



Historical African Education, Assessment, and the Pan-African Ideal

41st AEAA Annual Conference
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Skylight Hotel, Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Outline



African Education



Pan-African Ideal & Education



Africa and Assessment



Emergent Trends



Way-forward



Sustaining the Unsustainable





Archaeological Site of Volubilis – Morocco



Traditional African House

Africa is a noble and ancient continent (Akani, 2017).



Pyramid of Giza - Egypt



Rock-hewn church in Ethiopia - Lalibela



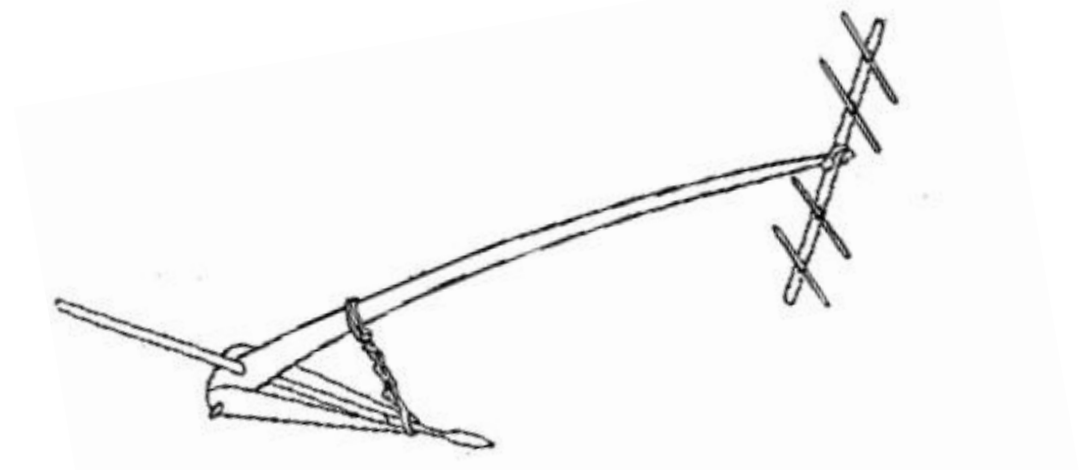
Kano City Walls – Nigeria



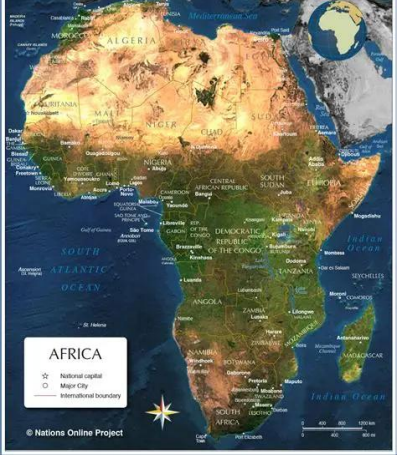
Farming in Ethiopia



Ancient City of Aksum – Ethiopia



Engineering and Measurement Issues

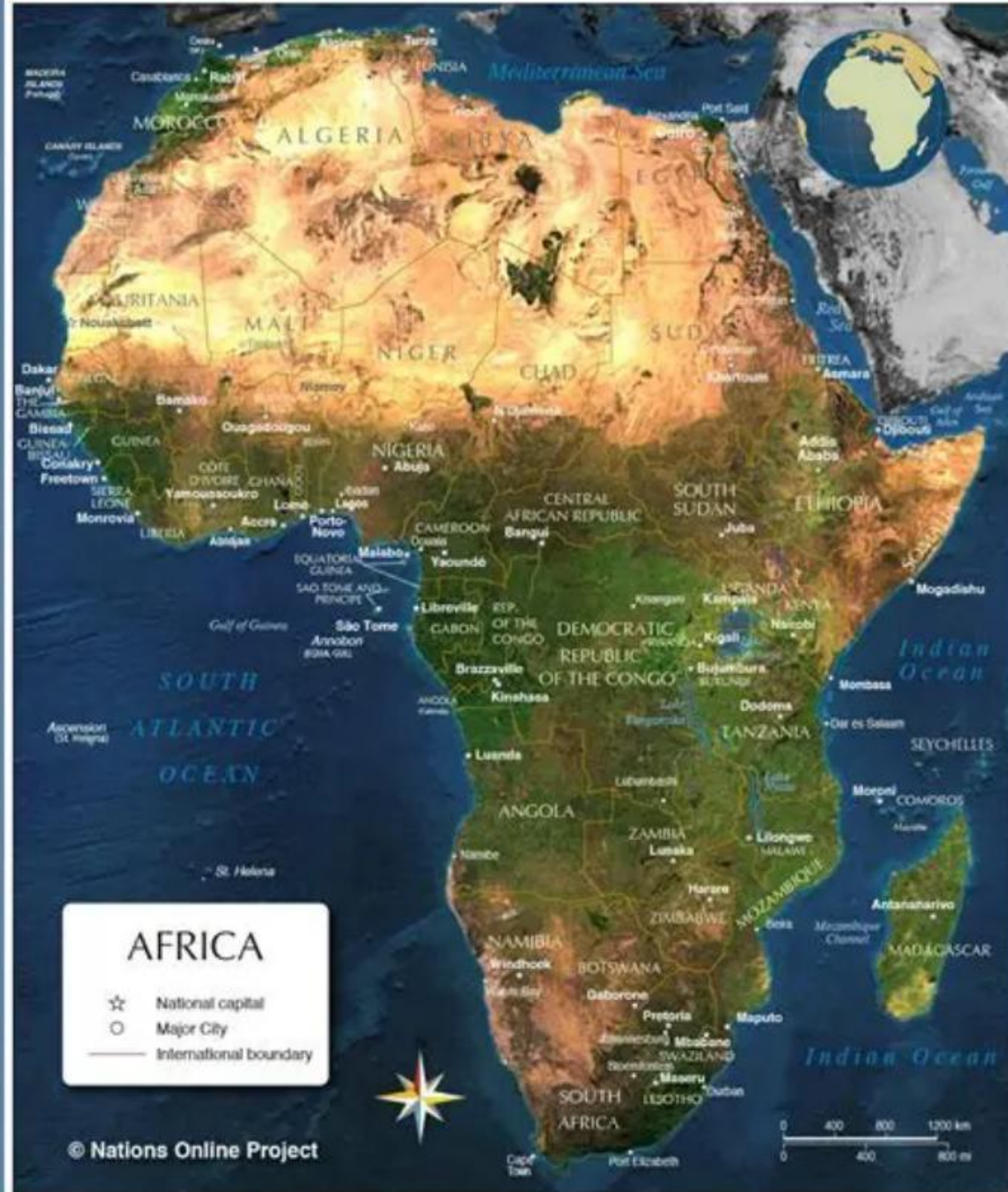


???

- What is the Africa we want? _____
- Is our education system and assessment strategy relevant to Africa?
- Can we achieve what we want with the incumbent system?
- How should we respond to the global emergent shifts and changes?

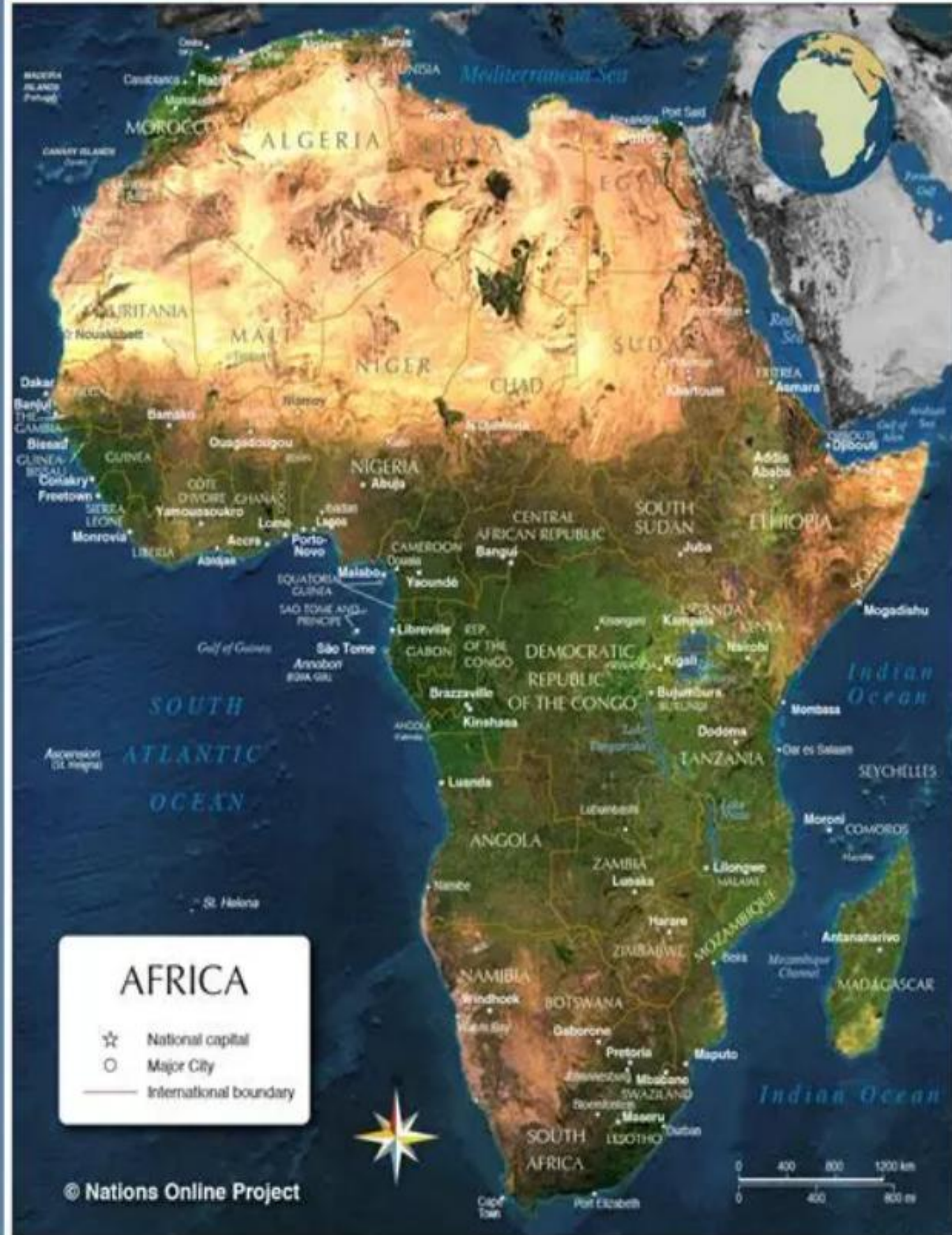
Africans

- As IKS
 - to inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority;
 - to develop intellectual, physical, and social skills;
 - to understand, appreciate, and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large;
 - to develop character and moral training; to develop a sense of belonging and encourage active participation in family and community affairs;
 - to acquire specific vocational training (e.g., training a child to know how to farm, hunt, carve, weave);
 - to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour (Ashu et al., 2023, pp. 33-34).
- Questioning, Cultural Reclamation, apprenticeship (learning by doing), individual & collective responsibility, etc.

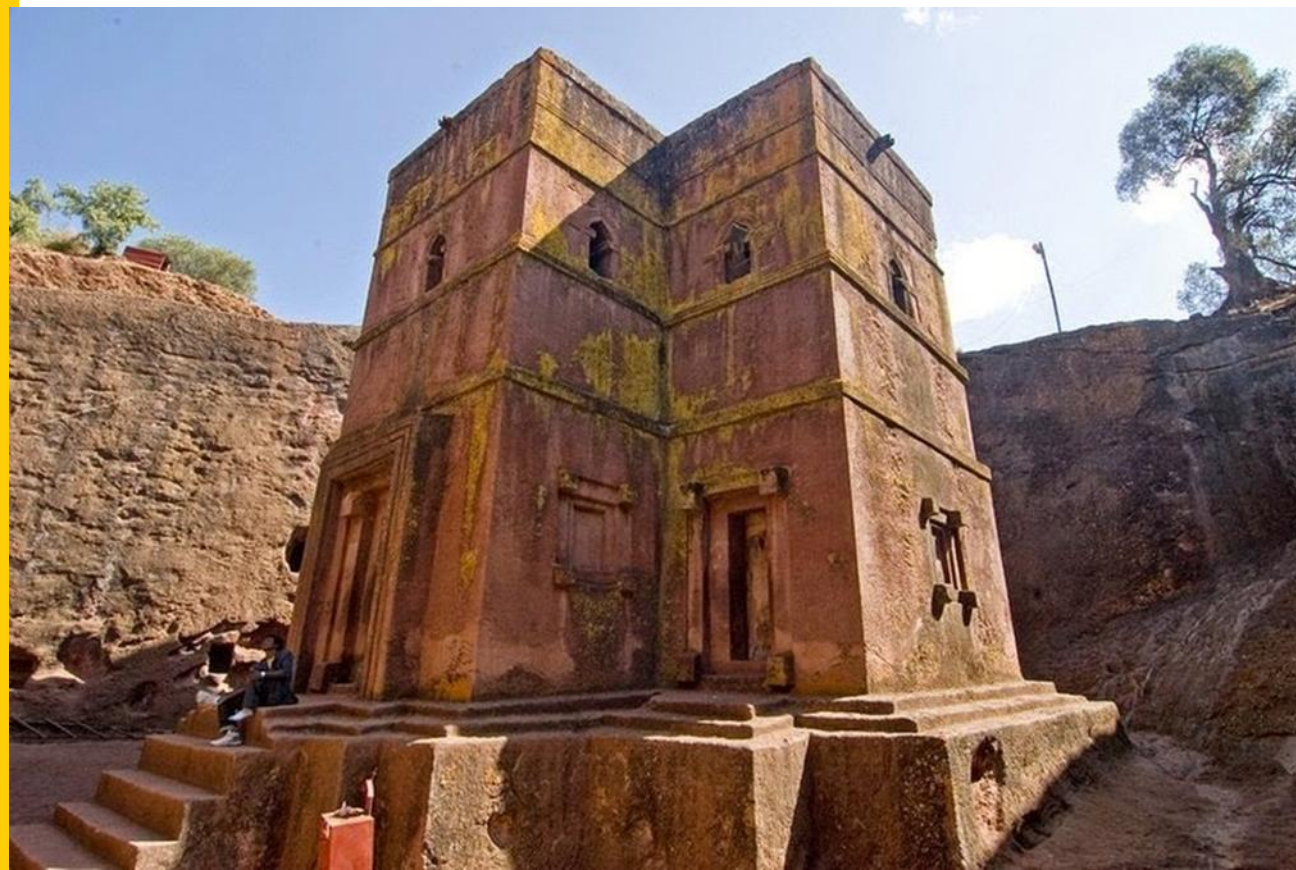


Africans

- Encompasses various aspects that reflect the continent's cultural values and knowledge systems.
- Though possible Ethnophilosophy, ...
 - Preparationism, Utilitarianism, Communalism, Holisticism, Perennialism, Reasonableness, Moral Maturity, (Ashu et al., 2023, pp. 36 – 38)



African Education



- As a cradle of human origin, Africa had a lot to give to the Globe.
- African architecture is characterized by its diversity, use of local materials, and deep cultural significance, reflecting the various communities and climates across the continent.
- Monument, stele, rock-hewn church, artifact, and many others unshackle the legacy it granted to itself of the advancement and the level it reached.



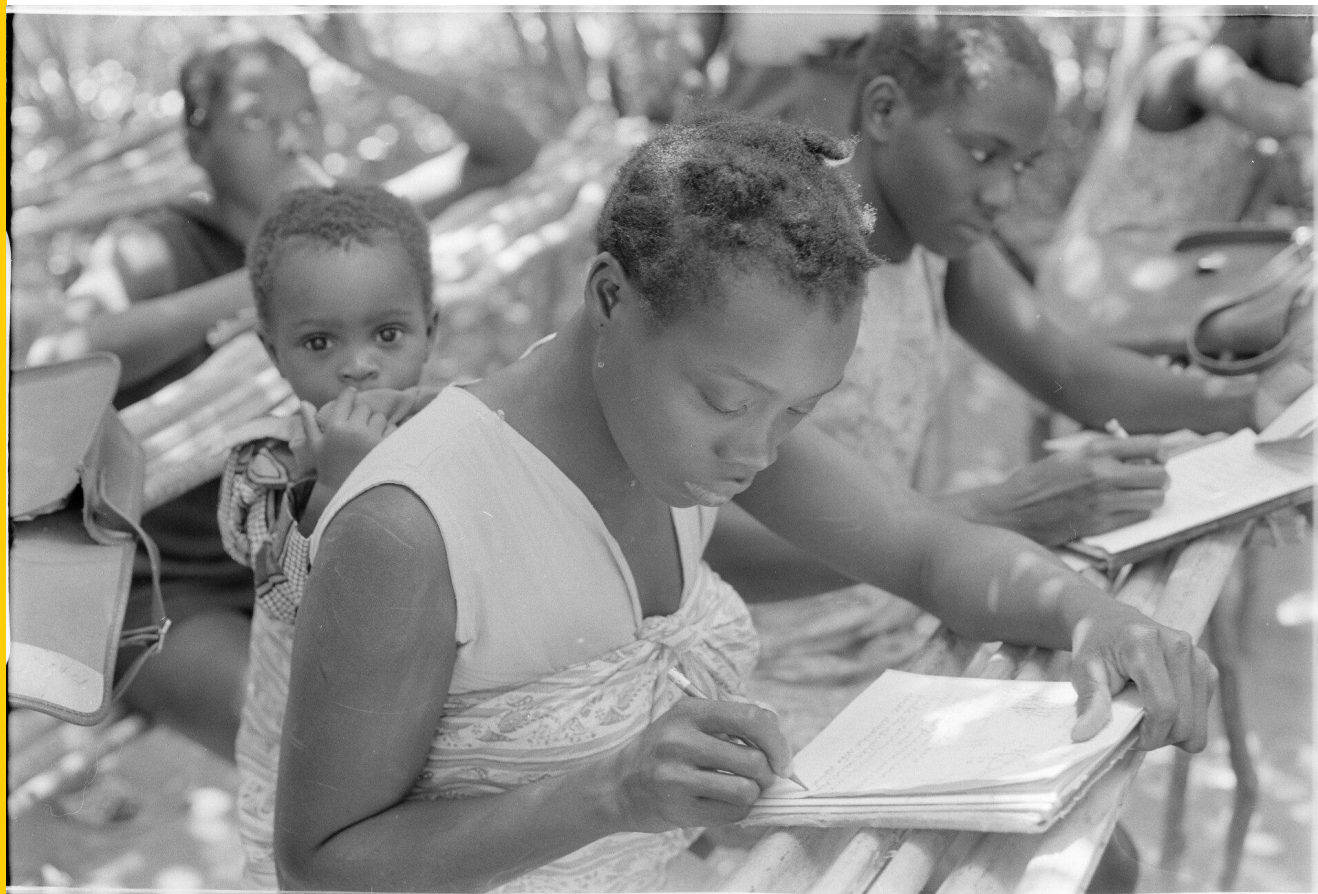
African Education

- Education in Africa was largely situation or context-based local discourse and/or experiential.
- They perceive a learner as a novice who is not defined as someone who lacks skill but instead is a newcomer within a specific community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Matusov et al., 1994).
- Papyrus and Mumification





Traditional Society in Africa



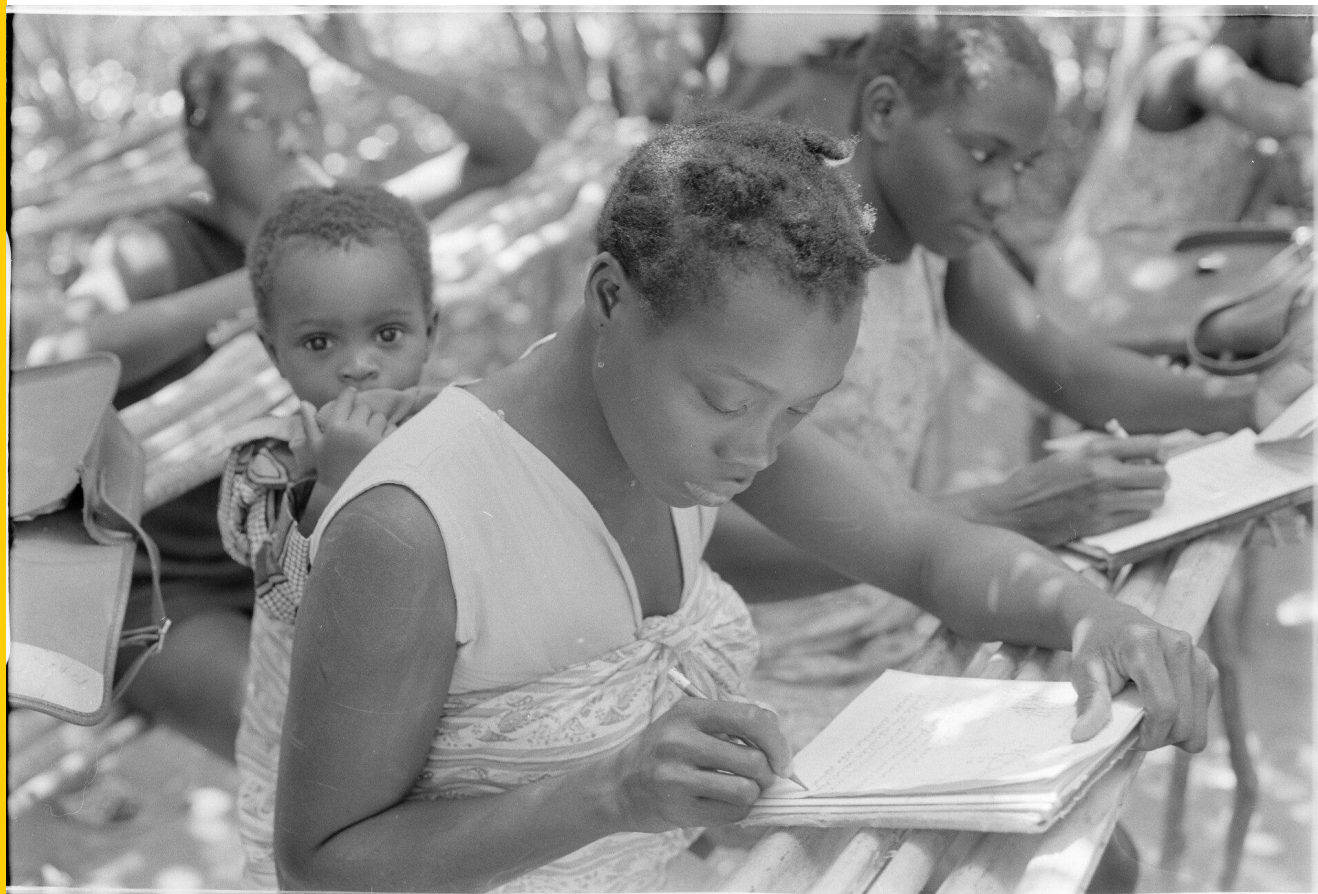
Open air school for adults, Guinea-Bissau, 1974

African Education

- Education in many precolonial African states was in the form of apprenticeship, informal education, without writing, learned from older members of their household and community.
- Mostly localized and was difficult to share, but competency based.



Traditional Society in Africa



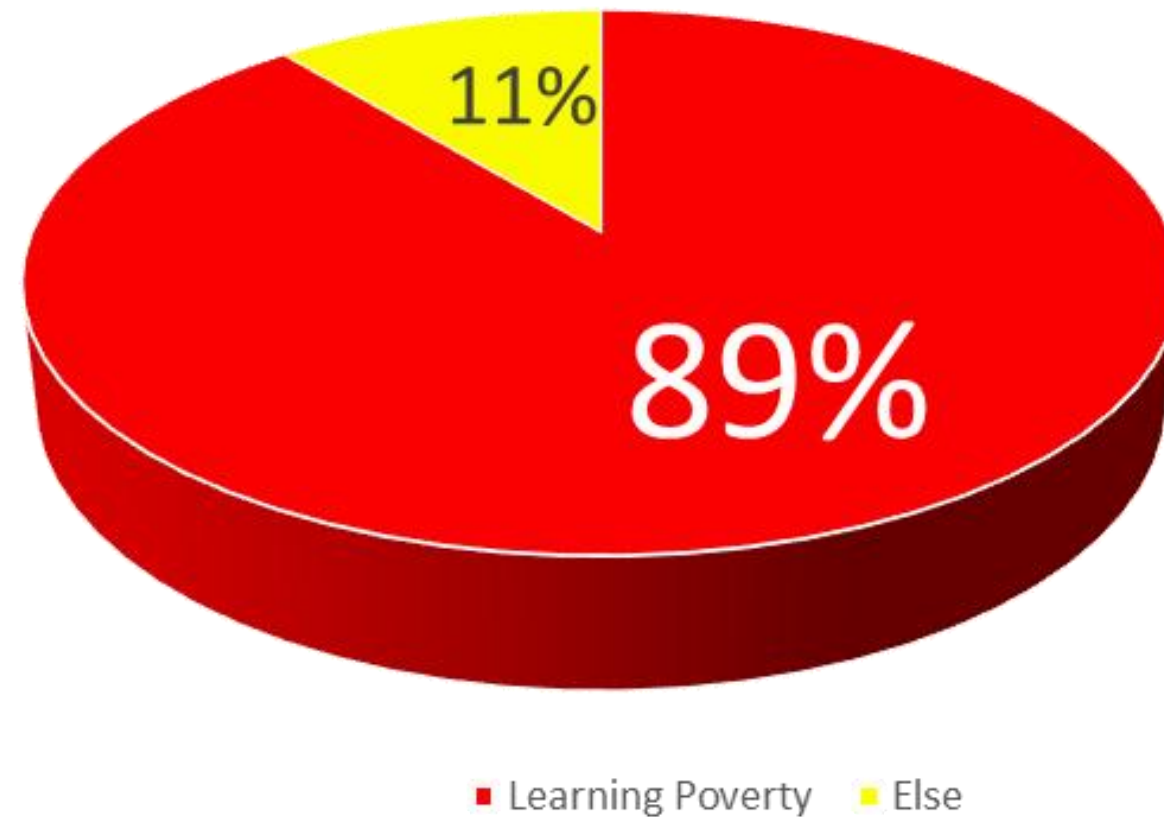
Open air school for adults, Guinea-Bissau, 1974

African Education

- Changes and their consequences?
- Colonial moves and repressive effects: acculturation, political elitism, mystification, domination, denomination, etc.
- Historical account of obsession with and dissensions on colonial education (Odugu, 2023).

African Education

Learning Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (WB, 2022)

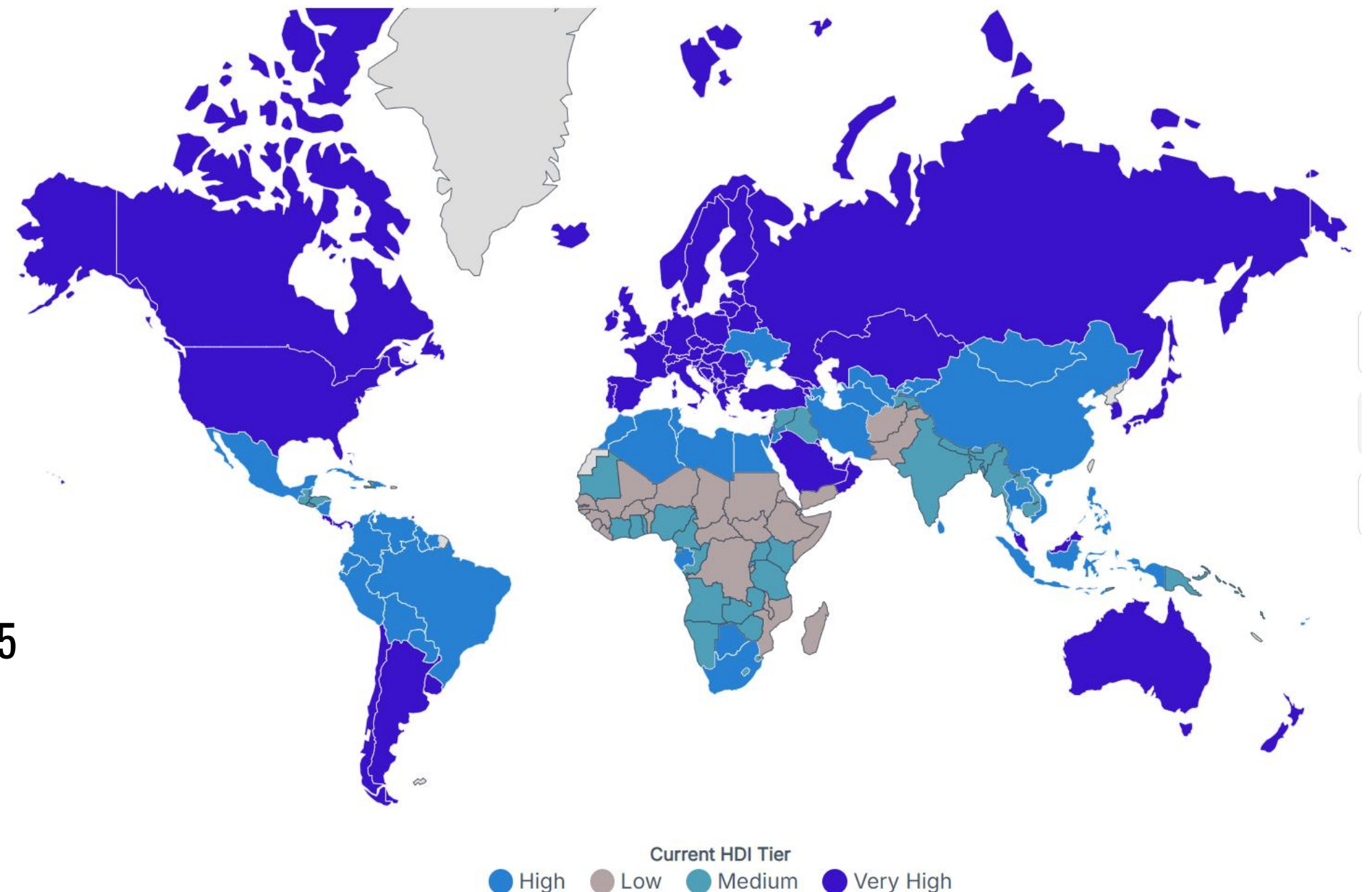


Changes in perspectives, value systems, improved fidelity, improper relevance, etc

The changes effected in the incompatible and copied education system, curriculum, and poor quality of education, leading to learning poverty.

African Education

- HDI remained within the range of 0.4 – 0.55 at a Sub-Saharan Africa level.



Human Development Index (HDI) by Country 2025

(World Population Review, 2025)

He who learns, teaches.

**If the lion doesn't tell his story,
the hunter will.**



Pan-African Ideal & Education

- Pan-Africanism since the mid-1990s, (PAA established in 1897)
- **Collective standing** (The legacy of Adwa, Establishment of OAU, unity for independence*)
- After 1960s ... ideal independence
- Maintained the colonial borders, legacies, official languages, education system, etc

Fooled by the randomness of rhetoric... end of slavery, racism, and colonialism



Pan-African Ideal & Education

- Contradiction between the Pan-African ideal and Education
- Education being sectarian, individualized, pyramidal, etc; guided by Western philosophies and epistemologies
- Emphasis on IKS (e.g., Ubuntu) and African Lingua Franca (e.g., Swahili), regional integration (Shift from OAU to AU), etc
- Continental Institutions (e.g., AU, AUA, PAA)
- Slipped efforts of the Pan-African University



Pan-African Ideal & Education

Even if we claim we have independence:

- Why do we still rely on the Western education system? How should we balance?
- Why do we use English (or French)... as a medium of instruction? (How can we track...?)
- Why do we fail to ensure quality? Role of Assessment?



Africa and Assessment

- Africans usually assess “competence” in something
 - They do not follow only one method: Authentic, Oral, Performance, Observation, etc
 - LP is one of the best models
- No formal exam, nor associated psychological threats such as anxiety, fatigue, etc.





Africa and Assessment

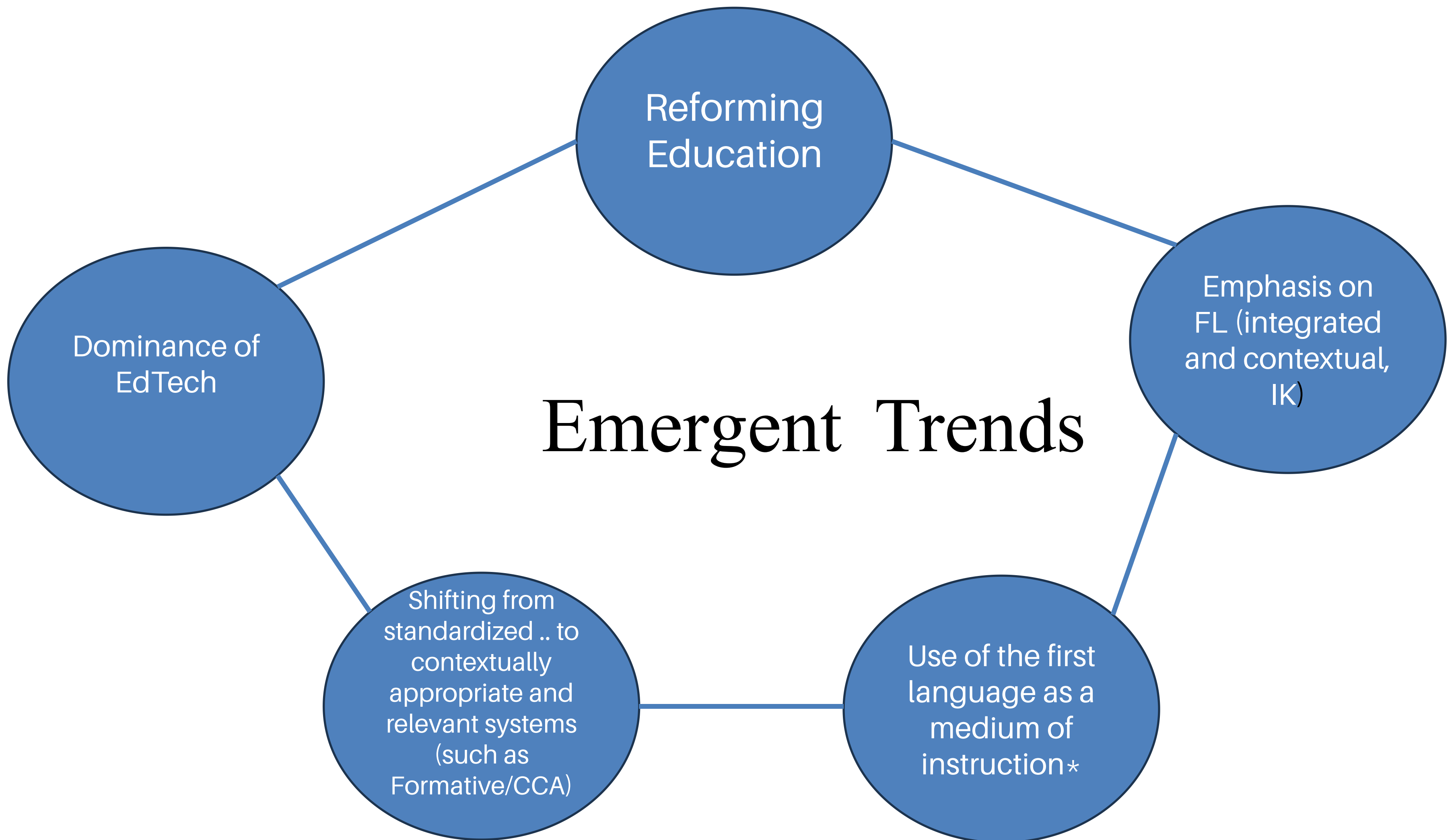
- Blindly borrowing Western values and standards
- Harmonization and Tranquilino effect:
 - Making us talk their voice, fulfil their interest, devalue ours, etc
- Devaluation of African theories, values, and norms, including morality





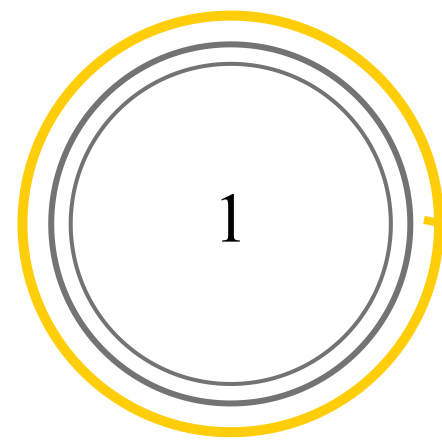
Africa and Assessment

- Back to competency-based education
- Our Assessment is largely dictated by measuring cognitive ability/knowledge, instead of promoting culturally relevant and practical assessments of a formative nature
- The prevalent misalignment
- Positioning us at a crossroad

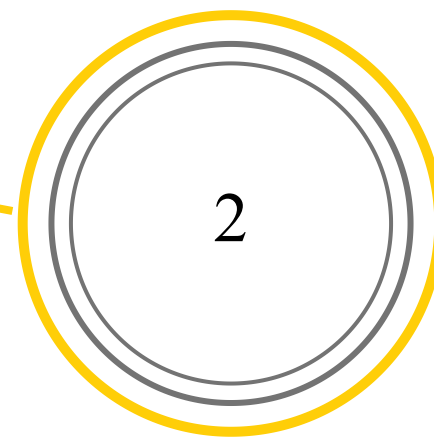


Way Forward

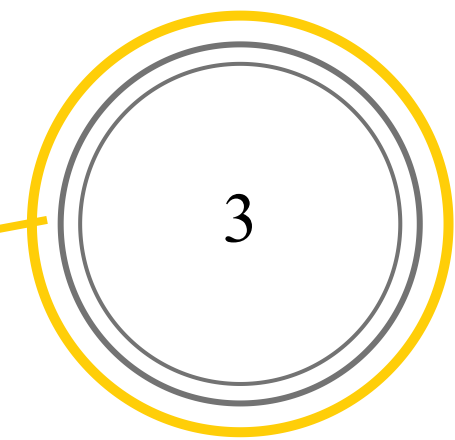
DECOLONIZING AND AFRICANIZING DISCOURSES & OUR ASSESSMENT APPROACHES



Africa must change its
Education System
(#Lumumba)

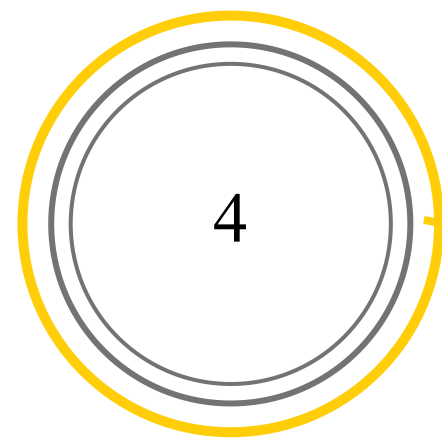


Decolonization of
Education and
Assessment in
Africa

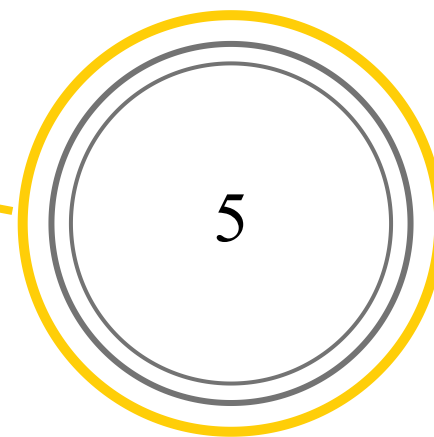


Balance between
decolonization and
Africanization, and
Standards

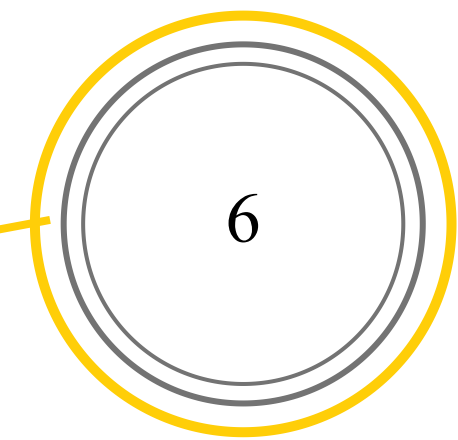
Way Forward



Africanize “the theory
and practice of
evaluation” that can
be translated into
widespread practice.



African wisdom for
African Education
development, and
beyond



Making assessment
& evaluation
culturally relevant

In Summary

- **African Learning – establishing a holistic personality & Competency-Based**
How do we shape our assessment system along this direction
- **Contents used to be African & Relevant – Purposeful**
However, we are schooling our children to prepare them for Western values & market demands, while we need to have established and advanced our values, norms, and produce productive citizens, etc
- **How should we track our Assessment to develop creativity & innovation?**
As different from the rule of thumb “exam” that is largely used for cognitive ...
- **Emancipated and productive, rather than the reproduction of knowledge.**
- **What should our policymakers focus to?**



Together we can!

Thank You
