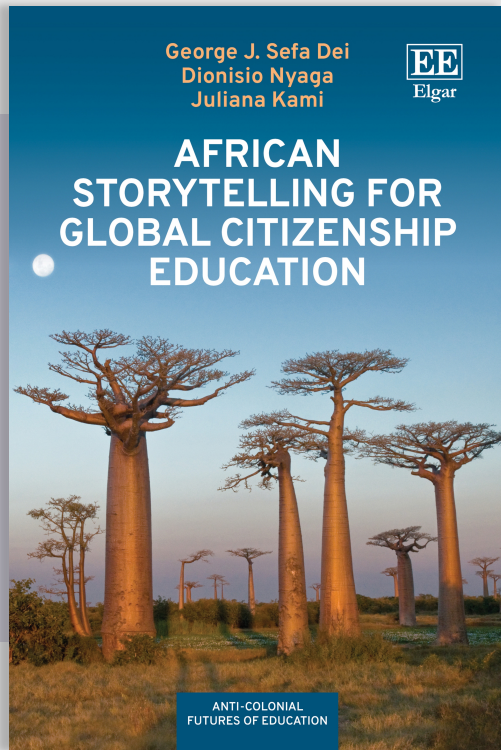




Written by George J. Sefa Dei,
Dionisio Nyaga, and Juliana Kami

Teachers College Record Book Review

African Storytelling for Global Citizenship Education

Reviewed by Rachel Kamnkhwani

Storytelling has long been recognized as a powerful means of preserving history, transmitting cultural values, and shaping communities. Yet within formal education, it has often been relegated to folklore or viewed as supplementary to “legitimate” forms of knowledge. In *African Storytelling for Global Citizenship Education*, Dei et al. (2025) challenge

this assumption by positioning African storytelling as a sophisticated epistemology, a transformative pedagogy, and a foundation for global citizenship education. At a time when educators continue to rethink curricula through decolonial and culturally responsive perspectives, this book offers a timely and important contribution.

The authors argue that African storytelling is a living knowledge system through which communities create, validate, and transmit knowledge across generations. In doing so, they position storytelling not only as a philosophy of education but also as a decolonial practice that challenges the longstanding privileging of Western knowledge systems. The book is thoughtfully organized, guiding readers from theoretical foundations to practical applications.

The opening chapters establish storytelling within an anti-colonial framework for research and education. Chapter 2 is particularly compelling because it positions global storytelling as an anti-colonial research methodology. Dei and colleagues argue that anti-colonial praxis requires scholars to confront the “value gap” between knowledge historically recognized as legitimate and knowledge that has been marginalized or rendered invisible through colonialism. More than a discussion of research methods, this chapter calls for epistemic justice by recognizing Indigenous storytelling as a rigorous approach to knowledge production and education. The book also demonstrates the breadth and diversity of African storytelling traditions. Drawing on examples from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Niger, Somalia, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and other African contexts, the authors show how different communities have preserved stories across

generations while transmitting values, histories, and cultural identities. Rather than presenting African storytelling as a single tradition, they emphasize its diversity while highlighting shared educational principles across cultures. The later chapters build on this broader overview through a sustained examination of Aembu oral traditions from Kenya.

Chapters 3 through 5 explore Aembu short stories and songs, riddles (*ndai*), and Aembu and Swahili proverbs (*methali*). Each tradition serves a distinct educational purpose while collectively preserving cultural memory, nurturing identity, strengthening moral reasoning, and cultivating critical thinking. The discussion of *ndai* is particularly engaging because it demonstrates that riddles are much more than children's games. Instead, they function as pedagogical tools that encourage inquiry, creativity, dialogue, and problem solving. Likewise, the exploration of proverbs illustrates how concise expressions of wisdom communicate enduring lessons about leadership, ethical living, relationships, and community responsibility. Together, these chapters demonstrate that African oral traditions are rich educational resources with enduring relevance for contemporary education.

Among the book's most significant contributions is its reconceptualization of storytelling as both a communal responsibility and a communal way of knowing. The authors write that "storytelling is a communal responsibility and duty" (p. 8), emphasizing that stories ensure younger generations learn the values, histories, and responsibilities of their communities. They further argue that "knowledge production is a communal endeavour, where people come together to share their experiences" (p. 8). Indigenous storytelling is therefore presented as a collaborative process in which storytellers and listeners create meaning together rather than simply transferring information from one person to another. This perspective challenges individualistic models of teaching and learning by emphasizing dialogue, reciprocity, and collective responsibility.

As someone who grew up in Malawi, I found this discussion particularly meaningful because it reflects educational traditions that continue to shape many African communities. Learning has long occurred through relationships among elders, children, families, and the wider community. Stories shared around evening fires and in classrooms were not separate from education; they were education. By validating these traditions, Dei and colleagues affirm Indigenous educational philosophies grounded in community, reciprocity, and shared responsibility while encouraging educators to reconsider what counts as legitimate knowledge.

One of the book's most innovative contributions appears in Chapter 6, where the authors move from theory to practice through four Indigenous pedagogical models: the pedagogy of the fire, the pedagogy of the tree, the pedagogy of the circle, and the pedagogy of the feast. These pedagogies offer compelling alternatives to teacher-centered instruction by encouraging educators to rethink where learning occurs, who participates in knowledge creation, and how educational spaces can reflect Indigenous values of dialogue, reciprocity, and community engagement. Rather than confining learning to classrooms, the authors demonstrate that meaningful education also takes place through relationships with people, culture, land, and community. For teacher educators, educational leaders, and curriculum scholars, this chapter provides some of the book's most practical and inspiring contributions.

The book concludes by looking toward the future. In Chapter 7, the authors argue that cultural stories are not simply repositories of tradition but resources for imagining educational futures. Their discussion of the politics of educational futurities reminds readers that storytelling is both an

act of remembering and an act of imagining. Stories help communities preserve their histories while envisioning more just, equitable, and culturally grounded educational systems. This vision extends naturally to the authors' conception of global citizenship education, which is grounded in mutual responsibility, relational ethics, and community rather than individualism. In doing so, they offer a compelling alternative to dominant global citizenship frameworks that often overlook Indigenous knowledge systems and experiences.

African Storytelling for Global Citizenship Education is a thoughtful, intellectually rich, and timely contribution to educational scholarship. By weaving together Indigenous methodologies, diverse African storytelling traditions, innovative pedagogical models, and a vision for educational futurities, the authors demonstrate the transformative potential of storytelling in education. Rather than simply advocating for the inclusion of Indigenous content in the curriculum, they challenge educators to recognize Indigenous ways of knowing as foundational to teaching, learning, and global citizenship. This book is essential reading for scholars of curriculum, Indigenous studies, educational leadership, teacher education, and global citizenship education. Above all, it reminds us that many of the educational practices needed to create more just and inclusive schools have long existed within Indigenous communities. Our task is to recognize, value, and learn from them.

Reviewer Biography

Rachel Kamnkhwani, PhD, is a scholar of educational leadership whose research focuses on successful school leadership, women's leadership, educational equity, and social justice in African educational contexts. Using qualitative and narrative methodologies, she explores how culture, community, and local context shape leadership, school improvement, and educational opportunities for diverse communities.