

Human Development Resource Centre

Vision Statement for Open Access Publication of Africa-Centric Literature/Texts and Tools

<http://thehdrc.org/index.html>

The Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC) is an interdisciplinary, equal opportunity facility registered in 1995 in Cameroon for research, policy, and societal outreach on lifespan human development, with special focus on the next generations – children and youth – in families and communities facing rapid social and technological challenges.

When scholars and researchers apply Western theories, epistemes and best-practice models in Africa, they are surprised that they do not exactly fit. This is logical given that no existing theory fittingly explains contemporary Africa's triple-strand cultural braid (Nsamenang, 2005). But the gulf between academic literature, international policy standards and Africa's existential realities has seldom been systematically charted, hence the salience of challenging African scholars and professionals to rethink how best to connect their westernized values and education to the sorry state of their continent and countries. The efforts of the HDRC to translate state-of-the-art literature and its own research into child and youth-friendly services hyped our sensitivity to this largely unexplored gap.

The awareness prompted the HDRC to become an Africa-sensitive advocate, tacitly exhorting African scholars and their development partners to generate intellectual properties within Africa's theory of the universe. If research that generates Africa-centric knowledge does not happen, Africa will persist as eternal knowledge and technology importer. The goal of our advocated generative processes is to access new frontiers of knowledge and provoke critical personal and collective awareness into research and development (R&D) that can gradually snowball into an African contribution to universal knowledge of scientific value (UNESCO, 1999). Our move originates in the generally muted reality that scientific inquiries and discoveries are rooted in, and spring from, contextualized "biases." Western scholarship, for example, is so-called precisely because some Western ideological values rather than universal value indicators constitute the foundational platform of contemporary Western science and the universalism it exudes (Kashoki, 1982).

The HDRC positions education in general and transformational teacher training in particular as an effective strategy to tackle the rupture between schooled knowledge and African livelihoods. Teachers are the hub of transformational education that begins with ECCE (early childhood care and education).

This positioning makes sense in the face of a yet to be met 1961 desire of African leaders that "African educational authorities should revise and reform the content of education in the areas of the curriculum, textbooks, and methods, so as to take account of the African environment, child development, cultural heritage, and the demands of technological progress and economic development, especially industrialisation" (UNESCO, 1961, p. 23). The African Union (2006) reiterated the wish for education that enables "an integrated, peaceful, prosperous Africa, driven by its own people to take its rightful place in the global community and the knowledge economy."

Teacher education is the most propitious cross-cutting sector within which to initiate and sustain visionary strategies that would empower Africa's future citizens with the productive values and generative competencies with which to cope and make progress in a competitive, knowledge-driven world in rapid transition. Teacher education texts and tools development is the most suitable takeoff point for this insight. Thus, the HDRC envisioned the production of Africa-centric literature/texts and tools for context-sensitive teacher education curricula and ECCE programming.

The first product of this innovative initiative sponsored by the Jacobs Foundation is a 36 chapter edited volume entitled *African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education Handbook*. Fifty English and French language contributors authored the chapters, a commendable feat indeed in African cross-language academia. The second product focuses on the root of humanity, children, to develop an African ECCE Resourcebook. Later volumes will attend to such themes as science education, ICT and technology education, language education, social science education, and eventually on curricular content and pedagogy for single school subjects.

Africentric scholarship is borne out of a legitimate desire to document hitherto disregarded African visions and experiences; it is neither a rejection of nor a revolt against inescapable western knowledges and technologies. To be authentic Africans must transcend colonial knowledge systems and legacies deposited on the continent as natural and unquestionable (Rose, 1999). The need is to understand Africa in its own terms and desist from the continuing loss of "sight of the soil out of which the existing African society has grown and the human values it has produced" (Kishani, 2001). African scholarship should not be undertaken in isolation, however. Our Africentric products make sense only within the exchange frameworks of trends in global knowledge waves and state-of-the-science scholarship and are designed to contribute to the corpus of universal human knowledge, where Africa deserves its own knowledge-niche.

References

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