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L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI

إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

**“Potted Plants in Green Houses”: A Critical Reflection on
the Resilience of Colonial Education in Africa
in the Twenty First Century**

Francis B. Nyamnjoh
University of Cape Town

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Abstract

This paper argues that education in Africa is victim of an exogenously induced colonial and colonising epistemology. Whatever appellation we give it, this epistemology takes the form of science as ideology and hegemony. Under it, education in Africa and/or for Africans has been like a pilgrimage to the Kilimanjaro of colonial intellectual ideals and also the tortuous route to Calvary for alternative ways of knowing and ways of life. Sometimes with justifying rhetoric on the need to be competitive internationally, the practice has been for the elite to model education in Africa after educational institutions in Europe and North America, with little attempt at domestication. This is a journey fuelled by an exogenously induced and internalised sense of inadequacy in most elite Africans, and endowed with the mission of devaluation or annihilation of African creativity, agency and value systems. It has served to reinforce in those who undertake it self-devaluation and self-hatred, and a profound sense of inferiority that in turn compels them to “lighten their darkness” both physically and metaphorically for the gratification of the colonising and hegemonic others. The paper argues that the future of education in Africa can only be hopeful through a meticulous and systematic creative process of cultural restoration and endogenisation, in tune with the negotiation and navigation of myriad possibilities in the lives of Africans small and big, poor and rich, rural and urban, and in between. If Africa is to be party in a global conversation on knowledge production and consumption, it is only appropriate that it does so with the interests and concerns of Africans as guiding principle.