication with those whom we want to educate, we cannot be considered to be serious about our education bringing about any meaningful changes. Chumbow wrote;

All education takes place as a result of effective communication of knowledge, skills and techniques by a knowledgeable and competent source to one who lacks such knowledge or skills. Language is the normal medium of communication of knowledge and skills in all educational (instructional) systems. Effective acquisition of knowledge and skills can take place only if effective communications via a language medium has taken place. ...education by means of an appropriate *language medium* provides the knowledge, skills and values necessary for humans to become effective, efficient and qualitatively valuable agents of change in the interests of national development (Chumbow, 2005: 169).

The situation of extraversion only shows that the process of decolonization needs to undertake many important tasks. Achieving formal political independence for the once colonized countries cannot be undermined. For genuine independence the political affairs must definitely be followed by the more important mental decolonization.

Colonization hence had multiple dimensions. On the one hand it held its victims under the direct control of the colonizers. On the other hand, through ideas that were spread in various forms the colonizers tried to hold the colonized in perpetual bondage. Mental colonization was furthered through religion, philosophy, cultural imposition and education in general. Each one of these in

one form or another inculcated among the Africans that there was only one genuinely universal humanity worthy of emulation and that was the European. It followed that other philosophies, religions, etc. were particulars that eventually had to give way to the universal. The colonialists' claim to universalism in all respects is the assault by which they actually denigrate and dehumanize those who have a different identity. The colonization of the mind through these different avenues has somehow succeeded in convincing many African elites that the prejudices of the colonialists are scientific truths. The ultimate decolonization of the mind has to start with the rejection of this idea of the supremacy of the Western universality alone. It has to start with the realization that the hierarchical view of human beings and their values was a creation of the West in order to dominate the rest of the world. This would then require that the Africans start to look inwards. We have values, cultures and knowledge that we have maintained and cultivated until the Europeans arrived. The way we treated our cultures and knowledge differed from the West, and it has to be recognized that we did not largely have a culture of writing. But that does not give us an inferior position in humanity. Our languages are not inferior to any other language, and they could be developed to handle complex concepts.

In fact mental colonization has its very good prophets and proponents in the Africans themselves. This is the result of one-sided education based on the "superiority" of the West. We became too innocent in accepting all that the Eurocentric education wanted to tell us, as scientific truths, while in reality what was portrayed as scientific only meant to keep us inferior to the Europeans. The assertion of European superiority has no basis unless one wants to argue that their current superiority in science and technology attests to this. A metaphysical superiority of the West as it was depicted by Kant, Hegel, and Hume is a self-serving myth. How can, then Africans accept this and keep on denigrating themselves? It is in this area that mental decolonization is needed most. Kebede argued:

...the deconstruction of Western discourse is the only appropriate weapon against this induced self-debasement. Nothing genuinely African and good can be realized without the radical extirpation of the internalized colonial discourse. So long as the colonial idea of Africa survives – and the idea survives, nay, prospers through the Western education of the young Africans – the conception of a truly African project of modernization is impossible, still less the design of policies and methods to turn modernization into reality. Mental decolonization is the key to Africa's numerous impediments and continuous marginality. This need to go from conversion to deconversion turns philosophical deconstruction into a *sin qua non* of African renaissance (Kebede, 2004: 160).

Deconstruction and conceptual decolonization are hence important means by which we can overcome extraversion. Through deconstruction we try to lay bare the contradictions and false assertions and assumptions contained in the Eurocentric discourse about those who are non-Europeans. Questioning the

veracity of the Eurocentric discourse, we may turn to the African source and reappropriate the wisdom inherent in African cultures and philosophies. This will create an opportunity to put to good use the indigenous knowledge. By returning to the source, in other words, we take a step away from extraversion. We do this to understand ourselves. To understand ourselves we use different sources and methods. Returning to the source and overcoming extraversion does not mean seclusion in knowledge that is only African. Rather, I advocate handling the issue in an intercultural way. It is not a matter of promoting purity and declaring that we have nothing to do with the outside world or the North. We have to avoid such seclusion mainly for two reasons. First of all nothing is pure. World cultures have been together for a long time. There has been a long standing cultural interaction that talk about purity does not have any meaning. Secondly and as a result of the foregoing, useful knowledge that has been developed so far is the monopoly of nobody but something that humanity must possess communally.

In attempting to realize the idea of conceptual decolonization, it may be good to ponder here on how many countries have a proper policy of science and a research-and-development program for science and scientific knowledge. I refer also to the general goal of education. Constructive policy has to be a policy that realizes both the potentials and the limits of science in production and life in general. As much as we underline the importance of education in development, I have stressed that we Africans were not able to develop an educational policy and curricula that is able to meet these goals.

Developing a science policy and a well-organized scientific knowledge and database that will help the development of a country requires an approach that takes into account the needs of that country. Hence mere adoption of some policy copied from other countries do not suffice. Copying from whatever source available without taking into account the concrete situation of a given country is not helpful.

The task is particularly difficult for what may be called the academy of sciences or similar institutions entrusted with such a task. Such an institution must undertake a profound soul-searching and brainstorming before adopting a certain policy. In the case of any African country the policy must not be such that it totally focuses on Western science alone. It should try to give an important role to indigenous forms of knowledge, which have hitherto remained oral, undocumented and inaccessible to those who are engaged in scientific research. A science policy only developed this way can truly be a proper science policy for a given country.

Such a policy could be in a position to design a proper research agenda for science. The research agenda and priorities largely have remained extraverted and left the scientists accepting an international division of labour where the North set the questions and the South collaborated in supplying data and performing other secondary tasks rather than engaging in building theory. The priorities cannot be our own since the questions are set elsewhere and many other conditions that enable us to set priorities lamentably fail. In such a situ-



ation even questions of the advancement in scientific knowledge could be considered secondary for us. The primary question should be the question of the appropriateness of a given scientific activity to our situation. In many African countries research priorities are rarely set according to the requirements of the given African country. Largely it has been a situation where those who provide the funds for research also determine the priorities, hence the expression, donor - driven research. Donor - driven research mainly focuses on answering the research questions formulated elsewhere which could be of little or no relevance to the concerned country. It is in order to overcome this that a proper policy of science geared towards locally set priorities must be undertaken.

Hence it is essential to redefine the goal of education in order to overcome extraversion. The formal declarations and official statements about education did not enable Africa to benefit from education to a desired level. This is the case, as I tried to emphasize above, since we did not undertake much to make education a vehicle for changing our lives. Apart from accepting the importance of education and knowledge in general, we did not ask nor question the type of education that is useful for us. The education, the educational policies, the media of the education and much of the Eurocentric material built into the education, rendered knowledge something useless for the overwhelming majority of the people. It is a form of knowledge, which is far removed from the people and their needs. That is why it fails to deliver the requisite knowledge to the people who need it for changing their lives.

One of the essential attributes of the Eurocentric education is its neglect and contemptuous disregard for what is known as indigenous knowledge. It starts with the premise that, that which is indigenous is particular and not useful in view of the "universal." This approach undermines the contribution of indigenous knowledge that has been useful for generations. Such undermining of knowledge at the same time undermines the local reality and the people who have been using the knowledge for generations. A misplaced view of Western knowledge, particularly science and technology, kept us Africans ignorant of how this knowledge could be used in enhancing indigenous knowledge.

So it is necessary and important to redefine the goal of education. Some may lament that since the goals of education are known and universal, why would it be necessary in an African context to redefine it? It was the way modern education was introduced into Africa and carried out that makes redefinition imperative. There are too many biases contained in the modern education that necessitate such a redefinition. Its exclusive claim to universality necessitates redefinition. Its introduction actually played a major role in eroding the capability and self-confidence of the African and the underdevelopment of indigenous knowledge. We need to overcome this and redefine education and its goal. As Hountondji argued, "...integration into world scientific research had resulted in arresting the development of pre-existing systems of knowledge, all the while pushing the periphery to specialize in subaltern roles in relation to the global processes of Knowledge production." (Hountondji, 2002: 234)

Obviously Africa needs education for the very same reasons that others need



it. But the differences between our realities, experiences, memories and the like necessitate the redefinition of education. The education that we need to work for has to be the one that rehabilitates our values, capabilities, memories and knowledge systems. I don't want to be misunderstood here. By redefining education and its goals we should not ghettoize ourselves. I emphasize that we must not establish a hierarchy between human cultures. Moreover we should see the cultures as having evolved through mutual and intercultural contacts. So, by taking a departure from the assumption that, only the European humanity is universal and valuable, we should be able to develop an approach that recognizes the contributions of all the possible cultures. Such an assumption would enable us to benefit from all knowledge developed by human kind without biases. Such an approach at the same time gives an opportunity for forms of knowledge embedded in peripheral cultures and have hitherto been denied any role to remerge. In the words of P. Hountondji we would be in a position to appropriate the established knowledge and reappropriate indigenous knowledge. He wrote:

If this ideal is shared, [appropriation and reappropriation] then the need will be acknowledged, in the field of knowledge and know-how, for this double movement-indispensable to the construction of a self-centred and intellectually independent Africa: a movement of critical appropriation of the scientific and technological heritage available internationally, and at the same time, a no less critical effort of reappropriation of endogenous knowledge and know-how. As a matter of fact both movements are similar, because the knowledge that is accumulated in the North, and which we must possess today, has been produced over centuries with our collaboration and that of all peoples of the world. To appropriate it for ourselves is therefore to reappropriate a heritage that for a long time has been misunderstood and neglected, in order to contribute, in a conscious and methodical way, to its promotion and development (Hountondji, 2002: 257-258) .

Education is instrumental in life. But the selective form of knowledge derived from or embedded in a specific culture is not appropriate. Hence redefining the goal and purpose of education would enable the extirpation of the biases contained in the type of educational curricula that has been merely copied. Extirpating it of its biases, we must be able to focus on the content of education to become useful in the reality of Africa. Redefining the goal of education hence can be seen as an attempt at striking the balance between that which is exogenous and indigenous. The exogenous is important. It is not the whole of it that is biased. By avoiding its biased, superficial and unnecessary elements we can put it to good use. Obviously, this is what countries of East Asia, including Japan have done in order to succeed. Indigenous knowledge is home grown and is rooted in the reality. It was unnecessary and imperialistic to declare this knowledge backward and useless. This led to uprooting many young people in the sense that those who went through Western education and resultant

upbringing ended up being alienated from their culture and language. They have developed a relation of hatred or ambivalence towards the indigenous. So when we try to strike a balance between the exogenous and indigenous we must recognize the importance of the indigenous and pave the way for its contribution to humanity at large. Humanity can benefit more from enrichment through intercultural dialogue rather than from a monologue.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding this paper I would like to once again invoke the goal of education. Education enables the appropriation of new knowledge, skills and values. The manner in which this is attained is important. In the case of the African countries there was an attempt to make a new beginning by starting from a scratch. This was because it was assumed that the traditional African knowledge and values were not important in comparison with the modern Western education. This had at least two disadvantages. Knowledge accumulated through generations which could be useful not only for Africans but also others was undermined. Undermining such knowledge and values had secondly a negative impact for Africans from the point of view of identity and psychology. This is why a goal of education consciously aiming at not only learning new subject matters but also reappropriating indigenous knowledge, values and skills is important.

When we compare the situation in which modern education began in Africa with the present status of education we see that many changes have taken place. There are different attempts both in Africa and elsewhere to give some role to the indigenous knowledge. My critique of extraversion is not to plead for an approach that exclusively focuses on indigenous knowledge. It is advantageous from a number of perspectives when different cultures and civilizations work together, recognizing the kind of value they have in common, learning from the aspects that are unique to this or that culture and tolerating aspects that might not even be understandable from their own unique perspectives.

Hence it has to be the goal of African education to cultivate all approaches that are necessary for appropriating new ideas from outside, and for reappropriating the indigenous knowledge, skills and values. The exogenous system must not impose itself on Africa, but must consider itself an equal partner in the quest of Africa for a change in the lives of African people. A change aimed at modernizing Africa having a definite impact on the lives of its people must be the goal of education in Africa. This can be better achieved through an intercultural approach.

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