

BOOK REVIEW

Selina Linda Mudavanhu, Shepherd Mpofu, and Kezia Batisai, eds. *Decolonising Media and Communication Studies Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Routledge, 2023. 298 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$144.00. Hardback. ISBN 978-1-032-48306-1.

Decolonizing Media and Communication Studies Education in Sub-Saharan Africa is an incisive anthology that challenges African academic institutions to come to terms with their colonial pasts and elicit a media and communication studies framework reflective of African experiences, languages, and cultural narratives. The book—with an array of essays by African scholars, divided into four parts with a total of fifteen chapters—engages in both a critical examination of the colonial structures in African higher education and also offers a roadmap for creating a more culturally responsive and intellectually liberating academic environment. It serves as a call to action from its provocative and engaging insights, for those within academia who consider the ultimate devastation of lingering Eurocentrism as a means towards true education autonomy in Africa’s education frameworks.

Opening with a critical observation about the resilience of the colonial “power matrix” in African institutions of higher learning, and particularly in media and communication studies, the arguments put forward by Grosfoguel and Ndlovu-Gatsheni about the “colonial matrix of power” indicate that African universities, even though politically liberated, have retained structures that give preference to Western norms, intellectual frameworks, and languages. According to them, such a legacy has resulted in African academia failing to develop a true scholarly identity that respects indigenous knowledge and prioritizes Afro-centricity.

The book comprises four thematic sections exploring decolonial efforts in African media and communication studies. The first, “Big Picture Considerations,” critiques the reliance on Western models in African media programs, advocating for disentanglement to reflect African socio-political realities. “Rethinking Classrooms” emphasizes Afrocentric, student-centered pedagogy, with Mudavanhu critiquing the “banking model” and Endong advocating for African cinematic traditions in curricula. The third section, “Reflections on Curricula and Syllabi,” which I consider the heart of the book, proposes an ambitious framework for overhauling curricula to “center” African perspectives. Chasi and Rodney-Gumede move to argue for a shift toward “Afrokology,” a holistic framework that looks to integrate African worldviews, values, and knowledge systems within media studies curricula. They further argue that, without such restructuring, African universities will continue to produce graduates who are alienated

from their own cultural realities and histories. This section provides a granular look at how an Afrocentric curriculum might differ, focusing on African languages, cultural studies, and indigenous methodologies as foundational components of media and communication education. Finally, “Beyond Classrooms” critiques foreign-funded journalism programs, highlighting their ideological motivations and their implications for African sovereignty in professional training. However, as much as foreign influence is rightly debunked, less space is given to the question of how African institutions might start independent programs of journalism training in order to reduce their dependence on foreign forces. At least some speculation with funding models or regional cooperation could have further complemented the debate of media education sovereignty for Africa.


What the book makes clear is that decolonization in African education consists of more than just inclusion of African contents but deep restructuring of the very principles of curricula, pedagogy, and institutional ethos. This line of thought is quite important, in that it actually flies in tune with ongoing movements like #RhodesMustFall in South Africa, where changes to the education system are still sought anew so as not to keep on alienating the African from their histories and identities. The contributors would argue that a decolonized curriculum would serve as a bridge between Africa’s past and future, enabling students to learn within a framework that is both intellectually rigorous and culturally affirmative.

I found the book quite frank in addressing several factors hindering decolonizing African media and communication studies, including institutional inertia, funding, and intellectual colonialism. Sometimes, the contributors tend to be idealistic and overly ambitious without always exploring pragmatic difficulties likely to be encountered in realizing their recommendations. Calls such as “centring African languages,” therefore, drive only partially towards the looming logistical and linguistic diversity problems of multilingual African societies. In most African countries, there are a number of ethnic groups, each with its own languages that represent its cultural and linguistic specificities. In Nigeria alone, there are over 250 distinct languages, for example. I, therefore, suggest a more general deliberation of how to strike a balance between indigenous language incorporation and the accessibility of education. This would have been quite valuable for the main arguments of this book.

Additionally, while insightful, the book sometimes oversimplifies Western influence as wholly destructive without considering selective adaptation. Challenges include limited resources, archival gaps, and financial constraints in implementing Afrocentric curricula. A clearer discussion on integrating Afrocentric and global standards would enhance practicality. Nevertheless, it remains an inspiring guide for decolonial education efforts in Africa.

In framing decolonization within a holistic project from curricular reform to pedagogical shifts, and to professional independence, the book sets an agenda both formidable and far-reaching for scholarship and action in the coming years. Despite some oversight concerning the practical applicability of the book, it serves as both an inspiration and a guiding light for those committed to fostering an education system that reflects the intellectual sovereignty and cultural

richness of Africa as a unique continent. It is, indeed, a good and engaging read for anyone who seeks to understand the complexities of decolonial theory in practice, especially within the context of African media and communication studies.

Ayodele James Akinola 
Michigan Technological University,
Houghton, MI, USA
aakinola@mtu.edu
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