African Studies: Knowledge Production and Beyond

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Abstract

The field of African Studies has emerged in recent years (1960s and 1970s) from obscurity to global recognition as an intellectual area of inquiry. It offers academic and career opportunities in advanced studies, ranging from certificates and diplomas to the bachelors, masters, doctorate degrees and post-doctorate work. Like other disciplines, African Studies as a multi-disciplinary area is engaged in research/knowledge production, teaching and public service. Yet a review of related literature in the field suggests that many critical challenges remain. It is hypothesized in this paper that until African Studies extends beyond knowledge production the field is unlikely to make significant and meaningful impact on African sustainable development.

Résumé

Au cours des dernières années, le domaine des études africaines a émergé de l'obscurité pour être maintenant reconnue en tant que véritable domaine de recherche. Il offre des opportunités académiques et professionnelles dans l'enseignement supérieur, allant de certificats et de diplômes aux baccalauréats, maîtrises, doctorats et post-doctorats. Comme d'autres, un programe d'études africaines est multidisciplinaire et vise la production de connaissances, l'enseignement et les services publics. Pourtant, une analyse bibliographique liée à ce domaine suggère l'existence de nombreux défis. Dans cet article, nous posons comme hypothèse que tant que le domaine des études africaines ne s'étend pas au-delà de la production du savoir, il est peu probable que ce domaine ait un impact important et significatif sur le développement durable de l'Afrique.

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INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of knowledge and knowledge production has been a major source of challenge to the human race. The literature suggests that the search for knowledge is as old as the history of civilizations. Yet the production of knowledge, old and new, continues to pose major challenges, even in the contemporary era of high technology, globalization and innovation. The challenges include effective strategies for knowledge dissemination, the application of knowledge, and sustainability. The focus of this paper is therefore two-fold: (1) the dissemination of knowledge in African Studies in an age of global information, communications and technology, (ICT) and (2) the application of knowledge as a viable means for transforming societies for the common good. Thus this paper aims at examining knowledge and its production in the context of African Studies as a multidisciplinary academic area studies enterprise. It suggests that for African Studies to undertake adequately the task of disseminating knowledge about Africa to Africans for their transformation and development, its strategy of disseminating knowledge must change.

KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

The recent demands for the study of knowledge in Africa (Haverkort, Burgoa, Shankar, & Millar 2012; Millar 2006; Boonzaaijer & Apusigah 2008; Houtondji 1997; Senghor 1997; Nkrumah 1963) pose, at a minimum, two sets of challenges: (1) a careful examination of Western epistemology and its interpretation of African history and culture, and (2) the development of African epistemology in the African context and the globalization of knowledge production. In both cases, scholars and practitioners have, among other things, grappled with four important questions, namely, what is knowledge? What is the structure of knowledge? What are the sources of knowledge? What are the limits of knowledge? It may be true that contemporary research and advocacy of indigenous and endogenous knowledge is founded on the earlier pioneering works of many ethnoscientists such as Lewis (1975), Wyman (1964), Conklin (1957). The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2005) has provided an impressive list of scholars who have attempted to address these questions: Kornblith (2002); Klein (1999); Audi (1998); Axtell (1997); Alston (1989); Chisholm (1977; 1982); BonJour (1985); Dancy (1985); Ginet (1975);

Armstrong (1973). Other scholars have confronted similar questions such as from where do we get our knowledge? How are our beliefs justified? How do we perceive the world around us? Do we know anything at all? However, based on a review of related literature, the fundamental question of what knowledge is remains unresolved and different schools of thought on the question have emerged. There is the tripartite theory of knowledge which defines knowledge as justified true belief; the Gettier (1963) cases that demonstrate that some justified true beliefs do not constitute knowledge; and the African epistemology which is frequently referred to as exogenous, indigenous and endogenous knowledge (Ray 2000; den Biggelaar 1994; Gyekye 1987; Balibutsa 1985; Kagame 1958; etc.).

A major challenge to the development of African Studies, first in the Diaspora, and second in Africa after WWII and African independence respectively, was three-fold: the reconstruction of African history which was distorted by colonialists and western historiography; the dissemination of true knowledge about Africa and the Diaspora, and the application of the knowledge produced in African Studies, a multidisciplinary area studies and academic unit.

We shall begin with the first order of challenge, i.e. the reconstruction of Africa and African history. For the most part the task of reconstructing Africa and its history may be viewed as a reactionary academic endeavour. African scholars both in Africa and the Diaspora reacted to European understanding and characterization of Africa as the "dark continent." European thinkers and scholars in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries had concluded that Africa and its people had no history worthy of academic pursuit. This school of thought was advocated by Toynbee (1934), Murray and Hernstein (1994), Newton (1923) and Hegel (1956). Another school of thought was represented by Mazrui (1987) claiming the great civilizations in Africa as a product of Islamic influence. Undoubtedly, there is much research evidence about Islamic knowledge in different parts of Africa, as indicated by Gemmeke (2009), Dilley (2005), and Umar (2004). It is important to note, however, that the Islamic knowledge does not replace African endogenous and indigenous knowledge. Indeed the sources of knowledge production in African Studies are multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary; they include archaeology, agronomy, anthropology, history, the arts, languages, philosophy, religion, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, music, sociology, geography, literature (written and oral), biology, agriculture etc. Equally important are factors that define the construction of African knowledge such as wisdom, the ancestors,

traditional healers, land use systems, traditional leadership and governance, funeral ceremonies, proverbs, experiences and observations, supernaturalism, calendar, concept and use of time, witchcraft theories and practices and so on.

Many western anthropologists subscribed to the notion of Africans as primitive people; Africans and peoples of African descent were considered less than human. The US constitution once considered Black Americans as two-third human and inherently inferior to whites (see Walton and Smith 2006; Wiencek 2004). The response to such (mis)conceptions ushered in the first phase of knowledge production in African Studies. Early Africanists like Woodson (1939), often referred to as the father of Black history, Du Bois (1903), Davidson (1969), Williams (1987), Nkrumah (1962), Dike (1956), Herskovits (1967), Falona (1999), Snowden (1970), Clark (1970), Ajayi (1985), Fage (1970), Mbiti (1969), William (1944), Azikiwe (1937), Soyinka (1990), Césaire (2001), Diop (1988), Asante (1990), Equiano (1989), James (1989), Blyden (1887), Rogers (1974), van Sertima (1976), Nketia (1949; 1964; 1966) and others worked tirelessly to refute European false assertions about Africa and the African Diaspora. Institutions, including academic and sector service and African Studies professional organizations were established to research, document and promote authentic studies of Africa and the Diaspora. The Afrocentric perspective / approach to African Studies continues and it will continue as long as the legacies of Eurocentricism and colonialism exist.

The second phase of knowledge production in African Studies is the recent focus on indigenous/endogenous knowledge production. As defined in various ways by some of its proponents—Hountondji (1997), Falola (1999), and Sillitoe (1998), endogenous knowledge is local, knowledge within. Indigenous knowledge on the other hand, has been defined in different ways. For example, Maurial (1999: 62) defined Indigenous knowledge as "the peoples' cognitive and wise legacy as a result of their interaction with nature in a common territory." Another scholar, De La Torre (2004) defined indigenous knowledge as the established defined knowledge of indigenous nations, their worldviews, and the customs and traditions that direct them. While Castellano (2000) described the characteristics of indigenous knowledge as personal, oral, experiential, holistic and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language, Maurial (1999) on the other hand identified the characteristics of indigenous knowledge as local, holistic and oral. In any event, it is important to note the connection between indigenous knowledge and worldviews. The implication here is

that both indigenous knowledge and worldviews can inform each other. The debate over indigenous and endogenous knowledge has gone beyond definition of terms and their characteristics; new research paradigms are being advanced.

Smith (1999) has identified the need for modern indigenous peoples' research project that resists the oppression found within research; Garroutte (2003) argued for an approach to research that stems from indigenous peoples' roots and principles. Relying on the definitions of a research paradigm provided by Wilson (2001) and other scholars, Hart (2010) has provided a framework for the development of an indigenous research paradigm. His research paradigm was based on the following four concepts: (1) ontology—a belief in the nature of reality; your way of being, what you believe is real in the world; (2) epistemology—how you think about that reality; (3) methodology—how you are going to use your way of thinking, that is, your epistemology; and (4) axiology—a set of morals or a set of ethics. Thus Hart (2010) argues that the existence of indigenous/endogenous ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology, that is, an indigenous/endogenous research paradigm, must reflect these four aspects of knowledge. He concludes by advocating indigenous control over research by involving indigenous people in developing, approving and implementing the research. It is important to note that Hart is not alone in the decolonizing efforts of indigenous peoples. Arguably, a fifth aspect that could contribute to Hart's proposed research paradigm is the concept gnoseology. As Haverkort, Burgoa, Shankar, & Millar (2012) have defined it, gnoseology refers to the way we learn, teach, and adapt our knowledge. This definition was based on their pioneering study of endogenous knowledge in Northern Ghana.

In the quest for knowledge and knowledge production, many African scholars, including scholars of African Descent in the Diaspora have conducted extensive research to document African contributions to human civilization. There is an impressive catalogue of African thinkers both in Africa and the Diaspora who have made enormous contributions to knowledge production and the advancement of African Studies throughout the world. It is not within the scope of this paper to provide a long list of the thinkers here, but suffice it to indicate just a few favourites: Manetho (1940), a historian of 3rd century Egypt, El Bakri, 1014-1094; Ibn Batuta, 1304-1369; lbn Khaldun, 1332-1406; Leo Africanus (1494-1554); Ahmad Baba (1556-1627); Asante (1990; 2007); Nkrumah (1964; 1963; 1962); Du Bois (1947); Dike (1964; 1956); Appiah (1997); Woodson (1939); Senghor (1997); Fanon (1967);

William (1944); Mbiti (1969); Otite (2002); Gyekye (2003; 1987); Diop (1988); Soyinka (1962); Achebe (1958); and Ki-Zerbo (1964).

Knowledge production in African Studies is not limited to African thinkers and scholars in Africa and the Diaspora. Many Western scholars have also been involved in researching African knowledge systems, for example, Leakey (1977); Davidson (1969); Herskovits (1967); Fage (1970); Greenberg (1966); Oliver (2000). Another important observation that is worth mentioning is the fact that there are millions of African thinkers who did not publish but nevertheless contributed to a better understanding of African knowledge systems through oral tradition/African oral literature. An example of such rich African knowledge production is the pioneering work of Vansina (1985). Knowledge production in African Studies remains an ongoing and challenging academic enterprise however there is enough evidence to demonstrate its impact on the global community and the disciplines (Bates & Mudimbe 1993; Falola & Jennings 1994; Guyer 1996; Gordon 2004; Fyfe 1994; Olaniyan & Sweet 2010). Its future greater impact may depend largely on the dissemination of its knowledge and knowledge production and application. It was in this context that the First International Congress of Africanists, held at the University of Ghana, from December 11-18, 1962, made 20 recommendations to advance knowledge production and its use (see Bown & Crowder 1964). The Congress was convened by President Kwame Nkrumah and headed by Professor K.O. Dike, the first African Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan.

Application of knowledge production

The transformation of knowledge into social action for the greater good is a major goal of African Studies. Our concern here therefore is to focus on the application. It is contended here that the improvement of human quality of life depends, in a large measure, on the application of knowledge; the production of knowledge for knowledge sake is not to be encouraged, especially in a global age of information and high technology. An effective application requires innovative approaches. The application of African Studies knowledge production may be viewed from four perspectives: (1) the Africanization of the disciplines, institutions and systems, (2) the transformation of African Studies knowledge production into social policy for social

change, (3) the application of African Studies knowledge production and dissemination for individual and national development in Africa and the Diaspora, and (4) African Studies knowledge production and innovation (something that is new or unusual), for example, a PhD degree in African endogenous studies—studies that will borrow from other academic disciplines (a new paradigm) to study a people within a defined space.

The application of knowledge production in African Studies began with the Africanization of the disciplines; it was also designed to eliminate colonial influences. At the official opening of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, on October 25, 1963, President Kwame Nkrumah did not fail to charge the Institute with the pursuit of the Pan-African ideas by eliminating all colonial influences in African Studies, extending the areas of the study to peoples of African descent in the Americas and the Caribbean, and by coordinating with institutes and centres of African Studies in other African countries to produce an "extensive and diversified library of African classics" (Nkrumah 1963).[2] Falola and Jennings (2002) revisited the Nkrumah idea when they urged the Africanization of knowledge and the role of African Studies across the disciplines. Indeed Meier and Rudwick (1986) in their volume, *Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980*, provided enough evidence to document the impact of black Diaspora history on the historical profession in the United States of America. This was perhaps an unintended consequence of the application of the African American knowledge production. As a matter of fact the historical profession has changed throughout the world. No longer can any well informed scholar deny Africa of its rich history and culture. This is not to say that there is complete objectivity in historical studies; indeed it would be nothing but a "noble dream" to expect complete objectivity in the disciplines.

Second is the transformation of African Studies knowledge production into social policy for the greater good. Social scientists and other African Studies scholars have,

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[2] The bad news is that only very few universities in Africa have institutes or centres of African Studies. Africa-centered educational systems are still lacking in Africa. Africa does not have any famous archives on African collections; most libraries with substantial volume of African collections are outside the continent and are mostly in the United States of America, Canada, and Europe.

for more than six decades, been engaged in conducting research for the improvement of human quality of life in Africa; they have engaged communities in their research agenda. Vansina's (1985) focus on African oral tradition, which involved indigenous community people, represents an excellent example of African knowledge production. Hart's (2010) research paradigm that involves innovative research methods with community persons is also another example. Such research approaches are imperative to transforming knowledge into social policy. Notwithstanding the variety of research approaches in African Studies, there are numerous research publications documented by Africanists throughout the world. Everywhere in the Americas (United States, Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean), Europe, Russia, Asia (China, India, Japan, Indonesia), Australia and Africa, Africanists have produced new knowledge in numerous and major areas—Pan-Africanism, African unity, public health, education, peace and security, economic development, foreign affairs, food production, nationalism, archaeology, medicine, arts, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), geography and resources, religion, music and dance, economics, psychology, films and theatre, etc. For example, the Institute of African Studies at University of Ibadan has a post graduate degree programme in peace and conflict studies. The programme is regarded as "a bold and major contribution to global peace initiative" (IAS, University of Ibadan 2009: 41). The focus of the programme is on how to produce peaceful outcomes from conflict situations. According to its Director, Professor Isaac O. Albert, graduates from the programme are transforming knowledge into policy and action. Knowledge and skills are being applied in solving local conflicts in Nigeria.[3]

As we experience the impact of technology on a global scale the knowledge and understanding of Africa is supporting technological innovation. For example, the use of phones is now a common communication phenomenon throughout Africa; innovators are using their knowledge of Africa to promote their products as they at the same time navigate various African public policies. Other examples of transforming knowledge into social policy are the University of Ghana's Centre for Social Policy Studies; and also a forum organized by the Ghana Culture Forum, held at the National

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[3] Interview by authors with Professor Isaac O. Albert at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan on June 18, 2013.

Theatre, Accra, on May 7, 2013 themed "Transforming the Culture and Creative Arts Sector: Policies, Strategies and Initiatives."

As indicated above, African Studies and national development was the primary goal of President Kwame Nkrumah, at least at the time the Institute of African Studies was established at the University of Ghana in 1961. As he noted at the First International Congress of Africanists in 1962, "While some of us are engaged with the political unification of Africa, Africanists everywhere must also help in building the spiritual and cultural foundations for the unity of our continent" (Nkrumah 1962: 10).

President Nkrumah's first objective was the unity of the diverse peoples of Ghana as a major effort toward national development. Emeritus Professor Nketia was appointed Director of the Institute in 1965 to help to achieve this objective through the study and use of African culture, music and dance. The idea was to bring Ghanaians of different ethnic groups and faiths together and also use culture as a tool for national development. In the same vein, K.O. Dike, in his welcome address to the delegates at the First International Congress of Africanists in 1962 mentioned above, stressed the importance of African Studies by urging African scholars to look, without in anyway compromising academic standards, at Africa's history, culture and development from the African point of view (see Dike 1964). To paraphrase President Nkrumah, we must decolonize the African mind as imperative to real African identity and development. Thus a major challenge to all Africanists is to work for a complete emancipation of the mind from all forms of domination, control and enslavement.

DISSEMINATION INNOVATION

Here we consider the idea of knowledge production in African Studies and innovation in the application of knowledge and its dissemination. A brief look at the literature on innovation is essential here. The word "innovation" is generally used in different sectors to refer to something that is new or creative or an unusual idea. It has become common to describe anything new as innovative. Innovation may be defined as the "process of translating an idea or invention into a good service that creates values or for which customers will pay...[the] idea must be replicable at an economical cost and

must satisfy a specific need." [4] Frankelieus' (2009: 49) definition provides an application perspective in line with the concept of originality: an innovation is something original, new and important—in whatever field "that breaks into (or obtains a foothold in) society, often via the market..." Frankelieus (2009: 49) argues that "innovation is not only about creativity. To much larger extent innovation is about action and results." In organizational context, however, innovation may be linked to positive changes in a variety of ways; for example, changes in the use of time or personnel, efficiency, productivity, communications, dissemination of knowledge produced, quality of products, competitiveness, market value and market share, organizational mission, goals, objectives, culture etc.

But where does innovation come from? In other words, what are the sources of innovation? The general sources of innovations are different changes in industry and market structures, in local and global demographics, in human perceptions, mood and meaning, in the amount of already available scientific knowledge, etc. (Drucker 2006). Two new sources of innovation are: manufacturer innovation—where a person or an agent innovates in order to sell the innovation; and the end–user innovation where a person or an agent develops an innovation for its own use because existing products do not meet their needs. In his book on the subject of sources of innovation, von Hippel (1988), an MIT economist, identifies end-user innovation as most important. According to Engelberger (1983), innovations require three things: a recognized need, competent people with relevant technology, and financial support. Tarde (1903), on the other hand, defines the innovation-decision process as a series of steps, including: knowledge, forming an attitude, a decision to adopt or reject, implementation use, and confirmation of the decision. Based on the understanding of the constituents of the concept of innovation and the importance of innovation for institutional organization, African Studies must seek to innovate its application of knowledge as well as its entire organization. This includes its mission, goals and objectives, its research methods, theories and knowledge dissemination strategies. How, for example, can African Studies disseminate knowledge about Africa to Africans in the rural areas and among the urban core population? This task alone

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[4]BusinessDictionary.Com (2013). Innovation. Retrieved August 15, 2013, from
http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/innovation.html

requires innovation. The traditional dissemination strategy was and still is teaching or giving lectures in the classrooms. Africa does not have enough educational institutions, especially the tertiary institutions to educate its peoples throughout the continent.

For African Studies to tackle adequately the task of disseminating knowledge about Africa to Africans in the rural as well as urban areas, its strategy of disseminating knowledge must change. It must go beyond the conventional classroom teachings and lectures and take into account the channels of communication that obtain in Africa today. African Studies must innovate its strategies. Traditionally Africans have their own channels of communication and knowledge dissemination, which, despite the upsurge of new forms of knowledge dissemination introduced from abroad, have survived and are still important and relevant means of communicating and imparting knowledge to the people. Thus Africans today find themselves caught in the web of traditional as well as what is now commonly known as modern forms of communication, hence a new way of communicating information to them must be sought.

There is often the view, as Wilson (1987) points out, that traditional channels of communication are mutually hostile to modern systems of communication. That is to say, "tradition and modernity" ("indigenous" knowledge and "scientific" knowledge) were regarded as mutually exclusive in content. Such a view, as Wilson (1987) and Marsden (1994) argue, is untenable. In social contexts conflicts often arise but they do so not necessarily "because one form is old and the other new, but because human beings usually resist change of any sort" (Wilson 1987: 88; see also Fine 1986; Baker 1989). In many situations in Africa, the traditional and the modern have co-existed. The continuous existence and operation of traditional channels of information dissemination in many rural as well as some urban societies in Africa in the face of the presence of modern forms of communication point to their relevance and adaptability. There may be differences in their principles from the new systems introduced from abroad, but the traditional channels of communication remain essential sources by which the information needs of the rural populations in Africa and other developing countries are met (Ugboajah 1979; Wilson 1987). There is arguably no doubt that modern channels of communication—radio, television, telephones, computers, etc. have taken central role in knowledge and information dissemination in African societies, however the effectiveness and credibility of

traditional forms of communication cannot be underestimated. For instance, an item of information that comes from a chief or a traditional leader is most likely to be accepted by a traditional African more than he or she would one from a radio, unless authentication is given to it by the chief (Nwokolo 2004; Uwakwe 2004). It is noted that northerner Nigerians "with an established way of life are likely to listen to their religious leaders and traditional leaders" (Uwakwe 2004: 29). Traditional systems of knowledge dissemination employ face-to-face approach and have served the people and are still relevant and important in many ways. In African societies, traditional channels of communication are:

> instrumental in the mobilization of people at the grassroots level for community development and national consciousness; the enlightenment of people in cultural, political, health, and other programmes leading toward self-actualization; public entertainment through arts, cultural festivals, musicals and dramatic performances; and intra-cultural, intercultural and other communication purposes leading to group and national cohesiveness (Wilson 1978: 87).

Since Africans today find themselves in highly diversified societies where 'tradition' and 'modernity' coexist, there is no one system of information or knowledge dissemination that is perfect and adequate. There is a need for a new strategy of disseminating knowledge especially about Africa for the benefit of Africans. The new strategy must move the discussion beyond the binary of tradition/modern knowledge dissemination. The two channels must not be seen as disparate but as complementary frameworks for best practice in knowledge dissemination. Thus the new strategy must include old and new Afrocentric and Eurocentric dissemination channels: oral tradition, talking drum, grapevine, mentoring, writing, lectures, town halls, body language, music, dance, the arts, paintings, proverb, sign language, carvings, publications, storytelling, electronic media, forums, festivals, rallies, interpretation of dreams, gossip, ceremonies, symbols, and rituals, as well as the conventional classroom teaching and lecturing in schools and universities. In other words, research findings—knowledge produced—on Africa must be communicated to the people through both the traditional and the modern modes of information dissemination. Multiple communication approaches must be employed.

In other academic disciplines and subject areas and in many organizations and institutions this innovation we are suggesting may not be "new". As noted already, in the areas of education, natural resource (environmental) management, human and food security, health, religion, etc. there have been many of such innovations. An example is a report by Musoke (1999) that Gorjestani (2000) refers to. It is about how in the Iganga district of Uganda, local communities and officials leveraged "traditional knowledge systems with simple and appropriate modern communications [that] helped to dramatically reduce high maternal mortality rates." A known and trusted system—traditional birth attendant (TBA)—by Ugandan women was used in the project. The TBAs were given walkie-talkies to communicate with public health workers from their work stations. From their remote areas, the TBAs became

> … the referral system to modern healthcare. In cases of complications or emergencies, the TBA could now call in the modern mobile unit or refer the patient to the rural health centre. As a result, maternal mortality in the Iganga district reportedly declined by 50 per cent in three years (Gorjestani 2000: 2).

A Theatre for Development group in Malya in Tanzania is reported to have been so well accepted by the community that, among other things,

> … they were able to influence the Malya Christian sect of the African Inland Church to stop its hostility towards drama performances. In general, the campaign led to a revitalization of cultural life, and paved the way for economic projects to alleviate problems such as unemployment and vagrancy (Kerr (1995) quoted in Kvam (2012: 48).

Gorjestani (2000) refers to a report from Senegal by Easton (1998 and 2001) of how an adult literacy course conducted by TOSTAN, a local NGO, empowered a group of women from the Malicounda village who convinced the traditional spiritual leaders to join their campaign to fight for the stoppage of the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), which "external partners had for years engaged the country authorities to abolish.., though with little success" (Gorjestani 2000: 2). The women's campaign caused the declaration in Senegal in 1999 of the illegality of the practice of FGM in that country. The campaign spread to other groups in neighbouring communities and neighbouring countries and over 200 communities abolished the

practice. Again, it is reported that in Uganda a project titled *Electronic Delivery of Agricultural Information to Rural Communities in Uganda*, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) under the Acacia Initiative, is being carried out by the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and CAB International (CABI). The project sought to use selected traditional media and modern ICTs such as television, radio, print media, video, e-mail, CD-ROMs to improve access to agricultural information by rural communities. Telecentres that already existed in the communities were being used as information resource centres (Munyua 2000). On how modern technologies have enhanced innovation in the application of knowledge generally and how new and innovative ideas are tested and applied in institutions and centres, we further mention, among many more examples, the Silicon Valley at Stanford University, Research Triangle at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Route 128 at Harvard University, and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences of the University of Florida.

As indicated above, reports on many of such strategic innovations abound in the literature. But in the discipline of African Studies, such innovations are not adequately created and employed. The copious knowledge produced on Africa and its Diaspora by Africanists over six decades remains circulating mostly within the academia. There have not been many innovative ways and efforts to communicate works produced in African Studies to the people at the grassroots level for community development and national consciousness. The people on whom studies are undertaken should share in the knowledge that is produced; in fact they should be the primary beneficiaries of the studies. As Antweiler (1998: 478) points out, documenting local knowledge is not just recording the knowledge contents as a product, but it requires describing the relevant cultural, social, economic and ecological processes. He argues that, "The forestry community, for example, no longer needs to publish so-called "success stories" for rather international consumption to the present extent, but it should concentrate its efforts in support of the societal processes at the local level."

The task of Africanists must go beyond acquisition of knowledge and its dissemination in the conventional way; the knowledge must be deciphered and brought to the level of the ordinary African through both traditional and modern channels of knowledge dissemination for the improvement of the quality of his or her life. In other words, researchers and disseminators must make products of their research understandable in practical terms for the people to recognize and appreciate

the usefulness or otherwise of their own experiences (beliefs, skills, practices etc.) and whether or not there is a need for change or integration with other (external) experiences for their own advancement. This requires pragmatic knowledge dissemination / communication strategies that are viable, socially responsible and appealing to the people (Singhal et al. 2004). Singhal et al. (2004: 141) have observed that "using the entertainment media for educational purposes provides an unusual opportunity to achieve this objective." We wish to suggest that the pragmatic new communication strategy that can be socially responsible, viable and appealing to (i.e. move, motivate and provoke (Kvam 2012)) the people must be varied and not just hinged on a single aspect of media: it must be via all aspects of the seemingly disparate but actually complementary (traditional and modern) channels of knowledge dissemination that pertain in Africa and its Diaspora today. This dissemination strategy is viable and important, for it is a strategy that favours "a multiplicity of communication approaches, to stimulate positive and measurable behaviour and social change" (UNICEF 2005: 6).

We recognize that not all knowledge produced in African Studies can be made practical for adoption by the people or for their direct consumption and benefit—there are some research findings that will be impossible to translate for practical purposes. We recognize also that there may be some constraints even with utilization of studies that can be adopted by people for practical purposes. These constraints may include lack of funds, personnel, logistics, goodwill of the local community and other stakeholders. We, however, think that this is where collaborations with and support from local, national and international institutions and organizations such as donor agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders will be useful.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be noted that knowledge production and dissemination in African Studies have achieved some significant milestones. Moving forward, however, there are many challenges and prospects. A major challenge is the gap between knowledge production and the application of knowledge; the Knowing and Doing Gap (KDG). This gap is further widened by inadequate dissemination methods capable of transforming knowledge into policies and actions for the common good of societies, especially the African and the Diaspora communities. It is therefore

recommended here that a new and renewed knowledge production paradigm, dissemination and application be seriously considered.

Firstly, we recommend that knowledge production in African Studies should not be limited to the social sciences and the humanities; it must include the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) areas. Africanists need to focus on the STEM areas by collaborating with the scientific and indigenous communities and engaging in African centered problem solving research that leads to knowledge production. Knowledge production should not be just for the sake of knowledge production that only creates opportunities for faculty progression, it must lead to advancement of communities. In other words, African Studies programmes must give attention to the STEM areas such as health, food and housing which contribute immensely to human quality of life. For African Studies knowledge production to be relevant and capable of contributing to national discourse and development, Africanists must engage in these areas of knowledge production and not remain content with the current status quo, otherwise they may in time become irrelevant and redundant.

Secondly, we further recommend a multiple strategy model of dissemination that takes into account different channels of communication—the traditional and the modern—as we have attempted to discuss in this paper. There is a need to take advantage of high technology and innovative approaches. This, among other things, requires a sound knowledge of relevant African languages and "cultural competencies." Africanists must disseminate knowledge beyond the four walls of the classroom to reach African villages and Diaspora ghettoes. No African should be deprived of information or research findings simply because they do not speak or read one of the former colonial masters' languages: English, French, Portuguese, German, etc. Thus we encourage African Studies programmes all over the world, especially those in Africa, to require competencies in at least one African language other than the mother tongue for all advanced degrees so that knowledge produced on Africa could also be written in African languages for the benefit of Africans for whom knowledge is produced. For example, the University of Ghana requires a course in African

Studies as a graduation requirement of its undergraduates in all disciplines;[5] this is a step in the right direction, therefore, we recommend that a similar thing be done for the language requirement that we are proposing for advanced degrees. African Studies courses and degree programmes should be made available for African and Diaspora communities through various educational systems, extension programmes, radio, television, internet and other technological means where and when possible. See Figure 1 below for the diagram of the proposed model of dissemination.
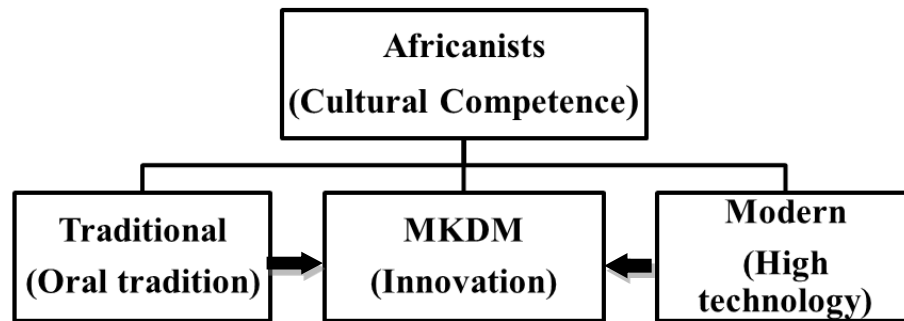

Figure 1:   Multiple Knowledge Dissemination Model (MKDM)

The third and final recommendation we offer relates to the use of the knowledge production and its dissemination, that is, the application of knowledge. Here, the emphasis is on bridging the KDG. Many examples of the application of knowledge have been cited in this paper. Some of the "best practices" cited can be adapted to the African Studies knowledge production. For example, the Silicon Valley (at Stanford University) approach can be applied in African Studies to enhance African business innovation and creativity. A generous donation of $300 million by an alumnus has enabled Stanford University to establish the Stanford Institute for Innovation in

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[5] See Owoahene-Acheampong, S. (2013). Knowledge Creation for National Advancement. In Owoahene-Acheampong, S. (Ed.). *African Studies and Knowledge Production* (pp.1-16). Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.

Developing Economies (SEED). [6] That Institute seeks to stimulate, develop and disseminate research and innovations that enable entrepreneurs, managers, and leaders to work towards alleviating poverty in developing economies. SEED's work is based on the philosophy that a critical route for economic growth is through the creation of entrepreneurial ventures and by scaling existing enterprises. The recently launched (SEED) regional innovation center is based in Accra, Ghana. It involves 36 business owners and managers representing 29 companies from West Africa—Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. The center also features a "maker lab" with prototyping capabilities. While it is too early to determine the effectiveness and results from the SEED knowledge application model in business, there appears to be enough evidence to support its potential impact in West Africa; time, however, will tell.

Meanwhile, the potential and opportunity for application innovation in Africa appears limitless. For example, there is so much "dark data" in Africa to be used for application innovation. By "dark data" we mean research resource materials that are stored in dark rooms or in places where they are being left to rot. They include library and archival materials in storages; lectures and conferences and summit materials; parliamentary documents; African presidential papers and others that are found in major cities in Africa, traditional palaces, religious institutions, national houses of chiefs and so on. It may also be noted that even where there are national archives, the materials are either not properly preserved or not preserved at all. These "dark data" have the potential of providing innovative solutions to African problems.

Another example of opportunity for innovation application in Africa is in the area of food security. Historically, "the earliest evidence of a sedentary farming complex" was found in the Nok culture in modern day Nigeria (Rupp et al. 2008). Yet today, Africa is not able to feed its people. Indeed, indigenous food production abounds in Africa, but the questions that arise are: How do producers make the food safe? How do they make them accessible in large scale? A major problem in food security in Africa is infrastructure, an important factor in food delivery and preservation. Unlike China, African governments are not providing the needed infrastructure to provide food security. For sure, there are ongoing attempts to solve these problems. But the questions that we ask are: Are these efforts Africa-centered or are they imported

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[6] http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/seed/index.html

solutions to fit into African situations? Should Africa, in this case the African Union, develop an African Food Security Innovative Center to address these issues? What steps, if any, are the Africanist communities taking to ameliorate the situation?

These shortcomings notwithstanding, Africa promises to be the world's continent of the future; it is endowed with youthful human capital and abundant natural resources. What is "missing in action" is transformational leadership and governance at multiple levels and sectors to cause individuals, public and private institutions and corporate bodies to bring about innovation and change in their fields of work to propel Africa to a high level of development.

African Studies has a major role to play in African development. It must extend beyond knowledge production to innovative dissemination of knowledge and its application to impact African sustainable development. The relevance of African Studies in Africa lies in large measure in its ability to focus (its research) on African problem solving solutions.

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