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THE INFLUENCE OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE ON BLACK AFRICAN IMMIGRANT STUDENT IDENTITIES: EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF STUDENTS, ACADEMIA AND GOVERNMENT IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Abstract:

This study examines the influence of African indigenous knowledge on the identities and education of Black African Immigrant students in Canada and presents strategies on how students, the post-secondary academy and government can advance multicultural education. Black African immigrant students' identities are formed and shaped by their indigenous experiences; this influences their socio-cultural development in Canada. Recognizing and promoting diversity and inclusion through its Federal Multiculturalism Act (1988), Canada preserves and enhances the multicultural heritage of all Canadians. This exploratory research seeks to understand the exclusion of African indigenous knowledge in the education of Black African immigrant students in post-secondary, and specifically investigates how effective multicultural approaches to teaching and learning can create more promising educational experiences for Black African students in Canada. The study provides insights into how Black African Immigrant students can reclaim their identities and explore opportunities for ongoing personal and social development within a multicultural society. Using an Indigenous Research Methodology frame, this qualitative research study applies critical theories that are grounded in indigenous knowledge systems. Suggested strategies and approaches will serve as an educational resource for all immigrant students in Canada who are on diverse pathways to bring about change in their communities, challenge the academy and educators in general to develop and implement effective multicultural education, and draw government and policy-makers' attention to significant and unacknowledged gaps in purposeful educational advancement of Canada's multiculturalism goals. Black African Immigrant students' confidence and perceptions of their African identities can and do play a critical role in the ways and manner in which they approach Canadian education. Collective efforts amongst students, educational institutions, and governments within a multicultural society will lead to more promising educational experiences for Black African Immigrant students in Canada.

Keywords:

African Indigenous Knowledge, Black African Immigrant students, Multicultural education, Indigenous Research Methodologies, Canada's multiculturalism

Introduction

The identities of Black African Immigrant Students are shaped and formed by their indigenous experiences, which Dei and Kempf (2006) identify as necessary if we are to understand our essence as spiritual beings. The failure to validate African Indigenous Knowledges as relevant to the educational experiences of Black African Immigrant Students in Canada creates fundamental issues that impact their identities and education. According to Ukwuoma (2016) “African indigenous knowledge is a tool for self-identification for Africans” (p. 115) and it’s relevant today in spite of the domineering role of Western education. He further asserts that indigenous knowledge has guided Africans in various spheres of life prior to the advent of Western education in Africa and elsewhere. African Indigenous Knowledge gives grounding and a sense of belonging to Black African Immigrant Students which also influences their educational experiences.

Although the multiculturalism policy in Canada encourages everyone to maintain their heritage cultural identity while adopting a common Canadian identity, African Indigenous Knowledge is yet to be included in the education of BAIS. The education of BAIS is impacted by the lack of confidence in their cultural heritage or identity. This has been influenced by colonial experiences from Africa, as well as in Canada, that has failed to emphasize the value and role of African indigenous knowledge in the development of the African society. Colonial educational systems prepare students to participate in the capitalist and individualistic society without giving them the opportunity to draw on and apply African Indigenous Knowledge in their education. African indigenous knowledge, on the other hand, helps individuals to understand their roles in the community and prepares BAIS to participate fully in the advancement of the African community in Canada. Inasmuch as the rediscovery of the original African identity may require recovering stories, epistemological foundations, and language in ways that are not currently available to us now, this study is a step to awaken consciousness of Africans in Canada to start theorizing and “reconciling what is really important about the past with what is important about the present and reprioritizing accordingly” (Smith, 2012, p. 40).

According to Berry’s (2015) multicultural hypothesis, people’s understanding of their ethnic identity is what causes them to accept other people’s unique identities. Insofar as multiculturalism involves imposing on Canadian public institutions a duty of accommodation, non-support for the application and use of African Indigenous knowledge in education could represent a denial of their multicultural accommodation. This would violate the premise of mutually complementary identities and of the democratic expectation of multiculturalism. This paper begins with a literature review on African indigenous knowledge and how it defines and forms the foundation of BAIS’ identities. It then provides the historical and evolving concepts on Canada’s multiculturalism and some opportunities that it presents to BAIS. The growing population of blacks in Canada is briefly illustrated, followed by an insight into BAIS’ education in Canada. Indigenous Research Methodology frame is explained and used for further analysis. This paper concludes with suggested strategies on how BAIS’ can reclaim their identity; the academy’s role in developing and implementing multicultural education; and suggested strategies on how government can support BAIS through effective multicultural education.

African indigenous knowledge and Black African Immigrant students

“Indigenous knowledge defines and is a response to the way people live in a given socio-cultural context over a period of time. And it is via this experience that people construct the way they explain, control and manage their lives, as well as how they relate to their attendant social and physical environments” (Shizha & Abdi, 2014). The concept of Indigenous Knowledge is usually associated with primitive but the people who have learned how to live and do things based on local and traditional connections have rationalization to support the role that indigenous knowledge system plays in everyday life. According to Linda Smith (2012) “some scholars have argued that the key tenets of what is now seen as Western civilization are based on black experiences and a black tradition of scholarship have simply been appropriated by Western philosophy and redefined as Western epistemology” (p. 46). In expanding on what Foucault refers to as cultural archive, Smith (2012) explains that what we believe to be Western knowledge is actually a storehouse (histories, artifacts, ideas, texts and/or images) which “contains the fragments, the regions and levels of knowledge traditions, and the ‘systems’ which allow different and differentiated forms of knowledge to be retrieved, enunciated and represented in new context” (p. 46). Although Indigenous Knowledges are usually connected to a place or land, it is not only valuable for the culture in which it develops but also presents solutions to community problems globally. “In fact, indigenous knowledge is part of the global knowledge system” (Ukwuoma, 2016, p. 111) and should, therefore, be acknowledged as such.

African Indigenous Knowledge is described as the knowledge of the local African peoples rooted in the rich histories, cultures, and traditions through time. It is the knowledge that is deeply rooted in the understanding of the African society, nature and culture, as well as an experiencing of the social and natural worlds (Dei, 2014). The term African Indigenous Knowledge is used discursively to represent the differently unique African knowledge systems from different countries, tribes, and cultures within the African continent. This is not to assume in any way that all Africans have one particular Indigenous Knowledge system but recognizing the similarities and commonalities that are shared among the peoples and the diverse African Knowledge systems. The diverse African communities, although very distinct in the diverse traditional and cultural practices, share commonalities that are grounded in African Indigenous Knowledge systems. However, the diverse African knowledge systems must not be homogenized but analyzed distinctively based on unique historical context and cultural practices or characteristics. It must be noted that indigenous resources are not static over time and space, but they continually evolve to emphasize the need for individual sensibilities and social consciousness for advancement. “Although localized and context bound, these knowledges evolve and can transcend boundaries. They should not be understood as boxed into a time and space. All knowledges are in constant motion and the fluidity of interactions of different knowledges makes every knowledge dynamic” (Dei, 2014, p. 255). Purcell (1998, as cited in Dei, 2014) asserts that although indigenous knowledges were uprooted through colonialism, these knowledge systems have continued to persist and adjust in new environments (p. 255). “Even as local peoples present their Indigenous cultures for external consumption, they are able to combine an intimate knowledge of their societies with the complexities and particularities of modern world systems (Errington and Gewertz, 1989 as cited in Dei, 2014, p. 264).

Seepe (2001, as cited in Emeagwali, 2014) explains that African Indigenous Knowledge is about reopening crucial files in the form of accumulated knowledge that were closed in the process of colonialism, which are, however, relevant to self-esteem, sustained indigenous inventiveness, endogenous technological growth, and employment generation. Although some BAIS may not directly acknowledge their connections to their Indigenous knowledge systems, they migrate with cultural lifestyles and individual epistemologies, which are grounded in their indigenous knowledge systems. Unfortunately, African students think less of their African indigenous knowledges when they are exposed to western education and this has a negative effect on the perceptions of the younger generations (Ukwuoma, 2016). However, indigenous knowledge and local experiences are expected to prepare these students to understand the world around them from their respective worldviews and to approach issues from that perspective. Emeagwali (2014) points out that “no society or segment should be ostracized and relegated to a status of inferiority” (p. 3). “Indigenous Knowledge must be part and parcel of the decolonization process and a challenge to modernization and neoconservative triumphalism, as well as to Western attempts at epistemological disenfranchisement of millions of people around the globe” (Chilisa, 2012 as cited in Emeagwali 2014, p. 3). Abdi (2016) draws on Nyerere (1968) and Rodney (1982) among others to emphasize that “pre-colonial traditional education was not only effective in its learning and pedagogical platforms; it was also relevant and well-designed for its recipients” (p. 46). However, the denigrating colonial epistemological relationship, even after the fall of formal colonization, is still intact for African students in Western countries and continue to affect their learning context in Canada (Abdi, 2016, p. 46). According to De Walt (2009) colonial universities serve as systems for breeding and harvesting intellectuals, thus “while the individuals (intellectuals) may think they are gaining an insurmountable amount of knowledge, they are often unaware that they are being drained of that with which they arrived: cultural and intellectual capital” (p. 201).

Multiculturalism in Canada

Multiculturalism in Canada has evolved over time, in response to the changing diverse immigrant populations that are represented in Canada, from focusing on ethnicity by celebrating differences, to managing differences through race relations, and gradually taking steps to support and advance constructive engagement that is inclusive of diverse populations (Kymlicka, 2015). “The whole idea of multiculturalism arose as an “afterthought” (Jaworsky, 1979, as cited in Kymlicka, 2015, p. 19), tacked on to a series of government reforms intended primarily to accommodate Québécois nationalism. And the goal of these multiculturalism reforms was primarily to gain ethnic group support for (or at least neutralize ethnic group opposition to) what the government perceived as the real issue: namely, defusing Quebec separatism. The idea of “multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” was, in effect, a slogan hastily devised to name a political bargain: in return for not opposing efforts to accommodate Quebec nationalism, ethnic groups would be given a measure of official recognition of their own, and modest financial support to maintain their identities. Canada passed the multiculturalism policy in 1971 and legislated the Multiculturalism Act in 1988. The focus and goals for multiculturalism has evolved and adapted over the years to the needs of the Canadian population.

Kymlicka (2015) identified different phases in the history of multiculturalism in Canada from the 1960’s to the 21st Century. At inception, the multiculturalism policy in 1971 focused on ethnicity

multiculturalism with emphasis on “celebrating differences” amongst the early European immigrants in Canada. The influx of visible minorities¹ who faced unique challenges - such as settlement, integration, naturalization and barriers to racism - different from what was experienced by European immigrants - caused the multiculturalism policy to shift focus to incorporate anti-racism and immigrant integration policies. “For the decade of the 1980s multiculturalism policy was one of equity multiculturalism with the focus on “managing diversity”, the reference point being “structure” and the mandate of “race relations.” For the 1990s it was civic multiculturalism, “constructive engagement,” “society building” and “citizenship.” And in the 2000s multiculturalism policy was one of integrative multiculturalism with the focus on “inclusive citizenship”, the reference point being “Canadian identity” and the mandate of “integration”. “Using more colloquial terminology Canada’s multiculturalism policy has evolved from song and dance in the 1970s, to anti-racism in the 1980s, to civic participation in the 1990s, and to fitting in in the 2000s” (Guo & Wong, 2015, p. 4).

The reaction to multiculturalism in Canada remains ambivalent among different government bodies or groups of people including Black immigrants. Inasmuch as multicultural policy poses contentious ideological stance in terms of its impact in the Canadian society, Mensah (2002) asserts that the policy has given Black people the “legitimate platform and coherent conceptual framework upon which ethnic minorities can articulate their points of view and their collective and individual concerns” (p. 228). He argues on the premise that multiculturalism, for instance, gives Black people the opportunity to engage in actions to mitigate against distasteful discriminatory actions and anti-racism that creates barriers to full and equal participation in the Canadian society; although this is done under very restrictive and controlled levels with a limited degree of social efficiency. Black Africans who claim Canadian identity usually explain their position and understanding of place within the context of Canada’s multiculturalism (Codjoe, 2006), even though they carry the burden of having to explain their Canadianess.

According to Ebgo (2016), Canada’s multiculturalism policy, which promotes identity retention, presents a general perception that it is an inclusive society where racial discrimination is either non-existent or has little or no impact on one’s access to the advantages society has to offer, including access to the right kind of education (p. 99). “Multicultural education has been linked to the goals of the original federal multiculturalism policy which promotes ethnocultural retention, fosters appreciation of the cultural heritage of others, and assumes increased intergroup harmony” (Lund, 2003, as cited in Kirova, 2015, p. 240). Abdi (2016) explains that critical multicultural education has the potential to safeguard the “real” learning rights of all learners instead of the symbolic multicultural education that stays with the superficialities of life. He further asserts that critical multiculturalism goes beyond just acknowledging the physical presence of the diverse students to include the educational context and relationships such as “historic-social, philosophic-cultural, and, certainly, the onto-epistemological locations of so-called ‘ethnic’ pupils in particular, who come from the African Canadian community and from other groups, such as

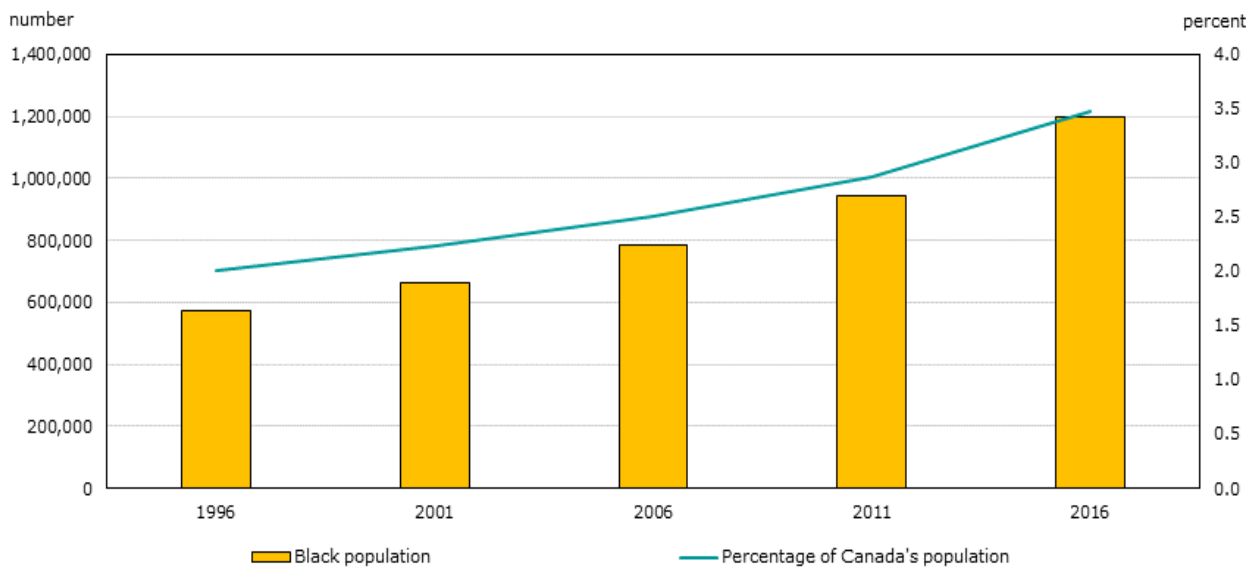
¹ 'Visible minority' refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the *Employment Equity Act* and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop127-eng.cfm>

Aboriginal peoples, who have been previously cognitively colonized” (p. 49). An effective multicultural education would require collective effort of students, academy or educational institutions and government support to create space and inclusiveness for all students to strive.

BAIS' education in Canada

The education of BAIS is impacted by the lack of confidence in their cultural heritage or identity, which has been influenced by colonial experiences from back home as well as in Canada. BAIS are not equipped and given the capacity to draw on African Indigenous Knowledges and purposely apply it to their education in Canada. Codjoe (2006) observed that “the theoretical knowledge about education of African-Canadian children advanced in Ontario by such black theorists as Carl James (1990), Enid Lee (1992) and Patrick Solomon (1992), to name a few, are rarely read or cited by Euro/Anglo-Canadian scholars in critical ways that challenge the status quo”. In fact, there is minimal educational literature about black students in Canada (p. 34). Codjoe (2006) notes that “the idea of [black] intellectual inferiority is still taken for granted by many people, despite the illusion of openness toward acceptance of all races in our society. For no group has there been such a pervasive, persistent, well-articulated, and unabated assumption of mental incompetence” (citing Perry, 2003, p. 35). He acknowledges that the academic underachievement of Black Africans is not a phenomenon that can be explained without a deeper understanding of the historical and socio-cultural views that inform it. Codjoe (2006, citing Ladson-Billings, 1995; Garcia et al, 1995.) recognizes that the academic success of minority students goes beyond the classroom to include cultural and sociopolitical competence and is embedded in a series of interactions between and across classroom, school, and home, all of which operate within the broader societal context (p. 38).

According to Statistics Canada (2016) Canada's Black population doubled in size between 1996 and 2016 with first generation Black people representing 56.4% of the Black population. 65.1% of the Black Immigrants in Canada migrated from Africa. According to the population projections from Statistics Canada, the Black population would continue to increase and could represent between 5.0% and 5.6% of Canada's population by 2036 (Statistics Canada, 2016). International students from Africa constitute 11.1% of the total international student population (statistics Canada, 2014).

Chart 1**Number of persons and percent of the population who are Black, Canada, 1996 to 2016**

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2016; 2011 National Household Survey.

The diagram shows the growth in Black population in Canada between 1996 and 2016. Published data on African indigenous knowledge, especially within Canadian context, is limited representing a neglect of an influential factor in the development of the Black African population. A gap exists between studies related to the role of African Indigenous Knowledges in Africa and research on the identities and educational experiences of African immigrant students in Canada. This paper is presented at a time of heightened international focus on various forms of oppression and denial of human rights, particularly in relation to minoritized groups such as African descended people (Proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, 2014).

Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM)

Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM) is a frame that acknowledges and respects the ontology and epistemology of the researched or the community within which the research is conducted. IRM is about demonstrating empathy, respect and ethical treatment of participants (Singh & Major's n.d; Weber-Pillwax 1999; & Wilson 2001). The underlying principles that guide the application of IRM include (1) recognition of indigenous knowledge as legitimate, (2) relational accountability and respectful research that aims to benefit and improve indigenous communities or the researched group, (3) collectivity and reciprocity, and (4) the use of indigenous methods in research. IRM allows Indigenous peoples to readily draw on their truths, histories, and knowledge without argument or explanation, without needing to justify their existence and thus transforming research from a tool of colonization into a tool of regeneration (Smith, 1999). Guided by an Indigenous way of knowing and being, Indigenous research ensures and entrusts the researcher's intent is accountable to his/her belief system and also to the community of the Indigenous researcher.

Indigenous Research Methodology requires the researcher (whether indigenous or non-indigenous) to be aware and uphold the relationship that may exist or would be established with the people and the environment, or with ideas, and be prepared to approach the research with mutual respect and reciprocity (Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Shawn Wilson (2008) refers to this process as relational accountability and further cautions researchers to be accountable to all our relations, make careful choices in our selection of research topics, our methods of data collection, forms of data analysis, and the way that we present data. Wilson (2001) asserts that a researcher should be answering to all the relations when doing research. The researcher is not expected to just answer questions of validity or reliability or make judgement of better or worse. Instead he or she should be fulfilling their relationships with the world around them. The researcher is expected to ask questions such as “Am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations to this relationship?”; rather than asking about validity or reliability. The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that when one is gaining knowledge, he or she is not just gaining it in some abstract pursuit; but gaining knowledge in order to fulfil their end of the research relationship (p. 177).

Indigenous Research Methodology is a form of indigenized methodology where research methods and measures are tailored to the culture of the research, which in this case is the African Indigenous Knowledge systems. According to Chilisa (2012) indigenization is a process that involves the critique and resistance to Euro-Western methodological imperialism and hegemony as well as a call for the adapting of conventional methodologies by including perspectives and methods that draw from indigenous knowledges, languages, metaphors, worldviews, experiences, and philosophies of former colonized, historically oppressed, and marginalized social groups (p. 101). As part of the indigenization process, research methods and strategies that are critical of western colonial theories are used to gain a deeper understanding of what is needed to change the status quo when conducting research about Africans. BAIS must be awakened to the realities of the past and encouraged to re-envision their educational goals to align with what is needed to advance the African community. Critically analysing the role of African indigenous knowledge in the identities and education of BAIS within an IRM frame expands the boundaries of knowledge production, which is relevant to the growth and advancement of the African community.

Conclusion

BAIS migrate to Canada with some African indigenous knowledge grounded in their ways of knowing and doing and education is expected to create a pathway to more promising experiences. The African knowledge system teaches the importance of building and maintaining good relations with the people in the community; respect for everyone, especially, towards elders; love and kindness towards those in need; sharing and hospitality; learning and speaking the local language; and encouragement to work hard. Even though BAIS have relocated to Canada, their ways of knowing still influences their relationships with people and indigenous knowledge is expected to guide them in carrying out their responsibilities to society, self and others. Black students who have the opportunity to cultivate comfortably in a multiethnic school environment and are

supported by educators who affirm, maintain, and value the differences that students bring to school as a foundation for their learning tend to do better academically (Codjoe, 2006).

However, the existence of African Indigenous Knowledge as an ontological truth does not automatically guarantee an epistemological understanding of how it influences the experiences of BAIS in Canada. BAIS' efforts to reclaim their identities and receive promising educational experiences in Canada is dependent on the collective efforts of the individual, the academy or post-secondary educational institutions, as well as the government policies.

The BAIS' role

The underlining concepts for Canada's multiculturalism are expected to provide an opportunity for everyone to reclaim their identities by preserving and enhancing their cultural heritage. Multicultural education is expected to allow students to draw on their African Indigenous knowledge, which would guide and encourage them to pursue educational outcomes that are geared towards the advancement of the African community in Canada. BAIS who are grounded in the African ways of knowing and doing do understand the essence of community and collective living as against individualism. These students understand that they are successful as individuals only if they fulfill their role and responsibilities in the collective African community. Their educational goals and pursuits must be directed towards reclaiming their identities and to explore opportunities for ongoing personal and social development and advancement of the African community. BAIS' pride in their cultural heritage will boost their confidence and self-esteem. They must build resilience to overcome their defeated colonial mentality and use their education to come up with solutions that are most desired for socio-cultural and economic advancement. Some suggested strategies to support BAIS are:

(1) Build knowledge and pride/affirmation in black cultural and racial identity: Pride in black identity is a critical factor that contributes to the success of BAIS. Their education is impacted by the lack of confidence in their cultural heritage and identity. Codjoe (2006) noted that the most recurring theme that contributed enormously to the academic achievement of the Black African students was the knowledge and pride/affirmation in Black cultural and racial identity. When people understand who they are and are given the opportunity to "freely" learn and apply what they know; it creates an avenue or opportunity for them to develop strategies to address issues in the community or society at large.

(2) Be awakened to the consciousness of reconciling the past to the present: When BAIS are consciously awakened to the influence of African Indigenous knowledges "they can critically interrogate and utilize relevant knowledges from their own histories, indigenous traditions and culture to devise lasting and working solutions to their current problems" (Dei, 2004, p. 252). A heightened consciousness of the influence of their indigenous background and esteemed confidence in the African identity is key to a more promising educational experience in Canada.

(3) Understand their roles in the community and prepare to participate fully for continuous advancement: Understanding that African Indigenous Knowledges are not primitive, but

representing the foundations of African epistemologies that prepare everyone to participate and perform their role to meet the collective community goals. An awareness of this truth in western society must be complimented with proper recognition of African indigenous knowledges as valid in knowledge production. African indigenous knowledge orients all people within society to work towards the collective good of the community; thus, the success of the individual is depended on how well they are able to fulfill their role in advancing the community.

(4) Identify Black pioneers who have done great work in society and build upon: Black students connect more and are inspired to learn when they find information about Black pioneers who had done great work in society and have articulated the black experience well for them to build upon (Codjoe, 2006, p. 44). Black students do not have to act White in order to advance in the western society; a better understanding of the interaction between race and ethnicity, amongst other intersecting identities, is central to Black student's psychosocial well-being and educational success.

Role of academy or post-secondary institutions

The exclusion of African Indigenous knowledges in the education of BAIS deprives them of the ability to connect their lived experiences to academic work. The absence of information that represents BAIS' true background and experiences in formal education creates a disconnect between their identity and education. BAIS are burdened with the difficulty of having to balance their cultural differences with western education; this can create learning and culture-related challenges that sometimes lead to educational disengagement (Ebgo, 2016). African Canadian youth's academic disengagement has been associated with cultural dissonance, racism, and discrimination perpetuated by the Canadian education system (Shiza, 2016, p. 187). They experience fear and disregard towards their cultural identity and African indigenous knowledges. Grande (2015) draws our attention to the fact that there is a divide between "on-the-ground" struggles of marginalized groups and application of research theories because of the relentless pressure to address the more immediate socio-political urgencies of the community (p. 2). She asserts that schools continue to be a forceful weapon used by dominant powers to create boundaries to control and mould the minds of people and weaken their indigenous identity in order to assimilate them into the mainstream society (p. 36). She, therefore, suggests the application of critical theory and pedagogy to support indigenous students. To support BAIS through academia, intellectuals are expected to acknowledge and soak themselves in this knowledge, assimilate the feelings, the sensitivity of epistemologies that move in ways unimagined by most Western academic impulses (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). A critical analysis of the current multicultural education in Canada locates discrimination in individuals' lack of sensitivity and knowledge that can be changed by efforts to reduce prejudice, promote cultural awareness and knowledge, and achieve equal accessibilities (Kirova, 2015, p. 245). A supportive education system will give students the opportunity to explore options and to adopt educational strategies that align with their current realities, which are sometimes outside the western colonial educational practices. Support to BAIS in the academy may take the form of capacity building and resource allocation to advance studies related to African students and communities. It may also mean expanding the process of knowledge production to include non-western or indigenous ways of knowing and doing and validating the later to be at power with accepted western knowledge production strategies.

Role of government and policy-makers

The extent to which BAIS are able to effectively draw on and apply their African Indigenous knowledges would to a greater extent depend on how well the Canadian multicultural concepts are fostered and implemented. According to Kirova (2015) multicultural education has been linked to the goals of the original federal multicultural policy which promotes ethnocultural retention, fosters appreciation of the cultural heritage of others, and assumes increased intergroup harmony (p. 240). Some suggested strategies on how the government and policy makers can support the multicultural education of BAIS include:

- (1) allocating specific resources to multicultural education that would encourage BAIS' to explore opportunities to address the needs of the diverse African community in Canada;
- (2) Identifying the contemporary priorities of the African community and working collaboratively with community leaders, researchers and post-secondary institutions to address the challenges that face Africans in Canada;
- (3) Recognizing the contributions of Africans to the economy to encourage Africans to continue participating in the Canadian society;
- (4) Removing barriers and other discriminatory practices that limit and intimidate BAIS in Canada;
- (5) Implementing critical multicultural education at various educational levels and holding educational institutions accountable;
- (6) Legislating multiculturalism *Act* in all provinces and highlighting equitable recognition and opportunities to all groups including Africans; and,
- (7) Creating space for diverse representation at higher decision-making tables to foster inclusiveness and ensure that critical multicultural perspectives are welcome and a priority for all.

The role and influence of African Indigenous knowledge in the identities and education of BAIS cannot be overemphasized. However, a promising educational experience will not be fully realized without the collective efforts of the students, the socio-cultural community, educational institutions and the government as a whole. Continuous research in this area of study would provide options to support BAIS education and empower them to increase their contribution to the African Canadian society.

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences” (Audre Lorde)

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