

# Exploring the Potential of Sankofa in Promoting Critical Thinking and Agency in Education Among Afro-descendant Youth

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## Abstract

Education plays a vital role in shaping individuals' perspectives, aspirations, and agency, particularly in postcolonial societies. This paper investigates the potential of Sankofa in promoting critical thinking and agency among Afro-descendant youth, examining their impact on educational practices and student empowerment. It provides an overview of bequeathed colonial education systems and their aims, and it explores the principles and theoretical foundations of Sankofa pedagogies such as postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy, and indigenous knowledge systems.

The paper examines how Sankofa can foster critical thinking through centering African epistemologies, deconstructing Eurocentric knowledge systems, empowering students to challenge dominant narratives, and cultivating an environment of dialogue, reflexivity, and intellectual curiosity. The paper presents case studies that illustrate, for instance, the successful implementation of decolonial pedagogies – a derivative of Sankofa – in higher education settings in Ghana and South Africa, highlighting some best practices and lessons learned.

Furthermore, the paper emphasizes the transformative potential of Sankofa in not only challenging colonial legacies but in fostering critical thinking and promoting agency among Afro-descendant youth. By addressing challenges and embracing opportunities, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can work together to create inclusive and empowering education systems in postcolonial societies.

**Keywords:** Sankofa, education, decolonial pedagogies, Indigenous Knowledge Systems

## Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' perspectives, aspirations, and agency. This is more so in postcolonial societies. In the context of Africa, where colonial legacies especially persist, the concept of decolonial pedagogy has emerged as a potential avenue for challenging hegemonic Eurocentric narratives and an opportunity for fostering critical thinking among Afro-descendant youth. Decoloniality is, however, only one of the many derivatives of Sankofa (Tedla, 1995). This paper aims to explore the potential of Sankofa in its essence in promoting critical thinking and agency among Afro-descendant youth, examining their impact on educational practices and student empowerment.

## Historical Context: Education in Africa

Before the onset of European contact, Africa was home to a plethora of thriving civilizations, each with its own unique contributions to human progress. Among these civilizations, the advancements in education stood as pillars of intellectual and cultural flourishing (Bob-Milliar, 2021).

Education was deeply ingrained in the fabric of society, playing a fundamental role in the transmission of knowledge, values, and skills from one generation to the next. While formal institutions such as schools and universities existed in some regions, education was not confined to these structured settings. Instead, learning permeated every aspect of daily life, from communal gatherings to apprenticeships under skilled craftsmen (Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003).

During the period spanning approximately 3000–1500 BCE in Kemet (ancient Egypt), diverse educational systems emerged to cater to varying segments of the youth population, with distinct oversight structures involving governmental authorities and religious figures, notably scribes and priest trainees. This educational landscape is corroborated by works such as *The System of Education in Kemet (Ancient Egypt): An Overview* by Kimani Nehusi (2010), which addresses education in Kemet as a structured system associated with social organization and institutional contexts. Additionally, the significance of priestly education during this epoch finds support in studies like *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt* by Emily Teeter (2011), shedding light on the pivotal role of priests in transmitting knowledge and spiritual practices within the Kemetic civilization. Such academic insights underscore the complexity and stratification inherent in Kemetic educational systems, underscoring the multifaceted nature of educational provision during this era.

One of the most remarkable features of ancient African education was its holistic nature, encompassing not only academic subjects but also spiritual, moral, and practical teachings. Elders served as repositories of wisdom, imparting valuable insights about governance, agriculture, medicine, and other essential domains (Mosweunyane, 2013). Through oral traditions, proverbs, and storytelling, communities preserved their histories and passed down invaluable lessons to future generations.

Moreover, education in precolonial Africa was often tailored to meet the specific needs of each society, reflecting its cultural values and aspirations (Mosweunyane, 2013). Within African historical contexts, it is evident that sophisticated systems of knowledge transmission and cultivation existed, exemplified by traditional apprenticeships that served as a conduit for the preservation and dissemination of craftsmanship and expertise (Ogundiran, 2013). The ancient Kingdom of Kush, for instance, as explored by O'Connor and Quirke (2016), boasted royal institutions that actively promoted learning and intellectual pursuits, fostering an atmosphere conducive to innovation and enlightenment.

In West and Southern Africa, the educational landscape was expectedly marked by rich, diverse systems of knowledge transmission deeply embedded in the cultural, spiritual, and socio-political frameworks of African societies. In West Africa, notable systems such as the Islamic scholarly traditions of Timbuktu and the broader Sahelian belt flourished, particularly from the 13th to the 17th centuries. These institutions, most famously exemplified by the Sankoré Madrasah in

Timbuktu, attracted scholars from across the Islamic world and served as vital centers for the study of theology, law, astronomy, medicine, and literature (Jeppie & Diagne, 2008). Education in these regions was largely manuscript-based, with an emphasis on memorization, interpretation, and the reproduction of classical Arabic texts alongside local commentaries.

Simultaneously, indigenous education in West Africa emphasized practical knowledge and communal responsibility. This form of education, transmitted orally and experientially through proverbs, storytelling, initiation rites, apprenticeship, and daily life, served to inculcate values, vocational skills, and historical memory (Fafunwa, 2021). It was holistic, intergenerational, and tailored to the needs of each community, integrating intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development.

In Southern Africa, particularly among societies such as the Zulu, Xhosa, and Tswana, precolonial education was similarly embedded in cultural practices and societal structures. Education occurred within age-grade systems and initiation schools where young people were taught moral conduct, survival skills, community law, and indigenous cosmologies (Ntseane, 2011). Here too, knowledge was transmitted orally and experientially, with elders playing a pivotal role as custodians of wisdom and societal norms.

These indigenous systems of education were neither static nor inferior; rather, they were dynamic, adaptive, and aligned with their environments and epistemologies. Recent scholarship continues to challenge colonial narratives that dismissed African precolonial education as unstructured or primitive, highlighting instead its depth, sophistication, and relevance (Odora Hoppers, 2002).

In essence, the educational landscape of precolonial Africa was characterized by dynamism, adaptability, and a deep reverence for learning. It laid the groundwork for the intellectual achievements and cultural vibrancy that would continue to resonate in other parts of the world through the centuries.

### **Colonial Legacy in African Education**

Education systems in Africa today have been deeply influenced by the legacies of colonialism, which aimed to assert colonial power, control local populations, and promote European values and knowledge systems (Ntarangwi, 2016). During the centuries of colonial domination, European powers implemented educational policies designed principally to serve the agenda and interests of the colonizers while marginalizing indigenous knowledge and cultures (Mudimbe, 1988).

The goals of colonial education varied across different colonial powers, but common objectives included creating a docile labor force, assimilating Afro-descendants into European culture, and legitimizing colonial rule (Mazrui, 1986). Curricula were therefore designed to principally instill obedience, reinforce racial hierarchies, and perpetuate the notion of European superiority (Ndofirepi, 2015).

The enduring effects of colonial education are still evident today. Afro-descendant youth often experience a disconnection between their own cultural identities and the Eurocentric education they receive (Mignolo, 2011). The dominance of Western knowledge systems in curricula and

teaching methodologies perpetuates an unequal power dynamic and marginalizes local epistemologies (Kagendo, 2019).

Indeed, the reference point of the vast majority of Afro-descendant intellectuals is centered on Euro-Asian values. This historical context of colonial education therefore underscores the need for Sankofa pedagogies that challenge these legacies, empower Afro-descendant youth, and promote critical thinking and agency. By critically examining this historical context, we can better understand the significance and potential impact of Sankofa in the education of Afro-descendants today.

More importantly, it highlights the need for the broader notion of Sankofa, which will then place African epistemology at the center of the Pan-African intellectual discourse (Tedla, 1995).

### **Brief Overview of Colonial Education Systems and Their Aims**

Colonial education systems in Africa were implemented by European powers with specific aims aligned with their colonial agendas. These systems sought to establish control over local populations, promote European values, and serve the interests of the colonizers (Freire, 1970).

European colonial powers such as Britain, France, Portugal, and Belgium introduced European forms of education systems in their respective colonies. The British colonial education system, for instance, aimed to produce a compliant workforce to meet the needs of the colonial administration and facilitate resource extraction (Mamdani, 1990). The French system aimed at assimilating Afro-descendants into French culture and creating a sense of diluted French citizenship (Rouhani, 2017). Portuguese colonial education focused on spreading the Portuguese language and culture while maintaining a system that reinforced racial hierarchies (Birmingham, 2003). Belgian colonial education in the Congo sought to create a labor force to support Belgian economic interests and perpetuate racial segregation (Vansina, 2010).

The curriculum of colonial education systems prioritized European languages, history, and culture at the expense of indigenous knowledge systems. Indigenous languages and cultural practices were marginalized or actively suppressed, further reinforcing the dominance of European values (Freire, 1970). The curriculum aimed to instill obedience, reinforce racial and cultural hierarchies, and legitimize colonial rule. In other words, European colonial values were presented as global values even to the colonized.

It is important to recognize these aims and objectives of colonial education systems in order to understand the inherent power imbalances and cultural erasure that continue to shape educational experiences for Afro-descendant youth. Out of Sankofa, decolonial pedagogies emerge as a response to some of these historical legacies and offer an alternative approach to education that challenges these power dynamics and promotes critical thinking and agency among Afro-descendant youth.

## **Examination of the Enduring Effects of Colonial Education on Afro-descendant Youth**

The enduring effects of colonial education on Afro-descendant youth are multifaceted and continue to shape their educational experiences, cultural identities, and opportunities for empowerment (Mbembe, 2016).

**Cultural Disconnection:** Colonial education systems often marginalized or suppressed indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and cultural practices. As a result, Afro-descendant youth may experience a disconnection between their own cultural identities and the Eurocentric education they receive (Mignolo, 2011). In Ghana, many respond to the names their occupiers forced on them, worship the weaponized god of their oppressor, and raise their children on the tongue of their tormentor. This disconnection has led to a sense of cultural alienation, identity crises, and a loss of self-esteem (Kagendo, 2019). In simple terms, coloniality.

**Eurocentric Curriculum:** The curriculum of colonial education systems prioritized European languages, history, and literature, while downplaying or erasing African contributions and perspectives (Ndofirepi, 2015). Afro-descendant youth are exposed primarily to Eurocentric knowledge, which perpetuates the dominance of Western epistemologies and marginalizes local ways of knowing. Any knowledge outside the European canon is considered fringe and often illegitimate.

**Reinforcement of Power Hierarchies:** Colonial education systems reinforced racial and cultural hierarchies, perpetuating the notion of European superiority and African inferiority (Mazrui, 1986). This has had long-lasting effects on Afro-descendant youth, shaping their perceptions of self-worth and potential. Internalized notions of inferiority hinder their confidence, aspirations, and agency. In fact, it has been heard sadly more than a few times in many communities in Ghana that “when on the path to church one encounters a white man, one must cease one’s journey; for in meeting them, one has encountered God.”

**Limited Economic Opportunities:** Colonial education often focused on producing a compliant workforce for the colonial administration or specific industries, rather than fostering entrepreneurship or critical thinking (Ntarangwi, 2016). This has contributed to limited economic opportunities for Afro-descendant youth, as they are not adequately equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for self-sufficiency and economic empowerment. The International Labour Organization report for 2021 to 2022 put the unemployment rate among youth in Ghana at 12%, with more than 65% underemployed. Only 5% of graduates find themselves “proper” jobs after the mandatory National Service (International Labour Organization, 2023).

**Educational Inequalities:** The legacy of colonial education has resulted in persistent educational inequalities, with disparities in access, resources, and quality of education between urban and rural areas, as well as between different socioeconomic groups (Makalela, 2005). African youth from marginalized communities continue to face barriers to educational attainment and empowerment.

In his paper published in the *Journal of Economic Studies*, Senadza finds “evidence of gender and spatial inequality in education in Ghana. In particular, the three northern regions [at the time] have lower education attainment ... compared to the rest of the country. The paper finds evidence of intra-gender and intra-spatial inequalities in education attainment in Ghana, with females

contributing proportionately more to the within-inequality component of the education Gini” (Senadza, 2012).

The enduring effects of colonial education underscore the importance of Sankɔfa and all it spawns: culturally relevant curricula, critical pedagogy, interdisciplinary studies, community engagement, experimental learning, and decolonial pedagogies. Sankɔfa can be used in challenging the colonial legacies and empowering Afro-descendant youth by putting African knowledge at the center of learning. By critically examining and addressing these effects, educators and policymakers can foster a more inclusive, culturally relevant, and empowering education system that promotes critical thinking, agency, and a sense of cultural pride among Afro-descendant youth.

### **Understanding Sankɔfa**

The notion of Sankɔfa is a philosophical and cultural principle originating from the Akan nation. The term “Sankɔfa” is derived from the Akan language, with “san” meaning “to return,” “kɔ” meaning “to go,” and “fa” representing the wisdom to retrieve (Tedla, 1995).

Academically, Sankɔfa embodies the notion of critical reflection on history and tradition as a means of informing present actions and shaping future directions. It emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and understanding one’s roots, cultural heritage, and historical experiences in order to navigate contemporary challenges and achieve progress (Tedla, 1995).

Central to the concept of Sankɔfa is the imagery of a bird with its head turned backward while carrying an egg on its back, symbolizing the idea of retrieving valuable lessons and wisdom from the past while moving forward. This imagery underscores the interconnectedness of past, present, and future, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between historical consciousness and contemporary agency (Tedla, 1995).

According to Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku, in academic discourse, Sankɔfa serves as a framework for engaging with issues of identity, memory, and social change. It encourages scholars to critically examine historical narratives, interrogate power dynamics, and center marginalized voices in the construction of knowledge (Opoku, personal communication, April 2, 2024). By embracing Sankɔfa, scholars seek to challenge dominant paradigms, disrupt colonial legacies, and foster inclusive and equitable forms of knowledge production.

In short, Sankɔfa represents a profound commitment to honoring the past, reclaiming cultural heritage, and charting a course towards a more just and sustainable future. As a guiding principle in academic scholarship, Sankɔfa reminds us of the transformative power of history and the imperative of learning from the past to shape a better tomorrow (Opoku, personal communication, April 2, 2024).

### **Some Key Principles of Sankɔfa**

Sankɔfa inspires various educational ideas and practices such as culturally relevant curricula, critical pedagogy, interdisciplinary studies, community engagement, reflective practice, and, of course, decolonial pedagogy, among many others.

Incorporating Sankofa into educational practices, for instance, involves recognizing and valuing the cultural heritage and experiences of students. Educators can develop curriculum materials that principally draw from African history, traditions, and perspectives, allowing students to see themselves reflected in their learning and fostering a sense of pride in their identity.

Sankofa also encourages critical reflection on history and society, challenging dominant narratives and power structures. Educators can employ critical pedagogy to empower students to critically analyze historical events, social issues, and cultural representations, fostering a deeper understanding of systemic injustices and promoting social change.

Sankofa embodies the interconnectedness of knowledge across disciplines and periods. Educators can design interdisciplinary units or projects that integrate insights from history, literature, art, music, and other fields to provide a holistic understanding of complex topics and encourage students to make connections across different areas of study.

Sankofa also emphasizes the importance of community and collective wisdom. Educators can facilitate opportunities for students to engage with their communities, including local elders, cultural institutions, and grassroots organizations, to learn from their experiences, perspectives, and traditions.

Again, Sankofa encourages active engagement with the past through experiential learning activities such as field trips, oral history projects, and cultural celebrations. Educators can create opportunities for students to immerse themselves in hands-on learning experiences that deepen their understanding of historical events, cultural practices, and social dynamics.

Finally, Sankofa emphasizes the importance of reflection and introspection in learning and growth. Educators can encourage students to engage in reflective practices such as journaling, group discussions, and self-assessment, enabling them to process their learning experiences, identify areas for growth, and set goals for the future.

By integrating the principles of Sankofa, such as decolonial pedagogies, into educational practice, educators can create inclusive, empowering, and transformative learning environments that honor the past, empower students to shape their future, and contribute to building a more just and equitable society.

## **Understanding Decolonial Pedagogies**

Definition and key principles: Decolonial pedagogies are educational approaches rooted in challenging and dismantling the colonial legacies and power structures embedded in education systems. These form but one of the branches of Sankofa aimed at decolonizing knowledge, empowering marginalized voices, and promoting critical thinking, agency, and cultural affirmation (Sleeter, 2017).

Key principles of decolonial pedagogies include:

- **Centrality of Epistemic Diversity:** Decolonial pedagogies recognize and embrace diverse knowledge systems, including indigenous, local, and non-Eurocentric ways of knowing.

They challenge the dominance of Western epistemologies and seek to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment (Smith, 1999).

- **Critical Consciousness and Reframing History:** Decolonial pedagogies encourage critical thinking by providing alternative perspectives on historical events, questioning dominant narratives, and uncovering silenced voices and stories. This fosters a critical consciousness that enables students to analyze power structures and engage in transformative action (Freire, 1970).
- **Intersectionality and Social Justice:** Decolonial pedagogies recognize the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression, including race, gender, class, and coloniality. They address social injustices and seek to dismantle systems of imposed power and privilege that perpetuate inequality (hooks, 1994).

### Exploring the Theoretical Foundations of Decolonial Education

Decolonial education draws from various theoretical frameworks, including postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy, and indigenous knowledge systems.

- **Postcolonial Theory:** Postcolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said have provided critical insights into the dynamics of power, identity, and knowledge production in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Their work informs decolonial pedagogies by emphasizing the need to challenge hegemonic narratives, resist cultural erasure, and reclaim agency (Fanon, 1963; Said, 1978).
- **Critical Pedagogy:** Decolonial pedagogies share common ground with critical pedagogy, as both approaches aim to empower learners, challenge oppressive systems, and promote social justice. Scholars like Paulo Freire have argued for a pedagogy of liberation that promotes critical consciousness, dialogue, and praxis (1970).
- **Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** Decolonial pedagogies acknowledge the rich knowledge systems and cultural practices of indigenous communities. Drawing on indigenous epistemologies, decolonial education seeks to restore and honor authentic, original ways of knowing, fostering a more balanced and inclusive educational approach (Battiste, 2002).

### Analyzing the Relevance of Decolonial Pedagogies in the Afro-descendant Context

Decolonial pedagogies hold significant relevance in the Afro-descendant context, considering the historical legacy of colonialism and ongoing struggles for self-determination and cultural affirmation. As a branch of Sankofa, decolonial pedagogies are indeed vital especially for the following reasons:

- a. **Reclaiming Cultural Identity:** Decolonial pedagogies provide Afro-descendant youth with opportunities to reclaim their cultural identities and histories. By incorporating indigenous African knowledge, languages, and cultural practices into the curriculum, decolonial

pedagogies empower Afro-descendant youth to develop a positive self-concept and strengthen their cultural resilience (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

- b. **Challenging Eurocentric Dominance:** Colonial African education systems have long been influenced by Eurocentric perspectives, which perpetuate cultural erasure and reinforce colonial power dynamics. Decolonial pedagogies challenge the dominance of Western epistemologies, encouraging the inclusion of diverse Afro-descendant knowledge systems, languages, and histories (Mignolo, 2009).
- c. **Empowering Critical Thinking and Agency:** Decolonial pedagogies foster critical thinking among Afro-descendant youth by encouraging them to question dominant narratives, analyze power structures, and engage in transformative action. By nurturing critical consciousness and agency, decolonial pedagogies enable Afro-descendant youth to actively shape their own futures and participate in social change (Kagendo, 2019).

Decolonial pedagogies therefore offer a transformative educational framework that challenges the colonial legacies embedded especially in existing African education systems. By embracing epistemic diversity, promoting critical consciousness, and empowering marginalized voices, decolonial pedagogies hold the potential to foster a more equitable, inclusive, and culturally affirming education for Afro-descendant youth.

### **Fostering Critical Thinking through Sankofa Pedagogies**

#### **A. Deconstructing Eurocentric knowledge systems and introducing diverse epistemologies**

Sankofa practices like decolonial pedagogies aim to deconstruct Eurocentric knowledge systems that have dominated Afro-descendant education and introduce diverse epistemologies that recognize and value indigenous, local, and African ways of knowing (Mignolo, 2011).

By deconstructing Eurocentric knowledge systems, Sankofa practices such as decolonial pedagogies challenge the notion of a single universal truth and expose the biases and power dynamics embedded in dominant knowledge production (Smith, 1999). This involves examining how knowledge has been constructed, whose perspectives have been prioritized, and the marginalization of alternative knowledge systems.

Introducing diverse epistemologies entails integrating indigenous knowledge, languages, and cultural practices into the curriculum. This allows Afro-descendant youth to engage with their own cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and connection to their communities. It also broadens their understanding of the world, encouraging critical engagement with different ways of knowing and challenging the notion of a singular Eurocentric truth.

#### **B. Empowering Afro-descendant youth to critically examine and challenge dominant narratives**

Sankofa pedagogies empower Afro-descendant youth to critically examine and challenge dominant narratives that perpetuate colonial power structures and erode their agency. By analyzing historical

events, literature, and social issues from multiple perspectives, students develop a critical consciousness that questions and confronts oppressive narratives (Freire, 1970).

Afro-descendant youth are encouraged to challenge Eurocentric viewpoints, recognize their own experiences as valid sources of knowledge, and engage in counter-narratives that disrupt dominant discourses. This process fosters the development of a critical mindset, empowering students to become active participants in knowledge creation rather than passive recipients.

Furthermore, Sankofa pedagogies encourage Afro-descendant youth to critically reflect on their own positionalities and how they are shaped by intersecting identities such as race, gender, and class. This self-reflexivity enables students to recognize their own biases, privileges, and assumptions, promoting a deeper understanding of social structures and power dynamics.

### **C. Cultivating an environment of dialogue, reflexivity, and intellectual curiosity**

Sankofa pedagogies cultivate an environment of dialogue, reflexivity, and intellectual curiosity that supports the development of critical thinking among Afro-descendant youth. This involves creating spaces for open discussions, valuing diverse perspectives, and encouraging students to ask probing questions (Kagendo, 2019).

Through dialogue, students engage in respectful exchanges of ideas, challenge each other's viewpoints, and collectively construct knowledge. This process encourages active participation and builds the capacity for critical analysis, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving.

Reflexivity is fostered by encouraging students to reflect on their own learning processes, biases, and assumptions. This reflective practice enhances self-awareness and the ability to recognize and address personal limitations, fostering intellectual growth and openness to new ideas.

Furthermore, Sankofa pedagogies promote intellectual curiosity by encouraging Afro-descendant youth to explore different sources of knowledge, engage with diverse perspectives, and pursue independent research and inquiry. This cultivates a thirst for knowledge, a willingness to question established truths, and a desire to actively contribute to knowledge production.

### **Promoting Agency through Sankofa**

The agency of Afro-descendant youth can be promoted through Sankofa by encouraging the reclamation of their cultural identities and histories, by encouraging participatory and student-centered learning approaches, and by facilitating spaces for youth activism and community engagement. By embracing these principles and practices, Sankofa not only enables Afro-descendant youth to develop a sense of agency, but also imbues in them critical consciousness and the ability to actively participate in shaping their own futures and the betterment of their communities.

## **Case Studies: Successful Implementation of Sankofa**

### **Case study 1: Implementation of decolonial pedagogies in a university in Ghana (Adu, 2021)**

In this case study, Adu argues that not only can digital humanities (DH) provide a theoretical framework for decolonizing the academy, it also offers technological solutions to hurdles in the process (Adu, 2021). The paper argues that assignments, their theoretical underpinnings, and implementation are key to decolonizing higher education. It describes three accessible technology-driven assignments with DH pedagogy created for diverse classrooms at Ashesi University in Ghana and discusses their outcomes.

### **Case study 2: Sankofa curriculum development in a university setting in South Africa (Ammon, 2019)**

This is an abductive case study that investigates the process of decolonizing the curriculum at the University of the Free State in South Africa through the perspectives of staff and lecturers. Despite some important progress, these approaches were found to be slow and the question remains if it is deep enough to truly move towards a genuine epistemic openness. Ammon concludes that the paper has reached some insights on barriers to transformation and the challenges that lay ahead for academics (Ammon, 2019).

### **Case study 3: Synthesis of lessons learned and best practices for integrating decolonial pedagogies (Shahjahan et al., 2022)**

An analysis of various case studies and experiences in integrating decolonial pedagogies was published by Shahjahan et al. (2022) highlighting lessons learned and offering best practices for successful implementation. Some common findings include the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders, fostering supportive institutional cultures, and providing professional development opportunities for educators. The publication also emphasizes the need for ongoing reflection, evaluation, and adaptation of pedagogical approaches to ensure their effectiveness. The lessons learned and best practices presented can inform educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to integrate decolonial pedagogies in educational settings.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Identifying barriers to the adoption and implementation of Sankofa**

Factors such as resistance from entrenched educational systems and structures, lack of awareness and understanding among educators and policymakers, and challenges related to resources and training affect the adoption and effective implementation of Sankofa pedagogies (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012). There is the need for professional development, policy changes, and institutional support if these challenges are to be addressed.

### **Exploring the potential of technology in facilitating Sankofa education**

According to Kukulska-Hulme et al., technology has the potential to facilitate decolonial education (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2023). Digital tools and online platforms can support the integration of

diverse knowledge systems, provide access to marginalized voices, and foster global collaborations. Digital resources, virtual communities, and open educational resources can be used to promote cultural exchange, empower students, and challenge dominant narratives. However, there may be ethical considerations and potential pitfalls of using technology in decolonial education.

### **Collaborative efforts and partnerships to support Sankofa**

It is important to build networks among educators, institutions, and communities to share resources, knowledge, and best practices. According to Caniglia et al., collective action, intercultural dialogue, and transnational partnerships involving multiple stakeholders such as local communities, indigenous organizations, educational institutions, and civil society have the potential to advance decolonial education (Caniglia et al., 2017).

### **Conclusion**

Sankofa practices (including to some extent decolonial pedagogies) offer a transformative educational framework that challenges the historical legacies of colonial education and empowers Afro-descendant youth. By reclaiming cultural identities and histories, embracing participatory and student-centered learning approaches, and facilitating spaces for youth activism and community engagement, Sankofa promotes critical thinking and agency among Afro-descendant youth. Through the deconstruction of Eurocentric knowledge systems, the introduction of diverse epistemologies, and the cultivation of an environment of dialogue, reflexivity, and intellectual curiosity, Sankofa fosters a more inclusive, equitable, and culturally affirming education.

Despite the potential of Sankofa, several challenges and opportunities exist. Identifying barriers to adoption and implementation, such as resistance from entrenched educational systems and lack of awareness among educators and policymakers, is crucial. Addressing these barriers requires professional development, policy changes, and institutional support.

Technology also plays a significant role in facilitating Sankofa education. Digital tools and online platforms can provide access to marginalized voices, promote cultural exchange, and foster global collaborations. However, ethical considerations and potential pitfalls must be carefully navigated.

Collaborative efforts and partnerships are vital in supporting the integration of decolonial Sankofa pedagogies. Building networks among educators, institutions, and communities fosters the sharing of resources, knowledge, and best practices. Collective action, intercultural dialogue, and transnational partnerships involving various stakeholders can advance decolonial education and empower Afro-descendant youth.

By recognizing and addressing these challenges while embracing the opportunities, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can work together to create educational environments that promote critical thinking, cultural affirmation, and agency among Afro-descendant youth. Sankofa offers a pathway towards a more just, inclusive, and empowering education system in postcolonial societies.

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