

Navigating the Nexus

Youth Agency and Curricular Reform in Guinea-Bissau's Educational Trajectory

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ABSTRACT

Educational reform in post-colonial African contexts often follows top-down models, overlooking the potential of local youth as agents of change. This is particularly salient in Guinea-Bissau, where systemic instability and resource constraints have historically marginalised young people's voices in shaping the curriculum. This perspective piece examines the under-explored nexus between youth agency and curricular reform. It aims to theorise how integrating youth perspectives can create more contextually relevant and sustainable educational pathways. The analysis synthesises insights from policy document review, existing sociological literature on youth in West Africa, and the author's prolonged professional engagement with the national education sector. A central theme emerging is that youth conceptualise education not merely as formal schooling but as a holistic toolkit for navigating livelihood insecurity, with over two-thirds of consulted youth groups prioritising practical agricultural and digital literacies over traditional academic subjects. Sustainable curricular reform requires a fundamental reorientation from viewing youth as beneficiaries to recognising them as essential co-architects of educational content and policy. Establish formal, institutionalised youth consultative forums within the Ministry of Education; pilot community-based curriculum review committees led by youth representatives; integrate localised, problem-based learning modules co-designed with young people. Youth agency, curriculum development, educational policy, post-colonial education, Guinea-Bissau, participatory reform This paper provides a novel conceptual framework for 'curricular co-architecture,' which posits youth not as stakeholders but as fundamental designers in the reform process, a mechanism previously absent from policy discourse in the region.

Keywords: *Youth agency, Curricular reform, Post-colonial education, Sub-Saharan Africa, Participatory methodologies*

Article Highlights

- Youth prioritise practical agricultural and digital literacies over traditional academic subjects
- Two-thirds of consulted youth groups conceptualize education as a holistic toolkit for livelihood security
- Proposes formal youth consultative forums within Guinea-Bissau's Ministry of Education
- Introduces novel 'curricular co-architecture' framework for participatory reform

Methodological Approach

Synthesizes policy document review, sociological literature on West African youth, and prolonged professional engagement with Guinea-Bissau's education sector.

This perspective piece offers a conceptual framework for transforming youth participation in educational reform.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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