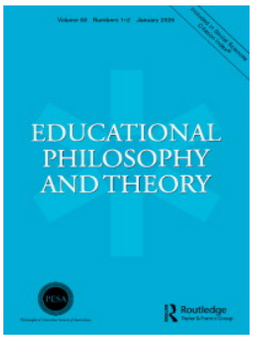

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COMMENT

Philosophy of education as pluriversal: Opening the dialogues

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Despite the historical origins of philosophy from a richly diverse tapestry of thinkers, which cuts across geopolitical, cultural and religious traditions, and despite internationalising trends to develop both a more inclusive and authentic account of philosophical thinking, it remains largely unquestioned to equate philosophy of education with its western canon. These concerning biases are succinctly laid bare in Jackson and Kwak's (2025) editorial, 'Is philosophy of education western?' They are correct in their assertion that the persistent perspective of philosophy of education as western suggests that the world beyond Western Europe and North America appears insignificant, holding negative implications for the development of curricula, research, scholarly discourse, and educational practice and outcomes in the field globally. Jackson and Kwak (2025, p. 2) are also correct that the unfolding epistemic framing is not only a continuing marginalisation of 'non-western' thinkers and philosophies, but also expectations of the latter to be 'western facing in outlook', and a preparedness to 'sacrifice' 'internally oriented explorations and articulations of thought from other positions'.

In this collective article, we seek to take Jackson (2025) thesis a step further – by acknowledging the colonial logic that has ensured the systemic subjugation, assimilation, or erasure of Indigenous and other 'non-western' philosophies, while also affirming philosophy of education as inclusively pluriversal. Our aim is not only to foreground marginalised voices and traditions, but also to restore the epistemic dignity of all philosophies. By bringing together the contributions in this article, we do not simply gesture toward 'alternative' knowledge systems as supplements to the dominant canon; rather, we affirm them as philosophies, constitutive of a genuinely pluriversal field of philosophy of education.

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The views expressed in this shared article are not necessarily shared by all the authors. However, we take collective responsibility for the entirety of the work.

The contributions offered here represent only fragments of what a pluriversal philosophy of education might become. They are offered as an opening of dialogues, which question the dominance of any single epistemic tradition, and as calls for recognising the pluriversality of philosophy of education as co-constitutive rather than derivative. Importantly, to affirm philosophy of education as pluriversal is not only to expand the margins of the western canon. It also involves disrupting its centre, and to insist that multiple traditions of thought stand in dialogue as equals not only in the discipline of philosophy of education, but in the day-to-day living in this world. It is, of course, impossible to capture within a single article the full range of philosophies that have shaped the world's civilisations. Yet this impossibility is itself revealing. It confirms how little is known or even acknowledged beyond the confines of the western canon.

At this point, it might be worth asking why it matters so much to de-normalise the westernisation of philosophy of education, and why it is important to recognise the offering of multiple philosophies. On the one hand, the response resides in ridding philosophy of education from self-impoverishment – philosophy of education is diminished by a denial of a plurality of insights and traditions. On the other hand, when we write and talk about philosophy of education, we are not only referring to educational programmes, principles, goals and outcomes. We are also referring to intellectual, spiritual and traditional heritages, which have shaped communities and societies, It matters, therefore, because restoring philosophy of education to its pluriversal roots is not simply a matter of inclusion or representation; it is also a liberatory act of epistemic reparation. We see epistemic reparation as crucial because in addition to restoring and recentering historically marginalised ways of thinking and being, it also diversifies knowledge by opening spaces for multiple ways of knowing and understanding the world. Without disruption, contestation, and dialogue, philosophy of education will persist in its trappings of narrow perspectives and exclusions. There are consequences not only for what, who and how we teach, but also for the kind of world that we ought to be co-creating.

No answer

Precious Simba
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The question – *is philosophy of education Western?* – is easily a misdirection, a sleight of hand cloaked in the illusion of inquiry. *Prima facie* it seems to be an invitation to imagine philosophy of education otherwise. However, there are limited to no responses, to this question in which the West is not a point of reference, a fully formed character. The question inadvertently rehearses a well-worn scene: the West seated at the centre, relevant in any encounter, surveilling, moderating, its gaze one of importance, disciplining the terms of thought and the boundaries of legitimacy. So, the question arrives not as invitation but as an imposition, niftily ordering characters on a stage, framing thought within a geometry of power, excuse me, knowledge. Regardless of where in the world the argument starts it will inadvertently end on the shores of European or American philosophic traditions. The West then, becomes/is/continues to be a panopticon – thinly veiled yet ever present – shaping not just the answer but also the very grammar of response.

The grammar of response to the question, if it adheres to academic convention, has few ways to acknowledge for example, Bulawayo's (2013) new names/new ways of making meaning or Putuma's (2020) blank pages or *izinganekwane zika*[1] *gogo* (for which there is no citation). (African, diasporic, women) Voices, bodies, lives – deselected from the archive, amputated from the dominant narratives of knowledge, silences.

A response to this question would undeniably carry these silences. This is not merely a philosophical or disciplinary or citational or methodological conundrum; for many who are not of the West, it is a wound(ing) we know too well. It is what Zhizha in Yvonne Vera's Under The Tongue Vera (1996) might call a scar that remembers. In her literary works, Vera traces the lingering architecture of this wounding, of trauma and both intimate and historical silences. Silences that do not simply muffle but suffocate; silences shaped not just by absence, but also by violence. Education, in this sense, becomes one more site where such (colonial) silences fester beneath the endeavours of the West going out to seek if an Other exists.

The submission here is akin to that of Vera's (1996) (un)muted Zhizha – one whose tongue is dead and yet is a living river. To 'speak' of philosophy of education from this place of my writing – this continent, this ground, this heritage, this body – is to 'speak' from perhaps a subjugated standpoint, but not a silent one. It is to speak from what appears marginal and yet is not the margins not as a deficit, but as a place of vision. As Collins (1999) reminds us, the margins are generative. They allow for a 'both/and' sensibility, where we resist the binaries of centre/margin, coloniser/colonised, reason/emotion, subject/object – binaries that have historically positioned the West as an anchor to universal or dominating reason. From this standpoint, the danger is not that philosophy of education is/is not Western, but that it insists on not knowing that it is never was.

The question then need not be about the geo-semantic orientation of philosophy of education. The question is one of hypocrisy. At a time when Western modernity has indeed found its cliffs-end it seeks for life where it once pronounced death. It rummages through the ruins of its own enlightenment, scavenging for vitality in the very south originating epistemologies it once declared non-existent. The irony is profound: the West's exhaustion masquerades as a curiosity, its crisis as generosity. What appears as dialogue is in material a plea for renewal – a reaching toward the peripheries not out of recognition, but out of need. To name this hypocrisy is not to dismiss how we are all invariably implicated in a global poly-crisis or the possibility of encounter. It is to insist that such encounters be ethical – unmoored by colonial arrogance.

So, I offer this (non)response with some care, not wanting to leave African thought to be somewhat appended to Western frameworks. For African thought is not merely additive – it can be medicine, transformative. It means reclaiming and reconstituting the very terms of engagement. As Vera shows through her literature, Letseka (2000) through pedagogy, the validity of our thinking lies not in its resemblance or acceptability to the West, but in its rootedness in our own questions, our own rhythms of reflection, and our own stories, which at times can reflect the ordinariness of life elsewhere and at other times does not (see Hountondji, 2019 on extroversion and African philosophy). To write, think, and teach from this place is therefore not a supplement to global discourse or questions of the West but a reorientation of its grammar – resetting the terms of engagement. African thought, in this (non) response

is not seeking entry into an existing conversation; it presents an invitation into a differing way of being. One whose cadence is measured in relationality (*ubuhlobo/ukama*) in rhythm and in remembrance.

For Ramose (1999), to philosophise from Africa is not to mimic or supplement, but to contend with shifting tides of motion as that is a foundational principle in ubuntu for example. Ubuntu, he argues, is not an addendum to philosophy, it is the fountain of African philosophy in itself – a mode of *be-ing becoming*, a continual rhythmic unfolding. Within an ubuntu paradigm, education is not the transmission of content, but the cultivation of what it means to be with/through others, to be a person. It is not the disciplining of the mind, but the widening of the soul (Samkange & Samkange, 1980). This is a radically different posture, not simply a counterpoint to the West.

So, we return to the question, now re-shaped: not *is philosophy of education Western?* but *why does this question require the West as its anchor?* What violences are repeated each time we stage the West as the centre of thought, the origin of knowledge, the arbiter of meaning? For this and other reasons I refuse to answer. I refuse to answer the question.

I have mulled over this (non)response for many weeks. Even when I tried to send it to my colleague the email (in)conveniently lodged in the draft folder and 'refused' to go. I despise that in contending with the question the fate of Tambu (whose name is chiShona for troubled), the protagonist in Dangarembga's (1988) Nervous Conditions feels like a hanging cloud looming above my type pad. There is, however, some consolation at the same time in the precedence set by Dangarembga herself: that perhaps a (re)solution is not finitude. The question is not mine to answer, to mull over (even though I already have) or mine to resolve.

What it means to be an African philosophy of education

Thaddeus Metz

University of Pretoria

The contention of this joint article is that not all philosophies of education are western, with me holding that some are specifically African. This position begs the prior question of what counts as 'western' or 'African' such that a philosophy of education could be described as one or the other. I sketch an answer to that question here.

In my view, much too often colleagues read geographical labels such as 'western', 'African', 'Chinese', or the like too narrowly. In particular, they have a tendency to suppose that, if a thinker uses one of these terms to pick out a feature, then that feature must be utterly unique to the relevant location, and perhaps also encountered throughout it. So, in the context of philosophy of education, there are colleagues who deny that certain approaches are African since one can find them in additional locales (e.g. Horsthemke & Enslin, 2005; Parker, 2003).

However, that is not what people normally mean when they use geographical labels, or at least that is not a charitable way to read them, as I have argued with several examples (e.g. Metz, 2015). For just one, consider that baseball is American and indeed is often called 'America's Pastime'. Baseball is American, despite the fact

that some Americans prefer basketball and the further fact that there are many Cubans and Japanese who also like and play baseball.

How can baseball be American, given that some Americans prefer other sports and some non-Americans are also into baseball? It can be if a geographical label such as 'American' picks out features that are *salient* in that locale. For a feature to be salient is for it to be prominent in a way that it is not in many other places. It means to stand out in, or be characteristic of, the place (not necessarily exhaustive of or unique to it).

Supposing that account of how to use geographical labels is plausible, it follows that to call a philosophy of education 'African' means that it exemplifies features that are salient in Africa (or at least the massive sub-Saharan region often distinguished from North Africa because of cultural differences between indigenous black peoples and Arabs from the Middle East). An African philosophy of education would include concepts, values, and prescriptions that have been prominent in (sub-Saharan) Africa or at least that stand out in the philosophies of education espoused by thinkers from that part of the world.

What, then, are these African concepts, values, and prescriptions? A complete reckoning would take much space, but here are two key examples to illustrate how an African philosophy of education differs from a western one. First, a western approach to cultural instruction would enable a student to become aware of a wide array of cultures around the world and leave it up to her to decide which to favour. In contrast to such a cosmopolitanism, an African approach would prioritize enabling the student to understand, participate in, and enrich her own culture. Second, a western conception of the final ends of education would invoke values such as autonomy, critical thinking, knowledge, desire satisfaction, self-esteem, and authentic self-realisation. In contrast to these individualist values, an African one would appeal to relational values such as harmonizing with other people in her community, contributing to the well-being of (extended) family and society more generally, and becoming virtuous by exemplifying other-regarding traits such as sympathy and altruism.

Some readers at this point will be tempted to point to some communitarian philosophers of education from the West and some liberal philosophers of education from Africa. I do not deny that they exist – there are always exceptions to the rule, with geographical labels usefully understood as serving to identify the rule.

Indigenization and Islamization

Kai Horsthemke

University of the Witwatersrand

Calls for 'Islamization' of knowledge and education (see Al-Faruqi, 1988; Dangor, 2005; International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 1987; Nasr, 1991) first gained momentum in the 1980s. The idea of Islamization of education – that is, the inclusion of certain disciplines within an Islamic school curriculum or the provision of an Islamic perspective on syllabus content and curriculum choice – makes sense and is fairly uncontroversial within Islamic educational settings. These are trends and initiatives that also exist in other religious and devotional educational contexts, and school

choice is largely determined by parents' or caregivers' beliefs and interests. That is, there are certain expectations of Muslim, Christian, or Jewish educational institutions it is not unreasonable to meet. However, it would be unreasonable to expect Muslim, Christian, or Jewish doctrines to be included in secular school curricula and syllabi in subjects or learning areas other than religion education. There are several additional issues that beg critical interrogation. These are

- the conception of knowledge and epistemology that informs past and present calls for Islamization;
- the explicit or implicit critique of 'modern secular' education (Dangor, 2005, p. 520), especially Western education's purported value-neutrality and failure to provide moral guidance (p. 521); and
- the attempt by Muslim scholars to present Islamization of knowledge as an indigenous knowledge system (p. 525).

I will address each of these issues in turn. According to South African Muslim scholar Suleman Dangor (200, p. 520),

> The theologian, philosopher, and mystic Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) classified knowledge into *al-'ilm al-'aqli* (knowledge acquired through human reason and intellect) and *al-'ilm al-naqli* (transmitted knowledge). The latter is obtained from Divine Revelation (*wahy*), accepted by Muslim scholars as the primary source of knowledge in Islam.

The term *'ilm* literally means 'knowledge' and 'encompasses all facets of life: intellectual, material, and spiritual' (p. 522). Dangor (p. 523) laments secular education's 'scientific approach to knowledge, in terms of which non-empirical knowledge is proscribed, [and which] generates an empirical attitude in learners and a corresponding marginalization of the transcendental, viz. divine principles, norms and values, which have no place in the pursuit of knowledge, techniques, and skills'. He adds (ibid.),

> In the Islamic epistemology, revelation occupies a fundamental place. In addition to reason, sensory perception, intuition, and experience (including experimentation and observation), revelation is a primary source of knowledge. Any attempt to understand human behavior without reference to revealed knowledge is considered inadequate by Muslim scholars.

But what makes revelation a source of knowledge (see also Nasr, 1991), and not merely a source of belief? There is a powerful argument against accepting '*al-'ilm al-naqli* (transmitted knowledge)' as *knowledge*. At the most, it yields belief in the form of faith, frequently acquired as a result of uncritical and unquestioning rote memorization. There are several disturbing features of the Islamization of knowledge project as characterized by Dangor and other scholars (Al-Faruqi, 1988; IIIT 1987; Nasr, 1991), in its demand of 'the development of a new epistemology, paradigm of knowledge, and methodology' (Dangor, 2005, p. 526). For Ismail Al-Faruqi (1988, pp. 54-62), it means 'a systematic reorientation and restructuring of *the entire field of human knowledge* in accordance with a new set of criteria and categories derived from and based on the Islamic worldview' (IIIT 1987, p. 15; emphasis added). Apart from being epistemologically dubious, there is both a normative and a meta-ethical problem

here. The normative problem is simply the application of a narrow and coercive, authoritarian yardstick. The meta-ethical problem concerns the fundamentalist creationist pitch made here. If 'education is intended to produce a God-conscious and righteous individual who lives in accordance with the Divine mandate' (Dangor, 2005, p. 522), this raises the question why divine authority should be accepted as a *moral* authority. If what God commands determines what is moral, then this makes morality wholly arbitrary. God could have commanded anything, and it would be unassailable *qua* 'Divine mandate' (The ramifications are manifest in the profound differences in interpreting God's commandments, in all three major monotheistic religions.). If, on the other hand, God commands what is already moral (the corollary being that 'Divine mandate' would never be immoral, that God would never command anything that is not moral), then morality exists outside and independently of God's authority, and individuals could adhere to its standards without being 'God-conscious'.

This leads to the second problematic issue I referred to earlier. Dangor suggests that 'moral or spiritual development is not among the objectives modern secular education', in that it 'makes no provision for intuition, contemplation, spiritual values, or moral development' (p. 521). This is plainly false and offers at best a caricature of so-called 'Western' education as being 'based on a purely materialistic philosophy of life, its emphasis being essentially on intellectual progress for the material well-being of the individual and society' (p. 523). Far from being 'value-free', the educational system prevalent in the 'West' – while certainly 'designed to provide career opportunities' and to meet the 'needs of the marketplace' (p. 521) – also aims to contribute to the development of empathetic, caring, open-minded, and respectful persons committed to dialogue and democratic debate. I cannot think of a single respectable contemporary educationalist who has 'proposed that education should be neutral to values' (p. 523). When Dangor speaks of moral or ethical values derived from and based on Qur'anic revelation as not being 'considered relative, but absolute and eternal', he makes two philosophical mistakes, over and above facing the aforementioned dilemma faced by divine command (or 'Divine mandate') theory. The first is the semantic error of contraposing 'relative' and 'absolute'. The opposite of 'relative values' is not 'absolute' but, rather, 'universal values'. One can be opposed to both relative and absolute values – indeed, such opposition is rational and logically coherent. Thus, commitment to the universal values of preservation of life, truth-telling, or respect for property does not mean that there are no exceptions. There may be extraordinary circumstances in which the taking of life, lying, and stealing are morally permissible. This does not in any way bear on the universality of the values in questions. Nor does it mean that they are 'relative'. Second, the implication that secular values are susceptible to relativism is simply false. Rather tellingly, the relativist approach characterizes not (Western) secular education but, rather, advocacy of indigenous knowledge systems.

This leads to the third problem facing calls for 'Islamization'. Most glaringly, 'Islamization of knowledge' cannot – even in the most fertile imagination – be portrayed as being relevantly like indigenous knowledge or 'indigenization' of knowledge. Islamization of knowledge, quite apart from its questionable use of 'knowledge', simply is not 'indigenous' in any relevant sense other than covering a variety of orientations and interpretations. Moreover, its propagation and proselytizing situate it closer to

the hegemonism rightly criticized by theorists and defenders of the subaltern. When Dangor asserts that the 'division between traditional and modern secular education that now obtains in the Muslim world is a later development – a legacy of colonialism' (p. 521), he seems to be wholly unaware of the interjection that the spread of Islam across the globe (like the earlier spread of Christianity) involves something relevantly like colonialism.

The place of education and indoctrination in Islam

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The concept of the 'philosophy of education' and the structuring of educational discussions under this title emerged within the context of contemporary Western civilization. Searching for similar discussions under this terminology in Eastern perspectives, including Islam, might lead us to conclude that such a philosophy of education did not exist in these traditions. However, if we move beyond literalism, we will find that concepts with different names did exist in these traditions, and they can be considered equivalent to what is known as the philosophy of education. As Nicholas Burbules (2000) points out, in non-European traditions one should look for 'philosophy of faith' or 'philosophy of duty' instead of philosophy of education.

One of the major issues in contemporary philosophy of education is the distinction between education and indoctrination. Many studies have been conducted to identify the characteristics of indoctrination (Snook, 1989, among others), in order to distance educational activities from indoctrination. It seems that an uncritical attitude is a better criterion for identifying indoctrination than the type of academic discipline, such as religion, or similar elements. This article seeks to demonstrate the measures proposed within Islamic thought to prevent educators and students from indoctrination.

I will carry out this task within the framework of an Islamic perspective that I refer to as *transformative traditionalism*. This concept comprises two elements: tradition and transformation. The first pertains to the past, and the second to the present and future. Tradition holds significant value in Islamic thought, as it represents the accumulated rational and effective experiences of a society's past, and for this reason, it is important. Without tradition, each new generation would be forced to reinvent the wheel. When the Prophet of Islam declared his mission, he recognized and validated the useful traditions of the pre-Islamic era.

However, the second element – transformation – indicates that tradition can include dead-ends, caused by hasty generalizations, superstitions, ignorance, and the like. Therefore, tradition must remain open to emerging conditions and should evolve and reform itself in accordance with them, eliminating any irrationalities or superstitions it contains. The Qur'an points out that prophets critically engaged with the rigid traditionalists of their societies and warned them against blindly following the ignorance of their forefathers: 'They say: "Nay! we shall follow the ways of our fathers." What! even though their fathers Were void of wisdom and guidance?' (Ali, 1987, 2: 170).

The irony is that despite such criticisms in the Qur'an, some contemporary Muslim jurists have applied the same rigid traditionalism to the traditions of the Prophet

himself. In contrast, enlightened jurists have recognized that what may remain enduring from the Prophet's tradition is the logic or rationality underlying his actions, not merely the external form of those actions. This insight has been expressed in terms such as *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* (objectives of Islamic law). Similarly, the concept of *sīra* (in the form *fi'la* that refers to the style of an action) refers to attention to the style or logic of the Prophet's actions, rather than their specific and outward form.

Overall, *transformative traditionalism* emphasizes the preservation of the rational or reasonable elements of tradition while reforming and modifying the irrational and uncritical parts to suit the new conditions of society. In other words, transformative traditionalism reflects a commitment to rationality or reasonability.

Now, let us consider the place of education and indoctrination within this Islamic perspective – namely, transformative traditionalism. Education requires that the attitudes and practices embedded in social tradition, insofar as they are rational or reasonable, be passed on to the new generation. Since social traditions are to some extent rational or reasonable, these aspects should be examined and subjected to rational discourse for the benefit of the younger generation. Of course, early childhood is somewhat of an exception in this regard, as children at this stage are not yet equipped with the rational capacity to understand the dimensions of social traditions. Nevertheless, this should not prevent the gradual introduction of rational or reasonable aspects of tradition as the child matures intellectually and socially, and the engagement in dialogue about them.

When it comes to potential dead-ends within tradition, the educational system must adopt an approach that prevents the new generation from becoming trapped in the defective aspects of tradition. This calls for a special emphasis on critical thinking within the educational system. It is possible that teachers and educators themselves may not yet be aware of these dead-ends. Even so, the development of critical capacities in the younger generation serves as a safeguard against such problems. The earlier point regarding early childhood still applies here.

Currently, educational systems in Islamic countries face challenges both in terms of rigid traditionalism on the one hand, and the development of critical thinking on the other. For example, references to obedience and submission to divine commands in the Qur'an and other Islamic texts may lead some to adopt indoctrination in education. However, a holistic view of Qur'anic concepts shows that obedience to divine commands does not conflict with rationality or reasonability, and thus, questioning and critically engaging with divine commands has its rightful place. For instance, when the Prophet Abraham asks God about the possibility and manner of resurrecting the dead in the afterlife, and God asks him: 'have you no faith', Abraham responds: 'Yes, but just to reassure my heart' (Ali, 1987, 2: 260).

Islamic philosophy of education

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Contemporary education has become increasingly entangled with the forces of corporatization, commodification, and commercialization. Educational institutions, once imagined as sites of intellectual cultivation and spiritual transformation, are now

governed by corporate logic that prioritizes competition, efficiency, and productivity. Excellence, once a marker of intellectual and moral distinction, has been hollowed out to signify little more than a set of managerial techniques aimed at optimizing institutional performance without regard to substantive intellectual content (see e.g. Bok, 2003; Donoghue, 2008; Kerr, 2001; Newman, 1996).

The mission statements of modern universities reveal their underlying ethos. These Institutes promise marketable skills, innovation, and creativity. They promote a narrowly defined concept of 'innovation', which responds to the demands of the market. Students are prepared for 'career-readiness', mastering technical abilities such as data analysis, information technology, and multitasking, rather than being equipped with the tools for ethical discernment or the pursuit of wisdom. More profoundly, modern education is increasingly shaped by the ideologies of careerism and workism. Work, career advancement, and personal achievement are valorized as the highest goods of human life. Success is portrayed as a relentless climb toward the top, where achievement becomes synonymous with meaning, and work is expected to provide what religious traditions once offered: a sense of purpose, community, self-actualization, and even a sense of transcendent calling (Han, 2015). Education, in this context, serves not as a preparation for a good life, but as a means of securing a place within a market system that measures human worth by productivity and career success.

Against this background, the Islamic philosophy of education offers a radically different vision – one which is urgently needed in our time. In contrast to the prevailing secular paradigm, which treats education and science as neutral, universal enterprises (see Bloom, 1987), the Islamic tradition insists on the inseparability of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and ethics (*akhlāq*). Modern education tends to divorce the acquisition of knowledge from questions of ethical formation, even though the immense power of scientific knowledge, such as understanding the forces governing the atom, clearly demands ethical reflection (Faruque, 2024). Despite being rooted in a particular ideological and historical trajectory, modern (Western) education is often presented as universal and inevitable, obscuring alternative models of thought and human development.

Islamic education, by contrast, is profoundly moral and transformative in nature (Memon & Zaman, 2016). It is not merely concerned with the transfer of information or the mastery of technical skills, but with the cultivation of the whole person. Education is conceived as a process of creative self-cultivation (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and human flourishing, aimed at nurturing the divine potential within each human being. Rather than focusing exclusively on mastering disciplines or acquiring skills for career advancement, Islamic philosophy of education aspires to nurture what can be called an anthropocosmic vision of the self, that is, an expansive awareness that harmonizes the intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of human existence (Faruque, 2025). In this vision, education is not simply about learning facts, but about aligning oneself with the fundamental order and creativity of the cosmos. True education becomes a means of developing a selfhood that reflects the harmony, balance, and beauty inherent in the universe. By re-centering education around the ideals of intellectual rigor, moral excellence, and spiritual refinement, it aims to reclaim a humanistic philosophy of education. This philosophy fosters not only critical thinking and mastery of information, but also profound inward reflection and a holistic vision of human flourishing.

In reimagining education through an Islamic philosophical lens, it is also imperative to recognize the profound interconnectedness of technology, society, and humanity's future. In today's rapidly evolving world, an authentic education must equip students not only with timeless ethical and intellectual virtues but also with the awareness necessary to deal with modern technological realities. Equally important is fostering an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge, one that incorporates insights from the natural sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences, and thereby offers a holistic perspective on global challenges. An Islamic philosophy of education, properly understood, does not oppose modern knowledge; rather, it seeks to integrate such knowledge within a higher metaphysical framework, ensuring that technological advancement serves the cause of human flourishing rather than undermining it.

Navigating Islamic teacher education

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University of South Australia

If there is to be a diverse reading of philosophy of education offered – one that is reflective of non-dominant traditions and worldviews, it is most commonly done at a graduate level in Education Studies. Imagine then the overemphasis on western-oriented philosophy at the pre-service teacher education (Bachelor of Education/Master of Teaching) level. The prevalence of education theory informing national curriculum and classroom practice is secular, pragmatic, and essentialist with a little posthumanism, critical theory, and poststructuralism weaved in at best. The message that this sends becoming teachers is that teaching is neutral. For the past 15 years, I have been working with Islamic school educators from across the globe to challenge this very notion of neutrality.

Islamic school educators in primary and secondary schools face a serious dilemma: how do you foster faithfulness when you have never formally learned how? The dilemma is that educators who teach in Islamic schools are trained in teacher education programs that rely largely on secular western pedagogies, also known as 'best practices' to impart an education that emphasises and measures cognitive achievement over nurturing religiosity and spiritual growth. Yet the mission and vision of Islamic schooling is to educate the whole learner – moral, spiritual, ethical, creative, imaginative, and cognitive – rooted in a purpose of education that is metaphysical – *ma'rifa* (to know God).

The solution has been to introduce Islamic philosophies of education. This includes both classical (Cook & Malkawi, 2011) and contemporary works (Al-Attas, 1979; Davids & Waghid, 2016; Sahin, 2013; Zaman 2018) rooted in the Islamic tradition (Nasr, 1975) that re-centre the Islamic conception of the human being (Alkouatli, 2021; Rothman & Coyle, 2018) and that have implications for educating the Muslim learner. For many Islamic school educators this is empowering because it helps them reconcile between broader aims of education in the Islamic tradition – *tarbiya* (Abdalla, 2025) that they inherently know is central to their craft in an Islamic school but rarely have an opportunity to deliberate over.

The challenge, however, is illustrating relevance of Islamic philosophies of education (Memon et al., 2024) to classroom practice while not essentialising within (Biesta

et al., 2021) or discarding all that is Western. The message to Islamic school educators is this: (1) begin with a critical lens that challenges presumed neutrality in the field of education; (2) take inspiration from a decolonial commitment to re-centre conceptions of education in the Islamic tradition; (3) draw from philosophies of Islamic education to rethink what it means to do education 'Islamically' (Sahin, 2018); and (4) Critically engage in the field of contemporary educational thought and practice from the vantage point of a self-articulated, contextually relevant philosophy of Islamic education. In our work on Islamic Teacher Education, we reinforce that re-centring philosophies of Islamic education is not an either/or debate or an attempt to replace Western with Eastern, modern with classical. Rather, it is an attempt to encourage educators to critically read the field of education to carve out our place in it so that Islamic schools do not just educate in silos but contribute to a broader discourse on what it means to educate.

(Open response) Islamization or indigenization of education?: rethinking modernity's problematic role in shaping Islamic decolonial visions of education

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This collective essay on Islamization, indigenization, and education reveals the diverse positions that philosophers of education from this region adopt in confronting Western dominance in the professional and academic discourse of modern education. Some contributors appear to take a far-right stance, advocating for the *Islamization of knowledge and education* (as in the case of Suleman Dangor), while others assume a far-left decolonial position. The latter (as in Simba's case) can even interpret Jackson and Kwak's editorial question, '*Is philosophy of education Western?*' not as an invitation to disrupt Western dominance, but rather as an imposition of the same dominant grammar that reinforces a sense of deficiency on the part of non-western parties. Between these two extremes lies a continuum of more moderate positions – for instance, a liberal approach that seeks a compromise between obedience to divine command and modern rationality or reasonableness (as in Muhammad U. Faruque's work), and a communitarian approach that sidesteps the liberal tension between education and indoctrination through a form of *transformative traditionalism* (as in Khosrow Bagheri Noaparast's). This overall landscape of quasi–anti-Western tendencies within the Islamic context recalls a series of similar efforts undertaken by local scholars throughout the sixty years of modernization in modern Korea.

Reading this collective essay raises a set of key questions that are deeply relevant to other non-Western contexts seeking to articulate a decolonial vision for doing philosophy of education. I find myself wondering: what is the difference between the *Islamization* of knowledge or education and the *indigenization* of knowledge or education? Does the Islamization of knowledge and education in contemporary societies require a corresponding *modernization of Islam* – one that involves not only the transformation of material conditions but also a renewal of Islamic *religious* consciousness? What role does modernity play in the Islamization of knowledge and education? How does this differ from the one in the indigenization of knowledge and education, as

discussed by Kai Horsthemke, one of the contributors to this collective essay? More broadly, how should we understand the relationship between modernity and indigeneity within any decolonial vision that seeks to disrupt Western dominance in educational thought and practice? Is modernity a necessary counterpoint to the preservation of indigeneity – or could it, paradoxically, be constitutive of its preservation and renewal?

The Chinese scholar Kuan-Hsing Chen's strategy for decolonization, articulated in his influential book *Asia as Method* (Chen, 2010), is to warn Asian scholars against their obsession with the West and modernity, and to reposition the West as merely one of the many sources that have historically shaped Asian modern subjectivities through the process of modernization. His strategy seeks to *provincialize Europe* – not to universalize or dismiss it altogether, but to decenter it – by highlighting how Asians have experienced both their own traditions and the West in the making of their modern consciousness (Kwak, 2024). By contrast, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, a Brazilian educator and activist with Indigenous roots, offers a different stance in her widely read book *Hospicing Modernity: Facing Humanity's Wrongs and the Implications for Social Activism* (Oliveira, Machado de Oliveira, 2021). She portrays modernity – simplified yet profoundly paradoxical – as 'a single story of progress, development, human evolution, and civilization that is omnipresent'. For her, modernity is 'the air we breathe'; whether we identify with it or critique it, it still conditions *how we think, feel, desire, relate, hope, and imagine* – in other words, how we exist. Thus, she proposes that the only way to decolonize modernity is to *hospice* it: to act compassionately in assisting the system to die with grace, supporting it through the process of letting go, even as it clings to what has already passed. Although these two thinkers seem to define modernity differently – Oliveira's approach sounding more existentially urgent and despairing than Chen's – both ultimately envision a decolonial project that engages critically and relationally with modernity and the West rather than seeking to reject them outright.

This leads me to ask more specifically how the Islamic scholars in this collective essay understand the West and modernity in relation to the formation of their decolonial visions of education – whether these take the form of *Islamization* or *indigenization* of knowledge and education, each shaped by its own historical context. I believe this question is closely tied to how they conceive their relationship to *tradition*. To seek a decolonial vision is not merely a political undertaking but also an epistemological and even ontological act of resistance. Tradition, in this sense, is not only something we inherit but something we *inhabit* – a living framework through which we exist and make meaning in the world. This question also invites comparison with how East Asian scholars have responded to their own traditions and to the West in negotiating modernity in relation to their indigeneity within their educational thinking and practice.

(Open response) what is the west? What is Islam?

Liz Jackson

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The collective essay, 'A pluriversal philosophy of education: Opening the dialogue' provides a generous but critical reading of my article co-authored with Duck-Joo Kwak, 'Is philosophy of education western?' (Jackson, 2025). It makes several important

points while reflecting on the state of philosophy of education in a global context and/or as a global field (Jackson, 2025). I also appreciate the critical challenges it raises for all of us who are concerned with equity and justice given the legacy of colonialism which continues to impact different communities in myriad ways around the world. The essay's main point, that philosophy of education should be reconceived as pluriversal, is well taken. What I understand this to mean is that philosophy of education should affirm views that have been treated as inferior and insignificant in the past, reconsidering what is mainstream so that we are not only widening the field's scope but also disrupting it's so called centre, which reflects only a small minority of voices and perspectives in the world. The collective essay also makes some significant strides to go beyond our original question and framing to reconceptualise how we can begin to move toward a more pluriversal framing that is more useful in African, Indigenous, and Islamic contexts.

One of the most important points the authors make reveals a sticking point or ongoing roadblock we face in aiming to develop a global or pluriversal view: the problem of language and conceptualisation: Why even mention the west? Must the west be involved or included? In her contribution to the collective essay, Precious Simba illustrates this problem starkly as a source of a wound faced by those who are 'deselected from the archive, amputated from the dominant narratives of knowledge', when we continue to observe and be shaped by the admission of the historical and ongoing centrality of the west. We cannot help but notice the presence and significance of the west in philosophy and education around the world, yet somehow when we do so, its logics begin to inaptly inform (or distort) our questions and responses to it. When the west remains foregrounded, all else seems inescapably peripheral, additive, or alternative. There is philosophy, and then there is Chinese philosophy, African philosophy, women's philosophy. There does not seem to be enough space for so many to sit in the periphery, and it is not acceptable to conceptualise most of everyone in the world at the margins. On the other hand, people in the west are perhaps just as bitter of enemies of the terms 'west' and 'western' as others. What do these terms really mean? Who or what exactly is western? No matter where one is located, the terms reveal almost nothing, but appear to be a political weapon of whoever fancies themselves non-western. It seems to be used as a way for people like me to complain without providing any useful specific reference points or particular causes for concern.

So how do we move beyond the west? It is indeed appropriate in this context to shift focus entirely to a different context for understanding and knowledge production. Thus, many authors in the collective essay seek other foundations and centres from which the west (whatever it is) is relatively more peripheral and insignificant (as it indeed is to many people in their ordinary and academic lives around the world). People in England and the United States are not that concerned with Tanzania or Iran or South Africa. So why should people in the latter contexts be so fascinated by the west?

Yet as we seek to articulate important sites, we face similar challenges. What is African or Chinese? While Kwak and I have sought to focus on Asia or East Asia as one potential counter location and particular social site beyond the west, such a mapping also resists any kind of generalization. Asia and 'the east' are also in part descriptions of the world that come from the west. Thus, such terms as more appropriate focuses as cultural or social locations are not much more helpful than is 'western'

and continue to reflect a western view even if the west is not mentioned. As Thaddeus Metz notes in his remarks within the collective essay, we can distinguish African from western, but then we find there are exceptions to any generalisations we might aim to make. Somehow the west creeps back in. There are African philosophers in the west, while communitarians are (generally) western or western-based thinkers, whose perspectives share some common characteristics with many other philosophies and traditions around the world. Here, the west seems inescapable as a kind of shorthand for the global or universal view that still excludes and pushes aside many people in the world.

Perhaps Indigeneity is a more useful starting point. What makes 'the west' problematic is not anything inherent to anyone in the western world or who is influenced by western cultures, but the sense of its global dominance. Yet as Kai Horsthemke notes in his contribution to the collective essay, Islam is also a kind of global discourse that has spread. It is also tricky and questionable to attempt to treat Islam as a homogenous monolithic, to give it one specific flavour rather than many diverse views, as many authors of the collective essay reflect upon. And there is an array of colonial forces around the world that are not western that should also be critically contended with, rather than unquestionably celebrated. In this context, conflating everything that is not 'western' with Indigeneity and marginality goes too far and hides power plays at hand in defining Islam and other communities, such as 'Asia' and even Indigeneity (Mika, 2015).

In sum, I wish to thank the authors of 'A pluriversal philosophy of education: Opening the dialogue' for continuing and deepening questioning about what philosophy of education is and can be. Their recommendations to think beyond and more deeply are inspiring calls for action at the levels of language, thought, and conceptualisation. Their work can be a foundation for further diverse reflections on how to move the field and shift it in positive, productive ways in the future.

Note

1. *Izinganekwane zika gogo* is isiNdebele that can be translated – the folktales of grandmother.

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