Research Article

Trivialisation, Reclamation and Vindication of Indigenous African Education: Affirming the Thesis of Complementarity in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: *The problem under scrutiny is the alienation that continues to characterise graduates from Zimbabwe's education system and the fact that this is eternalising within the postcolonial dispensation heightens the conspicuity of the problem. This alienation seems to have been occasioned by the denigration and marginalisation of the aspects of indigenous African education in Zimbabwe since the colonial era. The above, thus, demonstrates that Zimbabwe's postcolonial education system perpetually peripherises local culture within which the indigenous African education system is located. This cultural dissonance, as manifested in contemporary Afro-Zimbabwean education, substantiates 'Euro-Oriental dimensionism' – a perspective which unduly over-glorifies the Global North and its ideas dubbed 'philosophy of the centre'. This literary reflection which constitutes secondary research, therefore, sought to advance a counter perspective called 'Afro-clinic dimensionism' which seeks to deconstruct the Euro-Oriental erudition that is so scathing on African education. Thus, this article undertook to redeem indigenous African education from the Euro-Oriental falsehoods and vindicate the same so that it is viewed with due appreciation and respect. It is, herein, concluded that indigenous African education is by all standards a genuine and elaborate instructional system which is informed by a sustainable philosophy rooted in Unhu/Ubuntu. Hence, indigenous African education has the vast potential to complement the Western instructional system in the various areas of learning thereby manifesting the thesis complementarity. This article, thus, exhorts Sub-Saharan nations to escalate the integration of indigenous African education into their current instructional systems with a view to harnessing the envisaged complementarity.*

Keywords: Trivialisation, Reclamation, Vindication, Indigenous African Education , Thesis of Complementarity.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The value of indigenous African education in Sub-Saharan Africa is a subject for turbulent contemplation and contestation especially within the current world order driven by the concept globalisation. On a sad note, the Hegelian school of thought, for instance, questions the humanness of Africans and hence Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel [1770-1831 A.D.] himself proclaims that there is nothing harmonious with humanity and worthy of academic engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa (Shizha, 2010). In line with this Hegelian school of thought, James (2009: 110) reports that, "the missionary enterprise (which manifested Hegelianism) has been responsible for a positive injury against the African people, which consists of the perpetual caricature of African culture in literature and exhibitions which provoke laughter and disrespect." Hegelianism, thus, propagates the belief that Sub-Saharan Africa has no history *id est* the a-historicality of Africa (Makuvaza, 2008). Hegel is also known to have declared that to be in Africa is to be outside history. Correspondingly, the Hegelian school of thought obstinately holds that pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa had neither a philosophy nor a system of education in the universal application of the term (Funteh, 2015). This is further documented by Ocitti (1973: 105) who writes, "For scholars who think Africa

was *Tabula Rasa* with respect to educational institutions and processes, education meant Western civilisations; take away Western civilisation and you have no education."

The foregoing sentiments readily serve to take away from the African his or her sense of educatedness, which, in itself, makes him or her a rational human being. In fact, the above-referred sentiments serve to dehumanise the African and, consequently, denigrate indigenous African education. This demonstrates that indigenous African education is not without critics – a predisposition which this reflection deems normal because no system of education is perfect. Therefore, this denigration of indigenous African education fundamentally dwells in what Funteh (2015) refers to as Euro-Oriental dimensionism – a perspective which peddles a great deal of mendacities and unfounded allegations that are meant to discredit the African conception of education. Hence, it is principally within this Euro-Oriental inspiration and contemplation where the genesis of alienation and existential vacuity is located in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular.

This article, therefore, seeks to interrogate the Euro-Oriental notions on African history, philosophy, educatedness and rationality with a view to reclaiming the indigenous African education system from undue

falsification and trivialisation within the Sub-Saharan pedagogical discourse. In other words, this article seeks to deliver indigenous African education from the chimera and falsehood that it is not real education. The reflection, thus, seeks to advance a formidable antithesis of Euro-Orientalism, which Funteh (2015) refers to as Afro-clinic dimensionism. Afro-clinic dimensionism is a perspective rooted in Afrocentrism, which, in itself, seeks to deconstruct the Euro-Oriental falsehoods thereby cultivating an appreciation and respect for indigenous African education in the world at large.

Problem Postulation

The problem under inquiry is the 'alienation' that seems to currently characterise the youths who graduate from Zimbabwe's system of education and educators who man Zimbabwe's institutions of learning. This alienation finds testimony in the manner in which these youths trivialise indigenous African education and, more so, in the fashion in which the educators themselves peripherise most of the aspects of indigenous education in a postcolonial and globalising Zimbabwe. This marginalisation of the African indigenous aspects is envisioned in the observable peripherisation of African culture in Zimbabwe's education curriculum, which, on the whole, seems to be a reflection of Europe in Africa. Such alienation has been occasioned by colonialism through colonial education whose legacy is currently perceived in relation to neo-colonialism. Thus, the alienative nature of Zimbabwean education is currently attributable to the forces of globalisation that are consistent with the ushering in of Euro-Oriental cultures from the Global North. This article, consequently, seeks to reflect upon indigenous African education with a view to redeeming it from certain Euro-Oriental falsehoods deliberately propagated by the Global North - mendacities, which, in themselves, are entrenched in what is unduly referred to as 'philosophy of the centre'. Thus, this reflection congruously seeks to vindicate indigenous African education with a view to evoking the philosophy of redemption and advancing the thesis of complementarity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current reflection, which seeks to critically examine the trivialisation of indigenous African education, is informed by James's (2009) 'philosophy of redemption' which is a revelation of the truth in the History of African civilisation. James (2009: 108) articulates this truth, thus:

> Philosophy, and the arts and sciences were bequeathed to civilisation by the people of North Africa and not by the people of Greece; the pendulum of praise and honour is due to shift from the people of Greece to the people of the African continent who are the rightful heirs of such praise and honour.

The philosophy of redemption, thus, rationalises that Egyptians are the originators of philosophy and certainly of education in Africa and the world over. This fundamentally connotes that, 'as the cradle of mankind', Africa is also the cradle of civilisation subsuming meaning-making and education. Hence, this philosophy advocates a paradigm shift "from one of disrespect to one of respect for black people throughout the world and treat them accordingly" (James, 2009: 108). Therefore, the philosophy of redemption is about Africans working out their salvation, which, in itself, subsumes a renaissance of indigenous African education.

This article is informed as well as by the Sankofa principle which is premised on the inclination towards *returning to something African*. According to Woodson (2020), Sankofa is an Akan word from the Akan-Adinkera tribe in Ghana. The literal translation of the word and the symbol is, 'it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind'. The word is derived from the words '*san*' meaning 'return', '*ko*' meaning 'go' and '*fa*' meaning 'fetch, seek and take' (Slater, 2019: 1). This insinuates that Africans needed to go back to their past to retrieve what they may have forgotten which might be of benefit to them today. After having been interpreted and re-interpreted in several different ways, it was established that the Sankofa symbolises the Akan people's quest for knowledge with the implication that the quest is based on critical examination, and intelligent and patient investigation of the past (Woodson, 2020; & Slater, 2019). "Visually and symbolically, 'Sankofa' is expressed as a mythic bird that flies forward while looking backward with an egg (symbolising the future) in its mouth, or sometimes portrayed as a stylised heart" (Slater, 2019: 2). This ties with the motto, 'In order to understand one's present and ensure one's future, one must know their past'. Thus, the Akan people believe that the past serves as a guide for planning the future – a standpoint which intimates that promoting indigenous African education guarantees the success of contemporary and future education in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Hence, wisdom in learning from the past ensures a strong future (Slater, 2019).

Since it is centred on indigenous African education, which, in itself, is anchored in the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy, this reflection is also steered by Gade's theory of 'narratives of return' – a pedagogy which envisions opportunities for African renaissance in the African past. Hence, "the major statement behind 'narratives of return' is a desire or yearning to 'return' to the past for possible solutions to challenges and problems associated with the postcolonial dispensation" (Gade, cited in Makuvaza, 2017:351). This insinuates that the socio-economic and political problems that Sub-Saharan Africa is currently grappling with could be addressed by capitalising on the ideals that fall within the narratives of return. Narratives of return may,

however, sound anachronistic. Nevertheless, they remain handy in informing the current reflection in its bid to reclaim indigenous African pedagogy from undue trivialisation and ideological falsehoods.

A Synopsis of Indigenous African Education

Indigenous African education is a system of instruction which prevailed in the pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa which Hegel satirises as 'Africa proper'. It should, however, be taken into cognizance that this instructional system continues to manifest, for instance, in a postcolonial Zimbabwe as evidenced by the Shangani and Lemba rites *de passage* in Chiredzi and Mberengwa, respectively. Indigenous African education can be defined as the form of learning in African traditional societies in which knowledge, skills and attitudes of the community were passed from elders to children by means of oral instructions and practical activities (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002; & Masaka & Chingombe, 2013). This system of instruction had clearly articulated aims, curriculum content and methodology. Moreover, indigenous African education was anchored in the philosophical principles of holism, communalism, functionalism, preparationism, essentialism-perennialism and humanism (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002; & Darisoan, 2012). These are the same philosophical principles that undergird *Unhu/Ubuntu*. Hence, indigenous African education is underpinned by the philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu*. However, 'indigeneity' is not always synonymous with backwardness and outdatedness because what could be 'indigenous' in a certain area can still be contemporary and progressive there.

Indigenous African Education Trivialised

Indigenous African education is alleged to have been characterised with a great deal of rigidity (Akinbote, 2008), and conservatism, especially through the principle of essentialism or perennialism (Peresuh & Nhundu, 1999). Hence, it can be argued that with this essentialism or perennialism inherent in indigenous African education, its integration in contemporary instruction could be a recipe for atavism. Accordingly, Euro-Oriental scholarship avers that:

> …tribal education [indigenous education] was not an education for change; it demanded conformity, but not individuality, creativity or individual uniqueness. It taught strict obedience to the elders' rules and authority, which were not always necessarily founded, so that when missionaries brought their 'schools and real education' into Africa, it became a 'refugee' for those Africans who wanted to be different from other members of the group (Funteh, 2015: 142).

Thus, indigenous African education is indicted for its authoritarian tendencies, its oppressive outlook, and for not being receptive to new ideas and criticism.

Moreover, indigenous African education is claimed to have authoritarian tendencies as seen in the elders dominating the discussions and all other deliberations. This concurs with Ndofirepi & Ndofirepi (2012: 21) who blame indigenous African education for 'gerontocracy'. "On this gerontocratic structure, children can be said to be victims of intergenerational power imbalance especially when they are refused certain rights including knowledge and critical interrogation on the basis of their age" (Ndofirepi & Ndofirepi, 2012: 21). This also intimates that indigenous African education was an education for docility and quietism. Hence, Darisoan (2012: 53) mentions that, "worse enough the elders who were teachers hardly entertained any challenge." Furthermore, through the principle of preparationism, indigenous African education is highly gendered (Awuor, 2007: 28). Hence, its integration in contemporary education may militate against gender equity in Africa.

Darisoan (2012: 53) also alleges that, "it (indigenous African education) was confined to a particular clan or society and covered that aspect considered being of immediate relevance to them and it did not go beyond the borders of the society." This particularistic nature and spatial confinement implies that indigenous education was far from being internationalist, hence, it could neither export nor import ideas. This rendered it a closed system prone to stagnation, which is suicidal, especially against the backdrop of the 21st century world order driven by globalisation.

Indigenous African education is also said to have been characterised by a great deal of illiteracy and innumeracy. Mushi, cited in Darisoan (2012: 54), also claims that, "it was not easy to describe, compare, and estimate distance, volume, weight, and size of different objects because figures or letters were unknown to traditional African societies." Thus, in the absence of literacy and numeracy, the accumulated knowledge and skills could, therefore, not be stored properly as indigenous African education relied heavily on the memories of the elders, and, as such, this accumulated knowledge was difficult to spread from one place to another. Accordingly, Mosweunyane (2013: 50) demonstrates that, "less emphasis in the documentation of what was supposed to be learnt compromised standardisation and formalisation of knowledge and skills." In addition, the secrecy that seems to have characterised indigenous societies resulted in many Africans dying or going insane with their own wisdom (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002), thus, loss of highly valued knowledge.

Concerning content and methodology, Darisoan (2012: 54) argues that:

> Intellectual training occupied a very small place in the traditional African education. This

means that greater emphasis was placed on the 'concrete' rather than the 'abstract'. It ignored other cognitive abilities like reasoning, which though it was imperative, was insufficiently developed. So sometimes, everything happening, be it good or bad was attributed to God's will.

Hence, the idea of attributing every occurrence to the will of God or that of the spirits sounds incompatible with intellectual development.

Moreover, learning is said to have been lineal, meaning that it was unidirectional as the young were not afforded the chance to contribute since they were considered inexperienced. Theirs was just to listen and internalise what they were taught by the elders. "This", according to Darisoan (2012: 54), "limited their creative and innovative mental development, thus, leading to slow development of a traditional society." This is glaring manifestation of what Freire (1993) refers to as the 'banking' approach to learning, which is sometimes satirised as the 'expert-disciple model' or 'lecture-recite-assign-test' method. This conflicts sharply with the progressive and democratic learner-involving methodology.

Superstition is also alleged to bedevil indigenous African education (Akinbote, 2008). A good example is that which concerns preventing some members of the society from eating certain foods. "Some beliefs were attached to such foods for example if eggs were eaten by expectant mothers it was believed that she would give birth to a bald-headed child" (Darisoan, 2012: 54). This was mere superstition which was not based on positive-empirical and confirmable research.

Tiberondwa, cited in Adeyemi & Adeyinka (2002: 236), "has rightly observed that among some tribes in pre-colonial Uganda, for example, there was too much reliance on inculcation of fear and punishment as a means of teaching." This manifests the traditional paradigm of teaching which is consistent with indoctrination. Although it was not widespread, among the Angole (of pre-colonial Uganda):

Slow learners and offenders were killed to discourage slow learning and scare young people from committing similar offences (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002: 236).

This produced graduates who were obedient only out of fear, and it could be the possible reason why an African child is naturally timid and lacks self-confidence (Akinbote, 2008).

Akinbote (2008) cites other alleged limitations of indigenous African education that include: suppression of curiosity, whereby children were not expected to talk when elders were talking and whereby

children were prevented from asking too many questions or from asking visitors questions; and prolonged apprenticeship and initiation, for instance, that of the Poor society of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone which took up to an average of five years (Barker, 2003: 75). This prolonged stay in the jungle, which Funteh (2015: 142) calls 'bushism', was, in itself, a fertile condition for what Maposa (2011: 484) calls 'occultism'. In his works on the Shangani *Rite de Passage*, Maposa (2011: 481) mentions that, "the operation or the traditional surgery is painfully (rather cruelly) done." The surgery is also said to be performed in an unhygienic manner which puts the initiates at a very high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS (Maposa, 2011: 481). Maposa adds that some boys are reported to have died as a result of this careless surgery.

Indigenous African education is also alleged to be largely informal, hence, the concept 'informal acuity' emerges. This is confirmed by Blackmore and Coosey, cited in Funteh (2015: 143), who argue that: "African traditional system is purely informal in nature since it is only community-based." According to Funteh (2015), the above description is, predicated on the fact that there were no schools (with wall), valuable aims and objectives and no curriculum on the establishment and evolution of the idea of education. Funteh (2015) adds that this education system is alleged to have had no written script and documentation, professional teachers, professionalization, diplomas (credentials), fees, and that it consequently disqualifies itself from the universal application of real education. This trivialisation serves to dismiss the possibility of complementarity between the indigenous African education system and the contemporary Westernised instructional system extant in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, Funteh (2015: 143) argues that, "much of these assertions and arguments about the African indigenous educational system were constructed on the subjective, biased and unfounded and ungrounded speculations," situated within Euro-oriental dimensionism.

Reclaiming Indigenous African Education from Euro-Oriental Falsehoods
The reclamation of indigenous African education is predicated on Afroclinic dimensionism which seeks to deconstruct the Euro-oriental notions on African education that are hinged on Hegelian racism. On the alleged informal acuity, Omolewa (2007) clearly states that formal instruction manifested in apprenticeship and initiation schools. This is endorsed by Siyakwazi & Siyakwazi (2015) who argue that formal schools in the form of initiation schools like that of the Lemba in Mberengwa also characterised the indigenous African education system. Funteh (2015: 147) also cites another example of the Kwaja formal Blacksmithing School.

In dismissing the alleged absence of aims and objectives, Funteh (2015: 145) demonstrates that indigenous African education had clearly and meaningfully articulated aims and objectives -endorsed in Fafunwa's Seven Cardinal Goals, which, according to Akinbote (2008), include:

➢ To develop the child's physical skills;
➢ To develop character;
➢ To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority;
➢ To develop intellectual skills;
➢ To acquire specific vocational training and develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour;
➢ To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community life - in other words to impart good citizenship;
➢ To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community (Fafunwa 1974, & cited in Akinbote 2008).

Concerning the allegation that the indigenous African education system had no curriculum, Boateng, cited in Funteh (2015: 145), enunciates major knowledge areas that constitute the curriculum in question which include: "history, sociology, anthropology, environmental (plants, medicine and astrology), metaphysics, geology, geometry, arithmetic, hygiene and sanitation, communication and leadership, religion, chemistry, science and technology." This is confirmed by the New Encyclopaedia Britannica, cited in Funteh (2015: 147), which avers that, "these (Boateng's knowledge areas) certainly question the declaration that the system was void of particular subjects to be taught as the modern form of education."

Clarke, cited in Funteh (2015: 148), also deconstructs the alleged absence of the written script by establishing the fact that one of the earliest written African languages was Ge'ez, also known as Ethiopic. This is confirmed by Tedla, cited in Funteh (2015: 148), who declares that the Amharic, Sabean and Ge'ez scripts of Ethiopia testify the presence of literature, art and written scripts in Africa in the B.C. era well before the arrival of the Muslims, Christian Missionaries and colonialists.

To nullify the alleged absence of professionalisation, Funteh (2015: 147) declares that there were teachers, 'mostly professionals in the activity' concerned. This is also endorsed by Fafunwa, cited in Akinbote (2008), who affirms that such occupations as law, priesthood, medicine, civil service, bureaucracy (good governance) and so forth were, in themselves, professions. Moreover, against the alleged absence of credentials, Funteh (2015: 147) writes:

> After the completion of the course, all apprentices got a small cutlass, designed by their master which they kept as a sign of having successfully completed the training. It also served as a recommendation for them to,

upon completion, form their own training centres, if they wished. This was a certificate or diploma.

Lastly, the alleged absence of school fees is disconfirmed because for one to be a student in, for instance, the Blacksmithing School one must have completed paying one's school fees which varied from community to community but "it ranged from three goats, six fouls and nine jugs of palm wine, representing three years of scholarly pursuit" (Funteh, 2015: 147).

Therefore, the fact that indigenous African education is endowed with formal learning, aims/objectives, curriculum, written script, professionalisation, credentialisation and fees payment demonstrates that the integration of this customary instructional system into contemporary yet Westernised education is not a mirage but a glaring possibility. Thus, complementarity is envisaged between the indigenous African instructional system and the contemporary but Westernised education system – a position which advances the thesis of complementarity in the domain of education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

A Vindication of Indigenous African Education: Advancing the Thesis of Complementarity

Given the sound reclamation of indigenous African education from Euro-Oriental falsehoods in the foregoing, an absolution of this customary instructional system seems plausible. Hence its adoption into and fusion with Zimbabwe's contemporary education system sounds viable.

According to Adeyemi & Adeyinka (2002), indigenous African education was a successful means of maintaining the economic, social and cultural structures and stability of the societies in which it was practised. In more specific terms, "indigenous education prepared both boys and girls to come to terms with the physical, social and the spiritual world of their time; it also prepared them for the world of work" (Adeyinka & Adeyinka, 2002: 236). This quote connotes that the integration of indigenous African education with its practical-orientedness into Zimbabwe's contemporary education could be instrumental in promoting the raising of individuals who are employable, hence, the unemployment which is threatening the fabric of society is addressed. This is corroborated by Kaunda (1966), cited in Adeyemi & Adeyinka (2002: 236), who observes that, "pre-colonial education was effective because no able-bodied person in traditional African society was unemployed." Indigenous education was, thus, heuristic. It made learning more meaningful and purposeful since what was learnt was of utilitarian value. It also built in youngsters a sense of respect for honest labour, "and, thus, the children became productive and useful members in the society" (Darisoan, 2012: 53).

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Masaka & Chingombe (2013: 156) also underscore that indigenous education "was an educational system that was able to meet the learning needs of all and of the society in general," a disposition which concurs with Emile Durkheim's sociology of functionalism. In the same vein, Ocitti (1973) avers that learning took place in the context of real life where learners were taught how to hunt, farm and weave. This made the indigenous education system superior to Western education which was and still is not adapted to the African situation. Omolewa (2007: 596) also professes that indigenous African education "…is holistic - it cannot be compartmentalised and cannot be separated from the people who are involved in it because essentially, it is a way of life." This also demonstrates that the integration of components of indigenous African learning makes contemporary instruction contextualised, relevant and integrated with life. Peresuh and Nhundu (1999: 14) add that indigenous education was 'fun not agony' since it was work alongside play and that it produced individuals who lived life fully. "It was not a sieve to select the fit from the unfit" (Peresuh & Nhundu, 1999: 14), meaning that it was 'inclusive' and 'democratised'. Ocitti (1973) also views indigenous education as relevant, realistic and meaningful as it did not alienate Africans from their culture and concrete historical existentiality. Hence, cultural dissonance, disarticulation and neglect were virtually unheard of in pre-colonial Africa. With the integration of this customary system of instruction into Zimbabwe's contemporary education, instruction gets more relevant, culture-embedded, inclusive and democratised.

Social tension which today manifests itself in various crimes and divorce rates was virtually absent, which points to how successful indigenous African education was in promoting and enhancing sound human relations within pre-colonial African societies (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002: 236). This is attributable to the sound ethics, sound content on spiritual development, and sound content on moral training and character building which characterised indigenous African education. This also owes its existence to the African co-operative communalistic cosmology explicit in the adage; 'I am because we are, since we are therefore I am' which characterised human relations in the traditional African societies. Therefore, the fusion of indigenous African education into Zimbabwe's contemporary education has the vast potential to inculcate *Unhu/Ubuntu*, a philosophy which edifies morality and oneness.

Expatiating on the communalistic worldview, Adeyemi & Adeyinka (2002: 236) write:

> Through traditional education, young people acquired a communal rather than an individualistic outlook. …Thus, indigenous education prepared children to play their roles in the family, clan and the tribe as a whole.

In congruity with this communocentric orientation, Makuvaza (1996) regards traditional African education as 'genuine and relevant' in that it was education for self-reliance and service to the community, and that whatever was imparted to the learner contributed positively towards the survival of the community. In the same vein, Masaka & Chingombe (2013: 155) "argue that it was an education that had social utility: its graduates employed the knowledge and skills learnt to live productively for the benefit of the learner, clan and society in general." Darisoan (2012: 53) adds that, "…learners were taught to respect the properties of the whole society, and they used their acquired knowledge for service of the society." Thus, as vindicated in the preceding quote, indigenous African education is worth the praise since its principle of respect for community property is consistent with the modern trend of thought as testified in modern constitution documents in the USA, UK and South Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, which, for instance, emphasise protection of property and life. Above all, the adoption of the co-operative communalistic cosmology (*Unhu/Ubuntu*) embedded in indigenous African education in Zimbabwe's contemporary education system would mean that social cohesion, solidarity and stability are enhanced in the individualistic, unstable and crime-infested Zimbabwean society, giving the Zimbabwean society a more humane outlook.

According to Adeyemi & Adeyinka (2002: 236), "pre-colonial education should further be credited for its enormous capacity to preserve cultural heritage." Thus, Darisoan (2012: 53) adds that skills such as masonry, clay working, carving, cloth making, building and canoe making were taught with a view to maintaining the socio-economic and cultural heritage of the society. Cultural heritage in this context also entailed language, norms, chastity, honesty, diligence, valour, hard-work, generosity and hospitality, all of which are espoused by the philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu* (Darisoan, 2012). Adeyemi & Adeyinka (2002: 236) also underscore that:

> Once children understood and appreciated their cultural heritage, they too passed it on to their offspring who in turn did the same to their own children. In this way, the continuity of the tribe's pattern of life was assured.

This quote is hinged on perennialism. Hence, Boateng, cited in Okoro (2010: 152), argues that traditional African systems of education were so effective, "that a total rejection of the African heritage will leave African societies in a vacuum that can only be filled with confusion, loss of identity, and a total break in intergenerational communication." Therefore, an attempt to fuse the desirable aspects of indigenous African education into Zimbabwe's education system, at this juncture, seems a progressive move which has

the potential to preserve the cultural heritage of the nation.

Moreover, "one may describe traditional African education as humanistic because it emphasised that all human beings share equal membership of their society" (Peresuh & Nhundu, 1999: 14). This standpoint implies that this education system, by its very nature, did not give rise to an unnecessary class structure and inequality, which, therefore, connotes that this utilitarian kind of education had a recognisable measure of egalitarianism. Above all, indigenous African education is worthy of eulogy because it has the potential to mould an African who is endowed with the three cardinal virtues of reasonableness, moral maturity-refinement, and contributing to consensual dialogue (Ndofirepi & Ndofirepi, 2012: 23). Therefore, the fusion of this customary system of instruction into contemporary Zimbabwean education is bound to pay dividends in terms of social parity, morality and rationality.

CONCLUSION

In the wake of Euro-Oriental criticism levelled against indigenous African education, this reflection convincingly reclaims the same from what seem to be deep-seated falsehoods. Thereupon, the article vindicates indigenous African education as a system with the vast potential to complement the Western epistemologies of instruction in Africa. Hence, this erudition peddles the thesis of complementarity upon which it recommends the following:

- Zimbabwe's education system should reflect the Afro-Zimbabwean culture so that it becomes relevant within the globalisation agenda.
- Aspects of indigenous African education should be integrated into contemporary education so as to capitalise on the complementarity between the two systems in Zimbabwe and Sub-Saharan Africa at large.
- There should be ongoing, deliberate and genuine discourse on the redemption and vindication of indigenous African education so that African nations harness this system for positive educational transformation which is exigent for sustainable development.

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