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Mwangi Ndirangu

Education for Underdevelopment



Preface

Reclaiming African Learning from the Ruins of Colonialism

Education has long been championed as the cornerstone of development in Africa—a tool to eradicate poverty, cultivate democracy, and propel societies into modernity. Yet, after decades of educational reform, donor-funded projects, and ambitious national curricula, a sobering question arises: why does the promise of education remain unfulfilled for so many Africans? Why, despite mass schooling, do we still witness cycles of dependency, inequality, and disempowerment?

This book was born from the urgency to confront this paradox.

Education for Underdevelopment is not merely a critique; it is a provocation. It challenges the comforting narratives of education as inherently benevolent or universally progressive. It argues that African education systems, rooted in colonial foundations and sustained through neoliberal global logics, have often acted not as engines of liberation, but as instruments of control and underdevelopment.

Across ten interlinked chapters, this volume interrogates the structural, epistemological, and pedagogical dimensions of African education. It traces the colonial roots of formal schooling in Kenya and beyond, examines the enduring impact of Eurocentric curricula and foreign language policies, and exposes the political economy that shapes what is taught, how, and to whom. The book also considers the complex role of teachers, the commodification of higher education, and the radical potential of student resistance.

Yet this work is not an obituary for African education. It is a blueprint for renewal.

Chapters on decolonizing education and knowledge offer transformative alternatives rooted in indigenous wisdom, Afrocentric pedagogy, and participatory learning. The case of Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) is presented not only as a policy debate but as a critical site for contesting and reimagining educational futures.

In writing this book, I was inspired by the many African thinkers, educators, and students who refuse to accept a borrowed system as their destiny. Their courage, creativity, and commitment to reclaiming education as a tool for justice form the moral compass of this work.

This book is for them—and for all those who believe that another education is not only possible, but necessary.

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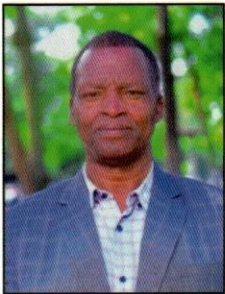
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Education for Underdevelopment

This book delivers a powerful message, asserting that traditional education systems in Kenya and across Africa urgently require a fundamental transformation to catalyze meaningful socioeconomic development. The author compellingly argues for a paradigm shift towards an education system that prioritizes the cultivation of critical thinking abilities, robust problem-solving skills, and practical, real-world competencies. He strongly advocates for the widespread adoption of competency-based education (CBE), exemplified by Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), as a crucial and necessary step in this vital direction. Significantly, the author underscores that this profound transformation cannot be effectively realized without a corresponding and comprehensive overhaul of both teacher education programs and assessment methodologies. Educators need advanced teaching skills to cultivate critical thinking and adapt to varied learning. Assessments should evaluate practical skill application, not just recall of factual knowledge.



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