Indigenous Textbooks and Case Studies as Effective Tools in Business and Management Education: A Comparative Analysis of Indian versus African Business Literature

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Abstract

Indigenous knowledge is that home grown, sustainable form of knowledge that is capable of triggering creativity and innovation, due to the spontaneity and familiarity it is synonymous with. In teaching and learning, it is widely recognized that building an indigenous knowledge based curriculum is essential to getting the active attention and sustained interest of students. While in several parts of the world, academic literature, for the most part are products of everyday, lived realities of the students, in Africa, that is not the case. Most African textbooks are exacts replicas of European and American texts, replicated without any form of alteration, whatsoever. This article focuses on select business literature in India and Africa, to state that while India has bridged the indigenous knowledge gap in business and management education by ensuring the strong presence of indigenous knowledge in the prescribed textbooks for students, African universities still prescribe foreign, and therefore, alien textbooks to business and management students. The end result is G. R. Woodman and B. Morse’s (1987) observation that the difficulty of designing viable development strategies in Africa is based on the fact that the region’s modern development thinking is not the direct descendant of, or an adaptation of the indigenous knowledge of the continent.

Introduction

In the face of the glaring inability of Western knowledge to tackle long standing and emerging global economic challenges, previously neglected culture specific experiences and diverse methods of explaining and understanding phenomena are increasingly gaining credence. Indigenous knowledge is one such knowledge that has been derided for centuries due to the advancement of Western specific knowledge and its enthronement as the sole harbinger of progress for the rest of humanity.

Indigenous knowledge refers to the distinct kind of knowledge that is generated from a particular locale over a period of time. It is the time tested, ‘relative’ knowledge that is
developed from experiences, that is, the interaction of the inhabitants of a place with their environment. This is often in their quest for basic survival and from the mental efforts invested in social, economic, and political advancement.

The World Bank defines indigenous knowledge as encompassing the sum total of “the skills, experiences and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood” (World Bank 2000). Dean and Levi define indigenous as “of being native or belonging to a place” While Ake (1990) defines indigenous knowledge as the authentic expression or outcome of history and intellectual evolution and experience.”

For the purpose of this study, it is imperative to state categorically that indigenous knowledge does not connote traditional knowledge. While traditional in its strictest sense symbolizes something static, retrogressive even, with no effort made at the scaling up of the existing, indigenous tends to tilt more towards an evolutionary kind of knowledge, knowledge still very much in touch with its roots and origins but not ignorant of emerging technology, ideas, changing value systems and growing environmental concerns.

What is often overlooked, however, is that much of what is passed on as Western knowledge today can be traced directly to the indigenous knowledge of Europe. Indigenous Western knowledge in all its entirety has been repackaged as global knowledge and exported to the rest of the world in compartments such as medicine, pharmacy, architecture, sociology, anthropology, business administration and management, education, communication studies, to mention few.

In some parts of the world, efforts have been made; at least, to adapt Western knowledge to the locally existing and lived realities of the inhabitants, or their indigenous knowledge. Other parts of the world have been unable to positively and effectively manipulate the received Western knowledge system and structure same to incorporate indigenous knowledge. The effects are often noticeable in the case of the two experiences.

In countries where indigenous knowledge has, in some variety and/or capacity, become part and parcel of students’ learning experiences, the benefit is often tangible in terms of student achievement, both as learners, and after graduation, in terms of contributions made to the immediate community. In those countries where wholesale, undiluted Western knowledge system, is passed on to students without efforts at incorporating indigenous knowledge in the form of the lived and environmental experiences of students, the result is often noticeable in the area of poor student performance, and a dearth of creativity and innovation in the wider community.

While it can be argued that other factors, such as poverty, cultural inclinations, historical antecedents and others may be responsible for the disparities in student performance, and in the output of creativity in a society, this article seeks to build on the several published works on the effect of indigenous knowledge in teaching and learning to argue that indeed, the level of incorporation of everyday, ordinary experiences and familiar issues as part of the learning
process could go a long way in determining the ability of education to deliver expected outcomes to any society.

The paper will focus on the experiences of two regions, India and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Within the two regions, the paper focuses on business management education, to infer that while India learnt long ago to incorporate indigenous knowledge in curriculum development at all levels, much of SSA is still trapped in the colonial era tradition where pre-packaged Western knowledge is imported and transmitted to students. Specifically, the paper will compare samples of case studies in business management textbooks used in India and in Africa as evidence of the incorporation or otherwise of indigenous knowledge in curriculum and at the end will try to present an analysis of the effects of both on both societies.

Indigenous Knowledge Relevance in Teaching and Learning

Education has been broadly defined; education is the process of transferring knowledge from one generation to another. Education in this context will be strictly translated as the formal form of learning, whereby established systems, structures and processes are employed for the impartation of knowledge to a select clientele. Within this formal structure, higher learning institutions will be the central focus, and within that, matters of curriculum concerning business schools and colleges will be specifically addressed.

Hanushek and Woessmann (2007) opine that education is only able to achieve its fundamental aim of societal transformation and ensuring creativity and innovation, when what is being taught is appropriate to the social and material environment within which it is expressed. This is further to the reconstructivist view of education, which emphasizes that textbooks, course materials and curriculum content must agree intimately with the social construction and reality of the learners (Mclaren in Darder 2003; Giroux et al 1986; Trifonas 2003; Ozmon and Carver 1986; Freire 1968; White 1983). Ezeanya argues that the sort of education that imposes foreign ideas only, on learners turns them into passive recipients of alien and unrecognizable knowledge, thereby ridiculing their immediate reality and suppressing the spontaneity of environment induced innovation and creativity (Ezeanya 2011, 70). Paulo Freire in a Pedagogy of the Oppressed opines that “authentic education is not carried on by “A” for “B” or by “A” about “B,” but rather “A” with “B,” mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinion about it” (1968, 82). In essence, education content must be generated, at the fundamental level, from within the socio-cultural, economic and political environment of the learner of his or her lived realities. “It is inadmissible,” according to Freire, to present pictures unfamiliar to the participant” in an academic setting (Freire 1968, 107). Ezeanya contends that “the most important part of education therefore, is the ability to make learners feel like masters of their own thinking by enabling them the freedom to analyze their own world experience and not that of another.” (Ezeanya 2011, 71).

It must be noted that this is not a call for a repudiation of the globally accepted business education curriculum mandatory to be considered a knowledgeable graduate of a business
school and most importantly, a successful entrepreneur or business manager. What this paper calls for is the imbueuent of a sense of self-awareness in African academia and students, a necessity for success in their environment, something that the universal business curriculum lacks.

**Business and Management Education in India**

India was under British colonial rule over two centuries and was forced to adopt Western education system. The long years of colonial rule impacted mostly the higher education system in India by making intellectuals of the society to adapt to British centric paradigms and curriculum education system. In the fight for Independence, however, the Indian champions of the end to colonialism, led by Mahatma Gandhi, enjoined Indians to research and re-discover the authenticity of India and channel all mental energies towards its expansion.

In *Towards New Education* Mahatma Gandhi condemned the British styled textbooks, syllabus and general curricula prevalent in India’s education system. He asserts that “the curriculum and pedagogic ideas which form the fabric of modern (Indian) education were essentially foreign, and till they are repudiated, there can never be national education”. (Gandhi 1956, 26). Gandhi call to the Indian intellectual was simple, “the system must be scrapped...” (Gandhi 1958, 28). Since Independence, and challenged by Mahatma Gandhi’s postulations, educationists across India have been putting up huge efforts towards retaining the unique identity of the nation, while concurrently opening up to global trends. Increasingly, the efforts have been paying off as the country can be adjudged as partly successful – in comparison to other post colonial societies - in a society engulfed by Western education system, culture and values.

In the field of business management, Indian intellectuals and practitioners have been contributing to the existing business and management literature by giving their own perspective. Business and management education in India have transformed tremendously and rapidly over the past two decades. The mushrooming of business schools in response to the growing market needs for management professionals is one of the driving forces for the rapid growth of business education sector. This has become a thriving business and highly competitive over the years. Some of the stakeholders of business and management education like B-Schools, academicians, writers and publishers these days are focusing on niching and customization. This has led to inclusion of more of indigenous case studies into business literature. Philip Kotler, a globally well known author and authority on marketing, while introducing Pearson One quoted saying “Marketing editions work best when they are localized to bring in stories and ideas appropriate to those markets.” (Kotler et al., 2009) The 13th edition of ‘Marketing Management-A South Asian Perspective’ contains 200 caselets and advertisements of companies from various parts of the world. Nearly half of them are drawn from the companies from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to make the South Asian students understand the concepts of marketing better within a familiar business environment. The objective of using more of indigenous case studies in imparting business education is to make the literature contextually more relevant to the local/regional business student.
Table 1. Use of Indian Case Studies in Business Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Management Text Books</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Indian Case Studies</th>
<th>Content Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Marketing Management- A South Asian Perspective 13th Edition, Pearson Education, ISBN: 9788131716830</td>
<td>Philip Kotler, Kevin Lane Keller, Abraham Koshy &amp; Mithileshwar Jha</td>
<td>Around 100 caselets and advertisements are sourced out from the companies from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.</td>
<td>The objective is to make the South Asian student understand the marketing concepts better with the help of caselets and advertisements drawn from the familiar business environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Concepts in Strategic Management and Business Policy 12 Edition, Pearson Education ISBN: 9788131729717</td>
<td>Thomas L. Wheelen &amp; J. David Hunger</td>
<td>Various topics and issues in this textbook are dealt by using short cases drawn from some of the Indian companies and brands like Apollo, ITC’s Bingo! and e-Choupal, Zapak, Satyam, Haldiram’s, Wipro, Nirma, Big Bazaar, Pantaloone, Mahindra &amp; Mahindra, and Bharti. All cases are actual organizations drawn mostly from Indian companies to make the concepts contextually more relevant and understandable to the business student.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


**Contextual Relevance**

The above table presents some of the management text books published by Pearson Education. These books focus on major decisions various functional managers and top management face in accomplishment of organizational objectives, utilization of resources and capabilities, and how they harmonize in meeting the challenges of increasingly demanding markets and to explore the opportunities. The managerial orientation becomes easier if the reader’s attention can be brought to the local business environment through various compelling examples such as business cases. It is but ‘to think globally and act locally’.
To engage the student/reader the content presented in the books to be interesting. As presented in the table, authors made enough effort in making them contextually more relevant by giving compelling examples in the form of caselets/short cases/case studies.

Analytical Approach

Case studies and relevant examples from the local business environment illustrate the concepts more effectively rather than using unfamiliar global cases and examples.

Business and Management Education in sub-Saharan Africa

SSA is a sub-continent comprising of 47 countries, and at first, would seem incompatible with India, a country. However, a beneath the surface inquiry would reveal much more similarities in the composition, historical and contemporary experiences of both. India is a country of 1.2 billion in population, while sub-Saharan Africa follows closely at an estimated 1 billion. India is comprised of several ethnic and religious groups, and the same is obtainable across SSA. Historically, India was colonized by the European power, Britain while SSA was colonized by several European powers such as Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal and Germany.

In contemporary history, SSA was only recently, easily classified alongside India as a developing area that is heavily dependent on the importation of machinery and other heavy industrial products from the West. This is no longer so. Going by economic growth indices and other yardsticks for measuring development, scholars, writers and others concerned with semantic accuracy are now at loss on what term to exactly use to qualify India. Developing no longer fits. Yet without much thought, SSA is still casually addressed as a cluster of developing countries.

Going by the importance of the right kind of education in building a strong platform for growth in every sector, one could say that education; the kind advanced by Mahatma Gandhi and being implemented to a large extent in India, has been fundamental in the progress recorded in India. In business and management education, while India has succeeded to a large extent in incorporating indigenous, homegrown ideas in the curriculum as evidenced in the textbooks and case studies, a cursory glance at the recommended texts in the course syllables of African universities will reveal a dependence on mostly foreign authored, foreign contextual textbooks and case studies. The table below is a brief compilation of business and management textbooks used across Rwanda, Kenya, and Ghana.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Management Text Books</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Case Studies</th>
<th>Content Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>a. Research for Marketing Decisions</td>
<td>Paul E. Green, Donald S. Tull and Gerald S. Albaum</td>
<td>American and Asian examples utilized to explain topic. Case studies used to show Rapid Rural Appraisal is Sri Lankan.</td>
<td>The book explores the role of research in marketing decision making. It explores the purpose, nature, and limitations of marketing research.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publisher: New Delhi - PHI Learning Limited.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Year: 1988</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b. Marketing Essentials</td>
<td>Farese, Kimbrell and Wolozyk</td>
<td>Several. Drawing mostly from Fortune 500 Companies.</td>
<td>Considered an essential reading text in the United States for familiarizing students with the skills and strategies of marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publisher: McGraw Hill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year: 1997</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>a. The Leadership Solution</td>
<td>Jim Shaffer</td>
<td>Several American examples and CEOs were studied or referred to including Federal Express, AT&amp;T Wireless Express Services, Netscape, Merksdale Group, American Management Association</td>
<td>Explores better ways for leaders to create a competitive advantage and carve a niche in their fields. Emphasizes the need for continuous improvement and change in every organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publisher: McGraw Hill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year: 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. The Leadership Secrets of Collin Powell</td>
<td>Oren Harari</td>
<td>Several centered around Collin Powell’s service to</td>
<td>Explores the leadership strategies of Colin, former United United</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher: McGraw Hill</td>
<td>the United States</td>
<td>States Secretary of State under George W. Bush Jnr.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year: 2002</td>
<td></td>
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3. **Human Resource Management**
   
   **Publisher:** John Wiley and Sons
   
   **Year:** 2008 (6th edition)
   
   **Author:** Raymond Stone
   
   The book thoroughly addresses age-old and emerging issues and practices in human resource management and organizational politics. The sixth edition includes topics on work-life balance, ageing population and shortage of skilled workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher: McGraw-Hill</th>
<th>Arthur. A. Thompson and Alonzo J. Strickland</th>
<th>Case studies are based on United States dotcom/New Economy companies.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year: 1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Strategic Management (10th edition)**
   
   **Publisher:** McGraw-Hill
   
   **Year:** 1999
   
   Explain the application of research strategy to business cases and challenges. It focuses on the various ways of strategy implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher: McGraw-Hill</th>
<th>Robert J. Calvin</th>
<th>AOL, Cisco, Dell, Intel and other multinational corporations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year: 2002</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discusses entrepreneurial strategies needed for both growing small businesses,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fundamentals of Business Law</td>
<td>Roger LeRoy and Gaylord A. Jentz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year: 2007, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Introduction to Management Accounting</td>
<td>Peter Brewer, Ray Garrison, Eric Noreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Publisher: McGraw Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year: 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Contextual Relevance**

The “think globally, act locally” persuasion is scorned at in most sub-Saharan African universities. In fact, from the above examples of recommended textbooks, one would not be mistaken to label the goal of business and management education in sub-Saharan Africa as “Think American, Act American.” Indigenous authors are lacking and with them indigenous or local examples and case studies. The result is that students are unable to fully grasp the core context of what is being taught.
Analytical Approach

Effective learning requires practical, hands on interaction on the part of the instructed, and case studies are expected to fulfill this objective. In business and management education in Africa, the entire reason for the incorporation of case studies and examples are almost defeated as the examples used are alien and detached from the lived experiences of the students, and even the teachers.

Apart from the contextual and analytical relevance, the use of foreign textbooks has brought about a redundancy in sub-Saharan Africa’s publishing industry. Most of the books listed above are from foreign authors and come in hard binding. Further, the high cost of these textbooks result in fewer purchases made by libraries, resulting in sometimes a student book ratio of 1:400. However, it is important to note that even sub-Saharan Africa, the incident of foreign textbooks and case studies vary in occurrence. South Africa is a good example of where the publishing industry is thriving and several indigenous authors, case studies and textbooks are used. Nigeria is another country that has the potential to develop a thriving publishing industry. Quite a handful of books are published by local authors but in several instances, they are of low scholarly and aesthetic quality and often lacking in the abundant utilization of locally generated case studies.

The World Bank notes that “the basic component of any country’s knowledge system is its indigenous knowledge (World Bank, 2000). According to Ali Mazrui (2003), African universities and intellectuals are mentally dependent on the West for generation of pedagogic ideas as evidenced in the curriculum, syllables and case studies. Mazrui points to this mental dependency as the foundations of Africa’s current state of dependence on others in almost every sector.

To stymie the continued cycle of dependency in Africa, more local authors should be encouraged across sub-Saharan Africa. Governments, development partners, and others interested in education must as a matter of urgency begin to actively encourage the growth of the local publishing industry. Beyond that, however, efforts should be invested by the numerous transnational higher learning institutes operating in several African countries, to develop case studies from the budding indigenous private sector and from the ever increasing transnational corporations injecting foreign direct investment in Africa.

Conclusion

Education to be relevant ought to carefully address the details of the environmental realities of the learners. Where learning is entirely foreign in approach, learners are unable to connect classroom work with their everyday life. The resultant effect is the inability to apply what is learned in the class to develop one’s self, community and society at large. Due to its colonial foundations, education in sub-Saharan Africa was founded on foreign curriculum and contexts. However, India, went through colonization, but has over time succeeded in largely indigenizing the curriculum content of its education system; Africa is yet to do so.
Focusing specifically on Business and Management Education, this article compared some major textbooks used in India versus the recommended textbooks in Africa. It was able to establish that Indian authors and case studies engage global trend in the field to come up with a hybrid that is at once real to the Indian student, without compromising his or her understanding of what emerging realities are in other parts of the world. In Africa, however, textbooks, and case studies remain largely foreign and abstracted from the everyday realities of the students. The resultant effects in summary is that Indian students are able to immediately translate classroom experiences in workplaces, leading to cutting edged innovation and creativity, African students struggle with making sense of what is taught in classroom and find it difficult to apply the knowledge gained at their workplaces.

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