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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the tensions present in an intercultural education model designed to offer an indigenous knowledge course alongside the national curriculum at Noonkodin School in Eluwai, Monduli, Tanzania. The study employed an ethnographic research design involving mainly in-depth classroom observations, interviews with the head and deputy head of school, informal conversations, and focus groups with 11 teachers and 20 Maasai students. The findings showed that the provision of intercultural education at Noonkodin is beleaguered not only by a hegemonic relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge, but also a strong cultural mismatch, contradiction, and ambivalence in their strictest sense. For the programme to succeed, the findings suggest the need to overcome both the hegemonic backdrop of Western education structures that shape what happens in the school, alongside the structural limitations of Noonkodin's location within a modern Tanzanian state replete with capitalist values that run counter to its stated goals.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous knowledge; western knowledge; intercultural education; Noonkodin; Eluwai; Monduli

Introduction

The relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge has been a subject of intense debate among scholars for several decades (Agrawal 1995; Dei 2000; Briggs 2005; Shizha 2006; Maweu 2011). With multiple perspectives and interpretations of the relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, the debate has become even more complex than ever (Mawere 2013). This complexity owes its origin to the proponents of both Indigenous and Western knowledge that consider the relationship between the two not only as being in binary opposition, but also as separate, contradictory, and incompatible with each other. The pro-Indigenous scholars, whom Agrawal (1995) labels as *neo-indigenistas*, for instance, consider Indigenous knowledge (IK[1]) as unconditionally positive and the only appropriate route for the development of indigenous and marginalised groups. For them, Western knowledge has contributed to the propagation of individualism, fragmentation, and the destruction of indigenous communities and nature (Battiste 2005; Barca and Arenas

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2010). These scholars also associate a Western education system with the loss, displacement, and marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems (Dei 2000; Shizha 2006).

By contrast, Eurocentric scholars romanticise Western knowledge as superior, scientific, and universal (Levi-Strauss 1966; Horton 1993), whereas IK is viewed as inferior, unscientific, and irrational (Agrawal 1995; Battiste 2005; Shizha 2006). For Eurocentric scholars, the difference between Western knowledge and IK is that the former is seen as open, systematic, objective, analytical, and dependent very much on being a detached centre of rationality and intelligence (Agrawal 1995; Briggs 2005), whereas the latter seems to be closed, non-systematic, and unintellectual rather than being analytical and logically deductive (Levi-Strauss 1966; Agrawal 1995). Nevertheless, some scholars regard such arguments as deeply flawed since learning, innovation, and change could not have occurred at all if societies were 'closed' (Green 2008). Likewise, Shizha (2010) establishes that for quite a long time, IK has been resilient and dynamic in responding to change and the pressures of modernity.

Despite such conflicting perspectives, in recent years, Indigenous and Western knowledge have been recognised by many scholars in academic circles not as fundamentally different, but as complementary and compatible forms of knowledge that can coexist in productive ways (Briggs 2005; Maweu 2011; Mawere 2013). This implies that although the two bodies of knowledge are premised on different worldviews, both have strengths and weaknesses as well as some basic similarities that can be tapped to enrich each other (Green 2008). For that reason, 'intercultural education' has been proposed as an alternative educational model useful for dissolving a dichotomy between Indigenous and Western knowledge so that the two bodies of knowledge systems can work together in a productive way (Aikman 1997; Portera 2008). A productive two-way dialogue is useful in creating new and shared knowledge at the interface between Indigenous and Western knowledge (Schroder 2006). In that way, intercultural education entails an education system that seeks to foster a constructive dialogue and mutual exchange between diverse bodies of knowledge systems while perceiving them as equal in value and status (Portera 2008).

However, besides its successes in revitalising indigenous cultures, addressing educational inequalities, and improving relations between indigenous and dominant societies (Aikman 1997; Gundara and Portera 2008), intercultural education has been marred by several practical challenges, including unequal relationship between cultures, imbalanced curriculum, and pedagogical incongruities (Layne, Trémion, and Dervin 2015). Equally, in various countries where intercultural education has been practised, the programme has faced difficulties in reconciling the aims and goals of indigenous education with those of the national education system (Aikman 1995, 1997). Most importantly, previous studies show that there have been deeply entrenched tensions between the aspirations, goals, and practices of indigenous education and those of mainstream Western education (Arenas, Reyes, and Wyman 2007). Despite this, there is limited research on how such tensions manifest themselves in the actual school settings. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate how the tensions between IK and Western knowledge manifest themselves against the Maasai's efforts to provide counterhegemonic education at Noonkodin School in Eluwai, Monduli, Tanzania.

Theoretical framework of the study

This research is underpinned by postcolonial theory that examines critically how Western theories have dealt with alternative voices and different ways of knowing (Said 1978; Mapara 2009). The theory, for instance, asserts that there exist multiple forms of knowledge with different ways of knowing (Briggs 2005; Shizha 2013) emanating from multiple sites and sources (Semali 1999; Dei 2000). As such, postcolonial theory was useful for this study since it rejects the hegemony and universalism of Western knowledge and calls for the deconstruction of knowledge universalism (Bhabha 1995; Shizha 2006). This study also employs postcolonial theory to accord agency to the Maasai by presenting them as subjects of history and not as subaltern subjects who cannot speak (Spivak 1995). Through the postcolonial lens, this study has analysed both colonial and post-colonial educational processes that continue reproducing hegemonic ways of knowing at the expense of IK in Tanzania's school system.

Methods and materials

Research design

This study employed an ethnographic research design, which informed all research procedures and methods for data collection as well as data analysis techniques. The choice of ethnography as a research design for this study was dictated by the need to explore the participants in the field using methods of data collection that capture their social meanings and ordinary activities in their natural settings (Brewer 2000; Delamont 2002). As such, ethnography is useful not only for allowing multiple understandings of reality and alternative interpretations of data but also for understanding the worldviews and ways of life of actual people in their everyday lived experiences (Crang and Cook 2007; Fetterman 2010). By the same token, through using multiple methods of data, ethnography offers a qualitative research approach with the potential to yield detailed accounts of different social phenomena (Reeves et al. 2013).

I used various methods to generate data for this research, including carrying out non-participant and classroom observations in the school where I interacted overtly with teachers and students in classes so as to penetrate their inner school life and lived experiences in their natural setting (Woods 2005). This method allowed me to capture systematically participants' social meanings, ordinary activities, and realities of intercultural education as exhibited by both teachers and students at Noonkodin but without externally imposing meanings to them (Brewer 2000; Delamont 2002). Lastly, I conducted interviews with the Head and Deputy Head of School, focus groups with 11 teachers, and 20 male and female Maasai students, alongside holding informal conversations with all participants at Noonkodin. While the Head, Deputy School Head, and teachers were involved in the study because they are key actors with desirable working and teaching experience in Maasailand,[2] the Maasai students were involved because they are key actors of both traditional and formal education in their community.

Study site and sampling procedures

This study was conducted in Eluwai, which is one of the most isolated areas in Monduli District. The area, for example, has no transport networks like roads for connecting it with other parts of the district. Eluwai was purposely chosen as a fieldwork site for this study because of the presence of Noonkodin School that has allegedly been reported to be one of the few schools in Tanzania that offers 'Indigenous Knowledge' as a unique intercultural education model (Burford et al. 2012). Also, given the nature and focus of this study, the remoteness of Eluwai from urban centres made it an ideal place for my research as it enabled me to explore IK practices in their natural settings.

Various sampling strategies were used to select participants for this study. First, a *criterion purposive sampling*, which involves searching for cases that meet a certain criterion (Patton 1990; Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle 2010) was used to select the Head and Deputy Head of School, as well as school teachers who were subjected to interviews and focus groups respectively. This sampling strategy allowed me to select the participants whom I believed were well knowledgeable about specific issues related to intercultural education programme at Noonkodin School. Second, to increase the credibility of the results, I employed a *purposeful simple random sampling* to pick up some participants from a large population of students in the school (Patton 1990; Creswell 2012). This sampling strategy is consistent with Ary et al.'s (2010) argument that the purposeful random sampling is used when the potential purposeful sample is too large as it was the case for the Maasai students at Noonkodin that took part in this study.

Data analysis

Data analysis in ethnographic research is a continuous process rather than a sequence of discrete stages, and it can be done simultaneously with data collection (Brewer 2000; Woods 2005; Fetterman 2010). Although a thematic analysis approach was employed to analyse field data for this research, the analysis itself relied largely upon my experience as a researcher as well as the nature of ethnographic data that were generated in the field. Likewise, while data analysis in this study did not follow fixed canons and rigid processes, the analysis of ethnographic data for this research was guided by certain steps, rules, and procedures, which according to Miles, Michael Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), help to establish shared ground rules for reporting the findings, drawing conclusions, and verifying their sturdiness and rigour. Therefore, in this study, managing and analysing fieldwork data involved various stages as follows:

The first stage involved transcribing verbatim all tape-recorded data from ethnographic interviews and focus groups with the participants in the field. After that, I translated all transcribed data verbatim from Kiswahili to English since most data were recorded in Kiswahili. The second stage involved using Word 2016 and Evernote software to store, arrange, and organise the vast body of ethnographic data into manageable units ready for analysis. The third stage involved what Ary et al. (2010) call 'immersing in the data' by reading and re-reading the transcribed and translated texts as well as handwritten observational notes from diaries and journals so that I could become more familiar with and obtain a general sense of raw data from the fieldwork.

The process of data immersion went hand in hand with highlighting the texts that contained some key themes as well as writing notes, memos, and summaries.

The fourth stage involved coding field data to retrieve meaningful materials and analysable chunks of data. Given that no computer program can analyse data for a researcher (Creswell 2012), I applied both hand-coding and the NVivo 11 software to develop codes based on the underlying concepts, main ideas in the research questions, and other themes identified when reading through the data. While coding, I searched for patterns of ideas repeated in various situations and with various participants, by comparing and contrasting them to create categories and identify major themes from the data (Crang and Cook 2007). In the fifth stage, I conducted what Fife (2005) calls 'the analysis of analysis', by putting together already analysed bits of information to create sub-themes which were used alongside major themes in the research report. Finally, when reporting the findings, not only did I build directly out of the analysed research materials, but I also offered personal reflections and new insights as revealed from field data and in the light of the available literature and past studies.

Ethical issues

Besides securing research approvals from the University of Sussex in the UK (where I was a doctoral student) and the University of Dar es Salaam (a local institution mandated to offer clearances for researchers on behalf of the Tanzanian government), I also obtained research permits from respective local government authorities in Monduli District. Moreover, I obtained permission from the Head of School to carry out classroom observations and hold interviews and focus groups at Noonkodin. Equally, I sought informed consent from teachers and students so that they could volunteer to take part in informal conversations and focus groups. Lastly, necessary procedures were taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, including anonymising their names during the interviews and focus groups as well as data analysis. Since the research participants did not raise any ethical concerns in relation to privacy and confidentiality, information about the place and the school as well as visual images has not entirely been anonymised per se.

Results

The results are organised into two major parts. The first part provides background information about the Maasai and intercultural education programme at Noonkodin. The second part explores the tensions and contradictions existing between Indigenous and Western education as manifested in the intercultural education model at the school.

Background information to the Maasai people and intercultural education at Noonkodin School

The first part provides contextual information that lays down a basic foundation for the discussion that is to follow in the second part of this article.

Maasai people, their culture, and traditional education

The Maasai [*ɨlMáásâî*] are a Nilotic ethnic group of semi-nomadic people whose population straddles the border between Tanzania and Kenya (Goldman and Riosmena 2013). They speak a *Maa* [*ɔlMaa*] language that is closely linked to the Nilotic languages spoken by the Kalenjin, Turkana, and Luo of Kenya, as well as the Dinka, Shilluk, and Nuer of Sudan (Kipuri 1983; Ehret 2011). Moreover, the Maasai culture, which is largely patriarchal, is symbolised by cattle, meaning that their pastoral economy is centred primarily on livestock keeping (Ndagala 1982). As such, besides acting as a source of staple food (meat, milk, and blood), cattle also give meaning to being 'Maasai' as pastoralists and people of cattle (Kipuri 1983). Most importantly, the philosophy of education among the Maasai is centred around an understanding of a *cow*. In that way, the types of knowledge and skills offered to both Maasai boys and girls revolve around cattle economy, which inform their philosophy of education.

In addition to cattle economy, the Maasai culture is also imbued with various traditions such as birth, circumcision, and marriage rituals, as well as the age-set system, warriorhood, polygamy, colourful dressing style, and traditional music and dances. These cultural practices are passed on from one generation to another through the medium of indigenous education. As such, traditional Maasai education which is based on age and sex renders boys to receive instructions that markedly differ from but are complementary to that of girls because of their differing social obligations in the community. Through herding in the bush, for instance, boys develop various abilities and skills related to animal husbandry, livestock management, animal health and diseases, unrelenting care of cattle, and ecology (Ndagala 1982). By contrast, traditional education for girls is centred on domestic management, involving mainly an extensive training on various domestic tasks such as cleaning household dishes, fetching water, collecting firewood, milking cattle, and taking care of young animals around the home environment (Bonini 2006). Generally, traditional education among the Maasai pastoralists aims not only at instilling in Maasai children a sense of respect for cultural values and traditions but also ensuring a survival of the pastoral economy.

Background to intercultural education model at Noonkodin School

The creation of Noonkodin School (See Figure 1 below) goes back to 1999 when the married couple, Emma Burford (a British) and Lesikar Ole Ngila (a Maasai) founded an Aang Serian NGO. Registered as a non-profit cultural association by Tanzania's National Arts Council [TNAC], the Aang Serian NGO opened a community college in 1999. This college began with 40 part-time adult students who were housed in a small rented office in Arusha city, Tanzania (Burford and Ngila 2006). The college provided post-primary education for the aim of protecting and promoting IK. In line with the stipulated goals, the founders developed a course in IK and Globalisation in 2001, focusing on four areas: Culture, History, Environment, and Health. The college also offered conventional subjects such as English, Kiswahili, Basic Literacy, Computer, and Media Studies.

In 2002, the Maasai leaders in Eluwai donated a plot of land where the Aang Serian NGO founders planned to open a rural 'community college', which was expected to offer IK curriculum alongside vocational subjects such as Ethnobotany, Sustainable Agriculture, Bee-keeping, and Livestock Management (Burford and Ngila 2006). Nevertheless, through intensive consultations with the Maasai elders in Eluwai



Figure 1. Some buildings of Noonkodin Secondary School in Eluwai, Monduli.

(Monduli), the Aang Serian founders opened a 'secondary school' instead of a community college as envisioned before. The founders realised that a rural secondary school focusing on IK approach, and offering a structured co-curricular programme alongside the national curriculum, would be the best option for them rather than a community college in the town (Burford and Ngila 2006).

Description of intercultural education programme

Situated in the remote area of Eluwai in Monduli, Noonkodin School officially opened in 2005 with 36 students. Later, it expanded its infrastructure and currently, there are four classrooms, two dormitories, a laboratory, a kitchen, two staff houses, a computer room, and a library. Today, the school has a total of 239 students, with 99 boys and 139 girls (See Table 1), alongside fifteen teachers (11 males and 4 females). Regarding the curriculum, Noonkodin began in 2005 by implementing a 'co-curricular programme', which later developed into an 'intercultural education programme' (Burford and Ngila 2006). This intercultural education model covers four main courses: a) Foundation module; b) Environment and society; c) Culture domain analysis; d) integrated health care; e) Ethnobiology research methods. As such, the approach allowed the school to teach Tanzania's secondary level curriculum, alongside IK course (Burford et al. 2012) (Table 1).

Regarding the teaching methodology, Noonkodin adopted a 'Unity in Diversity Approach' (UDA), an intercultural education model that uses an 'interactive study circle'

Table 1. Students' enrolment at Noonkodin secondary school by 2015.

Form	Boys	Girls	Total
I	16	34	50
II	38	39	77
III	31	38	69
IV	14	29	43
Grand Total	**99**	**140**	**239**

teaching method through collective learning and mutual respect across diverse cultures. This new approach aimed not to train youth for the white-collar jobs in urban areas, but to assist them to find new ways to make village life more sustainable and self-fulfiling (Pilgrim, Samson, and Pretty 2010). Generally, the intercultural education model at Noonkodin School involves a structured but non-examined co-curricular programme in which students, among others, learn their history, ethnobotany, oral literature, and cultures of their respective ethnic groups (Burford et al. 2012).

Tensions and contradictions emerging from 'intercultural education model' at Noonkodin School

This second part of the paper explores various tensions and contradictions facing Noonkodin School as it strives to offer IK course alongside the national secondary curriculum. Some of the central themes that emerged in this study are discussed below:

Intercultural education model at Noonkodin as a practice of contested discourses

The results of this study have shown that the innovation of the IK curriculum at Noonkodin runs through a complex interplay of contested discourses, involving privatisation, communitisation, indigenisation, and externalisation (see Figure 2 below).

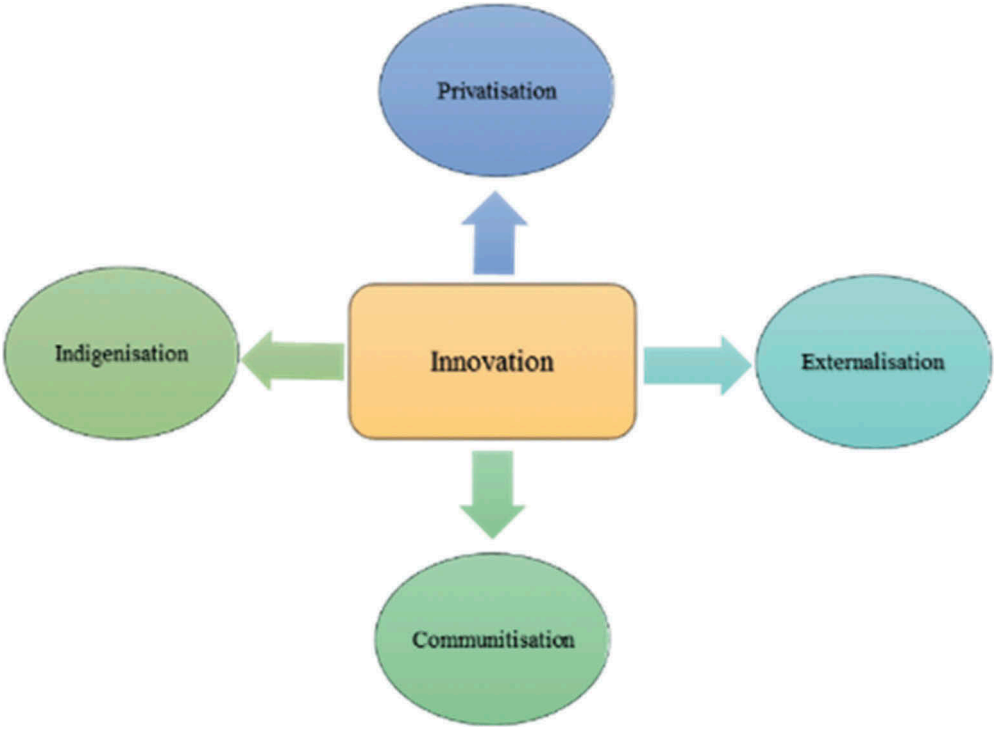


Figure 2. An illustration of contested discourses for intercultural education programme at Noonkodin School in Eluwai, Monduli.

I began my fieldwork at Noonkodin School after introducing myself as a researcher and handing over a clearance letter from the Education Department in Monduli District to the Head of School. It was from this outset that stories about IK started to unfold as we held some informal talks about my research project. As we continued with our conversations, I told the Head of School that I was interested in exploring IK and formal education practices among the Maasai. I picked this school since I had heard that it offers IK course as a 'special programme' alongside the national curriculum. Grinning, the Head of School swiftly replies:

> If you are interested in IK, here you are. You will learn a great deal of stuff about traditional knowledge. We introduced the IK course because Noonkodin is a 'community school', specifically designed to serve the Maasai. Thus, our school is proud of being the only school in Monduli District and Tanzania in general that offers the IK curriculum (A personal interview with the Head of School, Noonkodin, Eluwai, 12/01/2015).

Although I had offered a sympathetic ear to listen to the Head of School, I was confused by his labelling of Noonkodin as a community school. I wondered how a private school could become a community school in the same sense I understood and perhaps imagined it. When I asked how it was that Noonkodin was a community school while in my understanding it was a private one, the Head of School had this to say:

> It is true that Noonkodin is a 'private school' as you have said, but in reality it operates quite differently from other private schools in the country. This school, for example, charges very low tuition fees than other private schools so as to attract the Maasai parents and enable their children to access formal education without any financial constraints. Thus, Noonkodin is a 'community school' because it was built to serve the Maasai community that is still lagging behind in formal education (A personal interview with the Head of School, Noonkodin, 12/01/2015).

Amid our conversations, I was attracted by the phrase 'community school', or perhaps rewording it as 'communitised school' fits better. From this new wording, we can see a shift from a private school to the community school or putting it more simply, a dramatic move from 'privatisation' to 'communitisation'. I like the latter wording since in my own understanding it signifies a process, rather than a product. I believe the Head of School used a phrase 'community school' in the same sense of integrating the school with the community, thereby making it of, by, and, for the community. In essence, this means Noonkodin is a school that offers a 'communitive' education, which stands for a type of education that is fundamentally counterhegemonic or merely not colonial.

Accordingly, when asked further why they decided to introduce the intercultural education programme at Noonkodin School, the Head of School remarked that:

> We are trying to 'indigenise' the school curriculum and make it more relevant to the local environment and Maasai culture. Also, this school is partially pushed by UK donors who prefer the inclusion of the IK course in the school curriculum so that the Maasai community does not lose their traditional knowledge (A personal interview with the Head of School, Noonkodin, 12/01/2015).

I find a resemblance of double processes between 'indigenisation' and 'externalisation' here derived from the School Head's use of the verb 'indigenise'. Though in my understanding I would perhaps prefer the term 'localisation' to 'indigenisation' since the former implies more about the process of 'adaptation' than the latter. In this spirit,

I would argue that although the school management and its donors from the West have attempted in different ways to make a school curriculum more culturally relevant to the Maasai, making it indigenous has been difficult because of Noonkodin's location within a modern Tanzanian state imbued with capitalist values that run counter to its goals.

More importantly, from the School Head's last excerpt, we can also see the echoes of 'externalisation' taking shape in the inception of IK curriculum at Noonkodin School. I have coined the term 'externalisation' to signify a process of making something (like an idea) external. This metaphor holds water particularly because both the idea and funding of an intercultural education programme at Noonkodin originated from external sources. This is evident in the way Serian UK, a British NGO that sponsors the school introduced the IK course, prepared the syllabus document, and provided funds for the project. Nevertheless, besides limiting the Maasai agency in educational innovation, the externalisation of IK project at Noonkodin School has made it more susceptible to several practical challenges in its implementation.

Correspondingly, due to its new focus on academic performance, the school has currently started experiencing an influx of many non-Maasai students from other parts of the country such as Kilimanjaro and Arusha regions. Such influx has rendered the existing infrastructure inadequate to accommodate the biggest number of students wanting to use the school as a gateway to post-secondary education. Today, Noonkodin which began in 2005 as a private, but a low-cost community school offering low tuition fees to low-income Maasai students has now started transforming rapidly into a high-cost private school. The Deputy Head of School deserves quoting here:

> Due to a rapid growth in the number of students at Noonkodin School, the existing classrooms and students' housings are inadequate. Given this situation, next year (i.e. 2016), we must increase tuition fees to get funds for constructing additional classrooms and dormitories for students (A personal interview with the Deputy Head, Noonkodin, Eluwai, 19/01/2015).

Though Noonkodin's management has decided to raise tuition fees to expand the school's infrastructure as a response to a growing number of students from other parts of the country as shown above, it is unfortunate that this decision comes at the expense of the low-income Maasai families and IK course itself. The tuition fee at Noonkodin, which has risen steadily from 40 USD in 2006 to 380 USD in 2016, for example, apart from acting as a financial constraint, also holds little attraction for the Maasai parents who might be reluctant to send their children to high-cost secondary schools. The school's counter-shift from a low-cost to high-cost school, therefore, undercuts the very essence of its own making since Noonkodin will no longer cater to the needs and interests of the poor Maasai nor give room for the survival of a unique IK curriculum.

Teaching of IK curriculum at Noonkodin School as a process encumbered by difficulties

After reporting officially for the second round of fieldwork at Noonkodin, I attended several classes as a non-participant observer from Form One up to Form Four, but I found myself finishing an entire week without experiencing IK classes. After realising that there have been no IK lessons held, I asked the school management about the IK

classes and told them that, apart from taking part in other mainstream subjects, I wished to attend IK classes as well. As a response, the Deputy Head of School noted that IK was a crucial course when the school began in 2005, but in later years,

> The school started experiencing some difficulties in handling it. This is mainly because, at present, the school has no permanent teachers who can teach the subject since we usually hire part-time teachers. Thus, the school has only one teacher who teaches both IK course and Agriculture to Forms One and Three students (A personal interview with the Deputy Head, Noonkodin, 19/01/2015).

The Deputy Head's remark was also supported by the Maasai students who reported in the group discussion that:

> When we started Form One in 2013 we used to be taught the IK course, which was so interesting and most students liked it. But when we entered Form Two, they stopped teaching us the IK course because of lacking permanent teachers who can stay here like others. Since we have not seen the IK course teacher yet, we are not sure whether Form One students will be taught the course this year [i.e. 2015] (A group discussion with Maasai girls, Group A, Noonkodin, Eluwai, 21/03/2015).

Although the participants did not provide a reason for the lack of full-time teachers at Noonkodin, a possible explanation for this lies in the complexities surrounding the teaching of the IK course within the hegemonic backdrop of Western education structures, which are not readily equipped to accommodate traditional teachers in the formal school system. As a consequence, while the school's founders envisaged to recruit teachers for the IK course from among the Maasai elders and parents as a way of involving them in intercultural education programme (Burford and Ngila 2006), this dream could not be met by the school management's because of the dominance of Western education structures that dictate what is taught in the school, by who, and how.

Likewise, although the IK course was not taught frequently like other mainstream subjects, yet, fieldwork data indicated that various international researchers from the West visit the school regularly to carry out ethnobotanical research where they interact with students in practical sessions. The students, for instance, reported:

> Two special part-time tutors visit Noonkodin School when researchers from Europe and America come to conduct their investigation here. During this time, we usually carry out practical sessions and receive special instructions about the identification and uses of medicinal plants from traditional Maasai experts (A focus group discussion with Maasai boys, Group A, Noonkodin, Eluwai, 21/03/2015).

As such, although the founders of the school envisaged to include IK as a part of the school curriculum and designed a special building (See Figure 3 below) for offering the course, fieldwork data revealed that there was any structured teaching of the programme as happens in other conventional subjects. By contrast, IK classes at Noonkodin tended to be held whenever researchers from the West visit the school to carry out their research projects, and once the projects are finished, such instructors depart too. This was made possible mainly because Noonkodin is funded by Western donors that were attempting their best to link the researchers from the West to the school.

Moreover, my classroom observations at Noonkodin revealed that teachers' instructions in classes do not consider IK resources from local surroundings. While at the school, for instance, I attended the Biology lesson on Growth in Flowering Plants as



Figure 3. A building resembling a traditional Maasai house at Noonkodin School was intended to be used for offering IK classes.

a subtopic. Given the plentiful flowering plants outside the school, I expected the Maasai students to learn more practically by identifying the flowering plants outside the classroom as part of the syllabus. But this hope could not be met as teachers upheld that:

> We fail to engage our students with practical activities in their local environment because of limited time we have. Also, doing several practical activities other than the laboratory experiments would undercut our ability to complete the school syllabuses on time (A focus group discussion with teachers, Group A, Noonkodin, Eluwai, 04/02/2015).

As teachers' remarks above show, although Noonkodin School has attempted to offer IK course alongside Tanzania's national curriculum, there is still no enabling environment or structures, and infrastructural facilities currently available to support a successful running of the course against the hegemonic backdrop of Western education structures. Also, teachers' remarks above mirror the observations from previous studies, which revealed that the failure to localise their teaching and capture the realities of lives in the local areas is hampered not only by teachers' lack of capacity and the inflexibility of the centralised curriculum to do this, but also the dominance of the discourse promoting a Western-style education (Phillips and Bhavnagri 2002; Aikman 2011).

IK course as a programme featuring by conflicting, contradictory, and ambivalent goals

Although the owners of Noonkodin School introduced the IK course to make formal education more relevant to the Maasai culture, the school's focus remains inclined towards academic achievements as opposed to the actual goals of the programme. This was evident in my talks with the Deputy Head of School as shown below:

> *Researcher*: Why does the school not offer IK classes to Forms Two and Four students?

> *Deputy*: Forms Two and Four students do not take the IK course because they have Mock and National Exams. As you know, the IK course is a supplementary subject. That is why we teach it to Forms One and Three students that have no any pressures on external examinations (A personal conversations with the Deputy Head of School, Noonkodin, 19/01/2015).

As the quote above shows, the IK course at Noonkodin is viewed by the management as an optional course taught only to Forms One and Three students, while Forms Two and Four students are left to take the subjects contained in the centralised national curriculum. This was also evident in my group discussion with students who noted that:

> At this school, we have a course called Indigenous Knowledge. But as Form Four students, we are not taught it because we must study the subjects contained in the national curriculum so that we prepare ourselves for National Examinations (A focus group discussion with Maasai boys, Group B, Noonkodin, 23/01/2015).

> Indigenous Knowledge is an optional course at this school. That is why it is usually taught to other classes especially Forms One and Three students who do not sit for the National Exams. So, we have the IK programme at this school but only Forms One and Three students take the course (A focus group discussion with Maasai girls, Group A, Noonkodin, 28/01/2015).

As the extracts above show, the IK course at Noonkodin remains an optional subject, which is not given much emphasis as a special programme by both the school management and teachers. Some teachers, for example, even questioned its availability and importance in their school and stressed that their focus was on preparing the Maasai students for their final national examinations. According to school teachers,

> The IK course is nice but teaching it has been difficult for us because the programme is neither recognised in the curriculum nor examined when students sit for their final secondary education examination. Therefore, we are obliged to prepare our students for both internal and external examinations rather than teaching the course, which is not included in the national curriculum (A focus group discussion with teachers, Group B, Noonkodin, Eluwai, 06/02/2015).

However, the problem of non-recognition of the IK course as identified by participants above may be attributed to the school's management failure to take further steps to ensure that the course is accredited for secondary level curriculum by the National Examination Council of Tanzania [NECTA]. This could allow the IK course to be recognised in the national curriculum and be examined alongside other subjects during the final examinations. Given the continued non-recognition of the IK course in Tanzania's secondary level curriculum, therefore, the school's attention has now shifted towards students' academic performance in the mainstream examinations as opposed to teaching the IK course as envisaged by the founders of the school.

Balancing between traditional and modern life in school as difficult and problematic

While carrying out fieldwork at Noonkodin, I observed a cultural mismatch between traditional and modern ways of life in the school, which was evidenced by the way both the staff and students managed their lives between home/community life and Western school life in a problematic way. One aspect of this cultural mismatch manifested itself in

the wearing of uniforms for students and modern clothes for staff as opposed to traditional clothes that they are used to wearing in their community. However, while school uniforms can be considered by some as an attempt to change the traditional Maasai culture, students at Noonkodin School exhibited both positive and negative responses towards the outfit, albeit based on their gender and sex distinctions. In their opinions, for instance, the Maasai girls noted:

> A school uniform is not a bad thing, but a positive thing that helps to eliminate individual differences among the students. By wearing uniform outfits, all students are considered as equals. So, we have no problems with the school uniforms (A focus group discussion with schoolgirls, Group B, Noonkodin, 30/01/2015).

By contrast, Maasai boys were of the view that formal education has affected the dressing style of the Maasai community negatively, thereby making some girls wear some outfits that are unacceptable to their culture. According to the Maasai boys,

> Nowadays, some Maasai school girls wear trousers, and others wear miniskirts and tight clothes. They have imitated these different styles of dressing after getting used to wearing uniforms and modern clothes in formal schools. This is contrary to our culture that requires women and girls to wear clothes that cover all parts of their bodies. We believe this change is detrimental to our culture as it makes school girls wear disrespectful clothes (A focus group discussion with Maasai boys, Group A, Noonkodin, Eluwai, 21/01/2015).

As shown in the quotes above, while the Maasai girls support the wearing of school uniforms, boys consider wearing them as detrimental to their traditional culture. The differing perspectives between boys and girls on the wearing of school uniforms suggest that the former are trying to conform to patriarchal values, which seek to exploit modern wearing styles to the exclusion of girls, whereas the latter are willing to challenge and break away from patriarchal cultural norms related to the traditional wearing styles.

Importantly, it was revealed that the school staff and students at Noonkodin were attempting in diverse ways to negotiate their dual identities as they encounter both the modern and traditional spaces in the school and at home respectively. While at Noonkodin, for example, I observed how some native Maasai staff were struggling to negotiate their cultural values by putting on traditional attire when they are at home, and at the same time, adopting a Western style of life, including wearing modern clothes when they are in the school surroundings.

As such, during my fieldwork, it was a common thing to see native Maasai staff wearing modern clothes throughout the day when they are in the school compounds, but once they return home, they used to switch their attire to traditional ones. When I asked some Maasai teachers why they had a tendency of switching their dressing style between modern and traditional ones, instead of choosing only one style, they replied:

> As you know, the government does not allow wearing traditional clothes in schools. That is why they introduced school uniforms for students and modern clothes for staff. But as the Maasai, we prefer our traditional attire since it allows us to preserve our culture. So, we feel that it is not good to wear traditional attire at school, but when we return home, we are not obliged to observe such educational policy (A focus group with teachers, Group C, Noonkodin, Eluwai, 11/02/2015).

> When we are at school, we conform to the dominant culture by wearing modern clothes as required by the government. But when we are at home, we feel more comfortable to wear

> traditional attire as required by our culture and the community. If you accustom to wear modern clothing, the community cannot understand you. People would say formal education has spoilt you (A focus group with Maasai teachers, Group A, Noonkodin School, Eluwai, 04/02/2015).

Contrary to the staff who regularly used to switch between modern and traditional clothes depending on whether they are at school or home, to the students, it was not possible because many were boarders spending most of their time in a Western-modelled school. Although the Maasai students informed me during our informal conversations that they were free to put on their traditional clothes at weekends, throughout my stay at Noonkodin School, I hardly saw this happening. Despite this, the Maasai students interviewed were of the view that:

> Traditional clothes are an essential part of our culture. When we are at school, we stop wearing them because the government does not allow that. However, when we get back home during the term holidays, we usually wear our traditional attire. Even after finishing school, this tendency will not change since traditional attire constitutes a crucial component of the Maasai culture and identity (A focus group with Maasai boys, Group B, Noonkodin School, Eluwai, 23/01/2015).

As various excerpts above show, balancing between traditional and modern life in the school setting is challenging for both staff and students. While in the school compounds, for instance, 'modern' identity requires staff and students to put on Western-style clothes and uniforms respectively, but when they are back in their home compounds, the 'traditional' identity requires them to wear the traditional attire. This implies that both staff and students at Noonkodin School are trying in various ways to negotiate their dual identity in efforts to live and survive in two worlds, the traditional and the modern one, albeit in problematic ways.

Discussion

The findings showed that the innovation of the IK curriculum at Noonkodin runs through a complex interplay of contested discourses, involving privatisation, communitisation, indigenisation, and externalisation. In the process of these contested discourses, we have witnessed how the so-called 'intercultural education' at Noonkodin has been caught in a complex web of ambivalent goals, which have put the school in a catch-22 situation, first by the passion for offering an alternative co-curriculum responsive to Maasai culture, but second, by the zeal for the academic achievements of their students in an attempt to fulfil the prospects of the national curriculum. Bhabha conceptualises this kind of ambivalent relationship as a complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relationship between coloniser and colonised (Bhabha 1994). We have also witnessed how Noonkodin, which is a private school underwent a *communitisation* process as it initially refrained itself from being a high-fee private to being a low-fee community school, which allowed it to introduce a unique IK course that aimed to offer counterhegemonic education for the Maasai students. In that regard, I have introduced a concept of a 'communitisation' both as a means of providing agency to the community at the grassroots level and also as a way of reinforcing a productive dialogue between the Maasai and other key players like teachers and policymakers in

education. Equally, I have used the metaphor of 'privatisation' in an attempt to explain Noonkodin's counter-shift from the low-cost (communitised school) to the high-cost (privatised) school, a process that seems to have undermined poor Maasai families, the survival of IK course, and the very essence of its own creation.

Besides privatisation and communitisation discourses, the results also highlighted the provision of IK course at Noonkodin School as operating around the discourses of 'indigenisation' and 'externalisation'. While indigenisation entails a process of making something indigenous, externalisation implies the process of making something external. The research findings, for instance, have shown how the two processes of indigenisation and externalisation manifested themselves at Noonkodin as the school attempts to indigenise its curriculum, but through deriving both the idea of intercultural education and the funding of the IK course from foreign donors. Consequently, this externalisation process has made the IK project at Noonkodin School prone to severe practical challenges during its implementation mainly because of lacking the grassroots support from the Maasai community, which was not actively involved in the project. Therefore, the innovation of the IK course through externalisation and indigenisation discourses at Noonkodin School, as Bainton (2007) argues, is merely a reconfiguration of Western education under a different guise.

However, externalisation and indigenisation discourses are subjected to some criticisms, which were also evident during the implementation of intercultural education at Noonkodin School. Some postcolonial scholars, for example, argue that the educational assistance projects mounted by international NGOs as it happened at Noonkodin are hegemonic ventures for engineering consent in periphery nations in a variety of exploitative relationships (Clayton 1998). Also, a postcolonial critique of *indigenisation* discourse shows that a magical return to uncontaminated indigenous is impossible since all colonising and colonised cultures are always in a state of change and some form of cultural interaction (Semali and Kincheloe 1999). In reiterating the above claim, Bainton (2007) argues that indigenisation suggests an impossibility towards an illusion since something, which is indigenous can neither be indigenised nor made to be so. Equally, the indigenisation agenda taken on board by Noonkodin School has been critiqued on the grounds that the agent cannot harken back to pre-colonial discourse in search of an authentic identity for lost origins since the subaltern agency is a form of negotiation (Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1995).

In efforts to avoid the limitations of indigenisation discourse, Bhabha (1994) has focused upon 'hybridity' with its potential for promoting a constructive dialogue between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Alongside eliminating an illusory dichotomy of tradition versus modernity (Marglin 1995), hybridity in postcolonial scholarship is credited with transcending essentialism on the understanding that cultural interaction is historically unavoidable (Semali and Kincheloe 1999). Yet, the problem with hybridity is that it is being asserted in a context where the *force majeur* of the global discourses favours the non-indigenous. According to Marglin (1995), hybridity has an unfortunate resonance with the term 'hybrid variety' that renders the agency of indigenous people overlooked and invisible. This problem is exactly what we saw in the provision of the so-called 'intercultural education' through the IK course at Noonkodin School. This implies that the call to indigenisation and hybridity as forms of agency in the colonial discourse have to overcome many hurdles that continue to hinder the provision of counterhegemonic education in indigenous and pastoralist communities.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the provision of IK course through the so-called intercultural education at Noonkodin School is beleaguered not only by a hegemonic relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, but also a strong cultural mismatch, contradiction, and ambivalence in their strictest sense. The hegemonic discourse of Western education and ambivalent goals, for instance, have made Noonkodin a key site where the Maasai students suffer in a Western-modelled school with no possibility of engagement with their IK since the agendas and values propagated by Western education in the school have been prioritised over those of the IK course. Consequently, Noonkodin has achieved little in terms of providing counterhegemonic education as IK course was not taking place as envisioned, while at the same time, the school has embedded western education, under the contested discourses of privatisation, communitisation, indigenisation, and externalisation. The findings suggest that the success of intercultural education programme will largely depend on the extent to which Noonkodin School will overcome not only the hegemonic backdrop of Western education structures that shape what happens in the school and how, but also the structural limitations of being located within the modern Tanzanian state replete with capitalist values that run counter to its stated goals.

Notes

1. IK is a widely used acronym in the literature that stands for 'Indigenous Knowledge'. In this article, the term IK refers to the knowledge of, by, and for the indigenous people embedded in their unique cultures, histories, ontologies, epistemologies, and worldviews.
2. The term 'Maasailand' refers to a predominantly semi-arid savannah landscape that stretches 150,000 km^2 from northern Tanzania into southern Kenya, where the rural population is dominated by Maa-speaking people (Goldman and Riosmena 2013). Historically, the area was divided into various territorial sections known as *iloshón* [sing: *oloshô*] in *Maa* language.

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