

Indigenizing Knowledge for Development: Epistemological and Pedagogical Approaches



Seth Oppong*

ABSTRACT

Possessing endogenous knowledge can help Africans formulate practical solutions to our problems that best fit our circumstances to improve our livelihood. Endogenous knowledge can be considered as knowledge about the people, by the people and for the people. This suggests that economic progress is most likely to occur in societies that succeed in linking their knowledge base to innovation systems. But can Africans create such indigenous knowledge? This paper outlines an approach that suggests modification in the current epistemology and pedagogy applied in teaching, learning and research. It is being proposed here that the African scholar should adopt a problem-oriented approach in conducting research as opposed to the current method-oriented approach that prevents the African from examining pertinent African problems. Pedagogy should also change from single-loop learning in which assumptions underlying western theories and concepts are not examined to double-loop learning. In addition, there is the need to revise the training of the next generation of African scholars and modes of knowledge dissemination. The African scholar must be educated on how to apply critical theory to screen imported knowledge. African universities should also rely less on publications in the so-called international journals as the criterion for staff promotion and rather rely more on publications in domestic journals, staff contribution to solving African problems and the number of postgraduates successfully supervised. The journey to creating indigenous knowledge will be long. As such, a 'front' should be nurtured to clear the path.

Keywords: Africanization, endogenous knowledge, epistemology, development, pedagogy

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge that is useful for development is one that can help solve societal problems. Kothari (2007) has pointed out that indigenous (or traditional) knowledge can be leveraged for human welfare and development. All other societies in the world have developed based on knowledge that can help solve their social problems. How is that the case? Van Vlaenderen (2001) makes the case that indigenous knowledge is essential for empowerment in a people-centred development paradigm as it constitutes successful ways in which people have dealt with their environment in the past and provides a basis to build on. Similarly, Korten (1980) has also advanced their idea that building on

local knowledge and resources reduces the likelihood that a development project will ‘de-skill’ the local people and increase their dependency on external experts.

The idea that contextually relevant knowledge is the basis for national development was succinctly captured by Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana. Nkrumah, in an address to the Legislative Assembly two days before the declaration of Ghana’s independence, is reported to have said that:

We must seek an African view to the problems of Africa. This does not mean that western techniques and methods are not applicable to Africa. It does mean, however, that in Ghana we must look at every problem from the African point of view ... Our whole educational system must be geared to producing a scientifically-technically minded people... I believe that one of the most important services which Ghana can perform for Africa is to devise a system of education based at its university level on concrete studies of the problems of the tropical world. The University will be the co-ordinating body for education research, ... Only with a population so educated can we hope to face the tremendous problems which confront any country attempting to raise the standard of life in a tropical zone (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh 1975: 94).

Nkrumah’s point is clear; we cannot hope to develop if we wholly depend on knowledge developed elsewhere. It is for this reason that King and McGrath (2004) have argued against the reliance on solely foreign knowledge for development, implying that there is danger associated with decontextualizing knowledge through careless borrowing from other people’s experiences. King and McGrath (2004: 5) quoted Michael Sadler, a British pioneer in comparative education, as arguing that:

We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant.

Similarly, after review of pertinent literature, Opong (2012) pointed out that many universities in the OECD countries all produce knowledge that is for local consumption and for solving their national social problems. On the other hand, many African universities are failing to produce knowledge that is contextually relevant with potential to solve African problems. As a result, there is reliance on knowledge produced by others for their society.

It even becomes more serious if we consider the importance of indigenous knowledge in the light of the criticism by Ake (2012) that Western social science is imperialistic. His argument is that Western social science is built on categorization of everything into the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ – all good things are associated with developed countries and everything bad associated with developing ones. Development translates into westernization and the pursuit of development reduces to making the developing country more like the West (Ake 2012: 11). Ake (2012: 11) even suggests that such approach to development ‘encourages dependence and inculcates a sense of inferiority’ in the people of developing countries. He argues further that as long as social scientists and students from developing countries (Africa in particular) accept such theories and phrases in their development efforts in terms of such theories, they are, in effect, acknowledging their own inferiority and the superiority of the West. ‘Their drive for development becomes a

manifestation of their belief in their own inferiority and reinforces this belief. By extension, this drive will also involve looking up to the West since it occupies the superior and enviable position of having attained the “good” state of being’ (Ake 2012: 11). This may manifest in the rejection of everything African, from the food we eat to our educational systems and therefore indigenous knowledge.

In effect, it appears that the root of all forms of Western knowledge is the erroneously strong belief in the cultural superiority of the middle class male Caucasian and enterprise capitalism. You need to take on their attributes to be recognized and accepted. That is why an African educated in a US university is respected more than the one educated in an African university, irrespective of the quality of the education actually received and their respective competence. It appears we are quick to associate and categorize all good things as originating from the West.

That Western social science exists to denigrate indigenous knowledge, which almost always serves as the basis for development everywhere, makes it urgent for African scholars to develop and disseminate endogenous knowledge for development. This shows that reliance on Western knowledge is not useful for two reasons: (1) it is not supportive of development for Africa and (2) it destroys the very indigenous knowledge needed for development, thereby creating stagnation. It creates a situation where Africans depend on knowledge that cannot support their development while at the same time it destroys the very knowledge they will need to develop.

But what constitutes indigenous knowledge? There is no single definition of indigenous knowledge (IK). In fact, others have referred to it as traditional knowledge (Kothari 2007: 4). However, the World Bank (1998: i) proposes the following definition based on some identifying characteristics:

IK is unique to a particular culture and society. It is the basis for local decision-making in agriculture, health, natural resource management and other activities. IK is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals. It is essentially tacit knowledge that is not easily codifiable.

Sinha (1997, cited in Adair 1999: 405) has intimated that ‘[indigenous] psychological knowledge’ should (a) arise from within the culture, (b) reflect local behaviours, (c) be interpreted within a local frame of reference, and (d) yield results that are locally relevant. In this paper, the view taken is that endogenous or indigenous knowledge refers to knowledge about the people, by the people and for the people. This paper, indeed, takes a perspective that might be described as ‘for us and by us’ (FUBU).

Because of the relevance of indigenous knowledge for development, this paper attempts to outline an approach that suggests modification in the current epistemology and pedagogy applied in teaching, learning and research with a FUBU framework. Given that contextually relevant knowledge is needed to propel development in Africa, it is appropriate that we examine the mode of knowledge production and dissemination processes.

2. CURRENT EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Epistemology focuses on how we come to know what we know and what counts as knowledge. In writing about the nature of knowledge development in industrial/organizational psychology in South Africa, Pietersen (2005) remarks that, though empirical research has significantly increased and become methodologically sophisticated, knowledge development is still almost wholly based on the positivist-empiricist paradigm and adaptations of non-local materials. This situation is not very different from what happens in the other disciplines and in other parts of Africa.

What this means is that knowledge development in Africa is characterized by use of research methodologies recognized as the best research protocols by the West. This is because many of the positive-empiricist research methodologies were developed by Western scholars and given the imperialistic nature of Western social science, many African scholars reject non-Western modes of knowledge production or any mode of knowledge not recognized as mainstream in the West.

Writing about the contributions of individual researchers to the indigenization drive, Adair (1999) intimates that in evolving discipline, the vast majority of researchers are either newly graduated or young researchers-in-training and as a result, many of them are only beginning to establish themselves as independent researchers. Adair (1999: 409–410) argues further that:

To these scholars, previous research serves as a model for how research should be conducted, and topics to research are readily selected from the journals. To become established as a psychologist, conducting a replication of a Western study applied to their own culture ensures a demonstration of their abilities as researchers and yields some knowledge about the replicability of the phenomena within the culture. However, it does not chart new ground for indigenous development. Research training, whether experienced abroad or locally, focuses on methodological rigour and research design. How to look for regularities and patterns of behaviour in order to identify researchable problems is seldom, if ever, taught. This training, plus their recent independence as investigators, leads new researchers to a greater emphasis on “method- fit” rather than on a problem-centred approach to research.

Adair’s depiction of scholars within imported discipline is very descriptive of the situation one finds in Africa. In fact, writing about the origin of scientific psychology in sub-Saharan Africa, Nsamenang (2007: 8) also points out that:

Constrained by a heavy dose of received knowledge, a high degree of imitative and replicative research and an extensive scientific acculturation of African scholars and researchers, many African psychologists are largely unaware of the Eurocentric nature of the discipline. They inadvertently promote Euro-American values and epistemologies to the neglect of their own.

Many fields of study did not originate with us. As a result, many of us are still learning the rudiments of the fields. Due to this, many of us wrongly believe that we can demonstrate our competence only by strict adherence to the Western positivist-empiricist epistemology. But why can African scholars who studied under eminent Western scholars not think independently without

resorting to religious adherence to their mentors' 'ways of doing things'? This is understandable given what Ake (2012) has said about the imperialistic nature of social science. His argument that Western social science turns people against their own way of life is a tenable explanation here. For instance, many African scholars feel too inferior to believe that they are capable of developing their own theories. Because of this, they dismiss attempts made by others. However, their fervent opposition to attempts by others reflects their sense of inferiority inculcated into them via Western education (social science) and their uneasiness about seeing others not schooled in the same Western universities like them doing marvelously well in theorizing. Thus, it results in the 'Pull him down' or PHD syndrome characterized by the 'dog in the manger' attitude (Oppong 2012: 5).

In agreement with Ake (2012), Yankah (2012) also argues that when the African scholar seeks to disseminate knowledge through publishing on the global market, he may be successful only when he is a good boy and at times may find himself embarrassed by international publishing houses. By being a good boy, Yankah meant that one must unquestioningly accept the mainstream in the West. Others unknowingly use globalization to advocate for reliance on Western knowledge in situations in which they put much premium on the global than the local. However, Yankah (2012, 52) reminds us that 'we often forget that "globalisation" is merely the promotion of another local culture and knowledge to the world stage'.

Yankah (2012) has identified a number of factors that contribute to the trivialization of African indigenous knowledge. Among these factors are language, editorial segregation, imitative agenda, and access and local knowledge. He describes how cultures of scholarship are mainly in English, French and German coupled with the denial of epistemological possibilities to other cultures. He points out that the result of such a process is the belief that recognized knowledge is one that is articulated in Western languages and educational institutions. Further, he concludes that 'this belief has become so strong that people doubt their own wisdom and the wisdom of others if that wisdom has not been articulated in western educational institutions and languages' (Yankah 2012: 52).

Perhaps the saying that 'the best comes from the West' best captures this inferiority complex. An illustration will suffice. In August 2012, a Ghanaian went to the US to pursue doctoral studies at one of the less known universities. Barely a week later, this Ghanaian in chatting with me online told me that a certain student (obviously from the African continent) had gone to *Africa*. I was so shocked that I replied: Are you also talking like them? This is because a significant number of US citizens ignorantly think of Africa as a country. So after hearing them a couple of times talk about Africa as country, he, who should know better, traded insight (of knowing that Africa is a continent) for ignorance (that Africa is a country). Interestingly, he was educated to Master's level in Ghana before leaving for the US. Can one dare say that educated Africans are more vulnerable than non-Western educated Africans?

With respect to editorial policy, Yankah (2012) has argued that international journals with no special focus on Africa hardly publish anything on Africa or when they do so they publish them in special editions. Besides, he is of the view that African universities are imitative as they concentrate on producing graduates equipped intellectually only to reproduce concepts, models, theories and solutions to human problems conceived, assembled and packaged in western settings

by western scholars. Yankah (2012) also remarks that African scholars, when making statements about their own culture, often quote western sources, and that constitutes the contribution of African scholars to trivializing indigenous sources of knowledge.

Chancellor Williams, an advocate for African civilization, recounted how he criticized Br. Kofi Abrefa Busia's work for quoting authorities on matters about which Busia himself was unquestionably the best authority (Williams 1961, cited in Yankah 2012: 55). Indeed, major sources of local knowledge such as Master's dissertations and doctoral theses are left to sit on the bookshelves of department heads, sometimes under lock and key. Contrary to this view, Schreuder and Coetzee (2010) use documented completed Master's dissertations, doctoral theses, and recognized South African journals as sources of data for a study on the research trend in industrial/organizational psychology in South Africa. This suggests that documented completed postgraduate dissertations and theses should be given their place in Africa's academe.

The pedagogy used in African education systems flow from the dominant epistemology the educators subscribe to as well as the authoritarian nature of the educators. Pedagogy refers to the art and science of teaching or imparting knowledge. In discussing current pedagogy and how it contributes to problems of Africa, we will examine the following: the role of knowledge production, availability of teaching and learning materials, and the teaching style of educators.

If knowledge that has not any root with the African soil is disseminated in African academe, the outcome will be African graduates who have lost their roots and touch with their African reality. Such graduates are better prepared, perhaps, to solve Euro-American problems more than their own. This is because such graduates are equipped with knowledge and tools that cannot help them solve African problems. In many instances, the African academe develop deficient human capital and perhaps should become appendages of some Western academe as they are most often externally oriented in how they deal with issues.

In fact, many Africans, whether educated at home or abroad, are educated out of their own culture to the extent that sometimes they become 'more English than the Queen' in African cities. This is achieved through the denigration of the African culture that all forms of Western knowledge seem to accomplish, whether deliberately or unknowingly. Educational institutions, being agents of socialization and acculturation, have performed their roles so well in inculcating an inferiority complex in Western-educated Africans. It is no wonder that a number of Ghanaians distinguish between 'book knowledge' and 'home knowledge', highlighting the impracticality of the 'book knowledge' relative to the street or authentic knowledge. Interestingly, this 'home knowledge' is the indigenous knowledge. This shows that even the non-Western educated African knows too well the 'uselessness' of Western knowledge in solving African problems.

Teaching and learning in the African academe is characterized by a paucity of relevant teaching and learning materials. This is to say that most of the textbooks available in many sub-Saharan countries are imported. Such teaching and learning materials contain concepts, models, theories and solutions to human problems conceived, assembled and packaged in western settings by western scholars using western values as the framework. Yankah (2012) intimates that teaching and learning in many African academies become reduced to teaching students to reproduce such materials while students, on the other hand, commit themselves to memorizing those materials.

At the end of the day, no real learning takes place except memorization of irrelevant facts. Given such situation, one should not be surprised that employers complain of the quality of graduates and graduates also complain that what is learned in school is not needed and applied on the job. With such a perception high among students, they will hardly commit themselves to serious learning except to get good grades in their exams.

However, when the African educator decides to produce textbooks, he or she is faced with a number of challenges. Nsamenang (2007) has remarked that due to the serious difficulties faced by publishing houses, African scholars are compelled to be personally involved in the distribution of their books. Consequently, this compels African scholars to depend more on external than internal outlets to distribute their books (Nsamenang 2007: 13). Reliance on external distributors also puts the books out of reach of the African students who need them most. The consequence is that African students do not have access to relevant materials that contain useful endogenous knowledge. What also needs to be of concern is whether or not the teaching and learning materials produced contain indigenous knowledge. That African scholars are trained to reproduce concepts, models, theories, and solutions to human problems conceived, assembled, and packaged in western settings by western scholars using western values as the framework is more likely to lead to a situation where the few locally produced teaching and learning materials are of no relevance.

Another element of pedagogy of importance to this discussion is the teaching style of educators. Many African educators are authoritarian in their dealings with students. It has been pointed out that democratic pedagogy is much talked about today, yet most African schools from researchers' observations have tended to write it off as purely a Western capitalist ideology (Lumadi & Awino 2009: 95). This is the case as there is a spill-over of the authoritarian parenting style from home to school. Debrah (2000), writing about management in Ghana, concludes that leadership in Ghanaian organizations could best be described as 'authoritarian-paternalistic'. Since academic institutions are organizations, leadership within these institutions can be expected to be similar. As a result of their authoritarian teaching style, many of them expect unquestioned obedience from their students and hold the view that students need to be controlled.

In such a classroom atmosphere, it is unlikely that freedom of expression will be entertained; the consequence is that students are expected to accept what they are taught without question as the educators are more knowledgeable than them.

In effect, the teaching philosophy is best described as single-loop learning as opposed to double-loop learning. Single-loop learning involves detecting and correcting errors to lead to a modification of the rules with the boundaries of current thinking, while double-loop learning involves underlying assumptions of problems are rather examined and challenged (Hayes 2002: 40). Cartwright (2002: 68) has also defined single-loop learning as one 'which involves changing methods and improving efficiency to obtain established objectives (i.e., "doing things right")' as opposed to double-loop learning which is an 'educational concept and process that involves teaching people to think more deeply about their own assumptions and beliefs'. She also intimates that "Double-loop learning concerns changing the objectives themselves (i.e., "doing the right things")' (Cartwright 2002: 68).

Thus, single-loop learning involves doing things better by attending to the ‘what’ whereas double-loop learning involves doing things differently or doing different things by first demanding to know ‘why’ before attending to the ‘what’. Thus, in single-loop learning, assumptions underlying western theories and concepts are not examined and challenged for their inherent bias but are accepted as given. Single-loop learning, therefore, stunts or stifles intellectually stimulating discourse or exchanges between the educator and the students. This then breeds in the students the attitude of unquestioningly accepting any given or received knowledge and even guarding against attacks on such knowledge. This may perhaps explain why a number of African graduates find it difficult to respond to novel situations.

So how do we improve the situation so that we can really indigenize knowledge for development? This article takes the view that both the epistemology that guides knowledge production and nature of pedagogy should be revised while institutionalizing the conditions that are supportive of those paradigm shifts.

3. PROBLEM-ORIENTED EPISTEMOLOGY

After review of the literature on indigenous psychology, Adair (1999), again, points out that there are four alternative indigenous psychology approaches or strategies, namely: linguistic, empirical, applied, and meta-discipline or pragmatic. He describes linguistic and empirical approaches as culture-based indigenization and applied and meta-discipline approaches as discipline-based indigenization strategies (Adair 1999: 407). Though both culture-based and discipline-based indigenization strategies are important, what is being advocated here is knowledge production that will focus on only African and pertinent global problems. This is to say that instead of allowing the positivist-empiricist epistemology and methods we are familiar with determine which problems can be studied, we should rather let the problems determine which methods to use.

The difference lies in the fact that if knowledge production becomes problem-driven, we will first of all focus on discovering the best evidence about the problem and let the source of evidence tell us what method to use to produce the needed evidence. On the other hand, if we let the method (based on empiricism) drive knowledge production, we will become obsessed with maintaining methodological rigour at the expense of relevance. Thus, many African problems will go unstudied because the available positivist-empiricist methods will make it impossible to study them. A good illustration of this issue is the question about whether or not angels are variables that can be studied empirically. Based on this positivist-empiricist paradigm, psychologists can only study the observable and because Angels are not observable, psychologists fail or refuse to have anything to do with the study of angels. The essence is that letting the method drive research will lead to a situation where many disturbing social problems are excluded from study.

A related concern is what should be recognized as source of literature for studies in Africa? As pointed out by Yankah (2012), in addition to journals, documented Master’s dissertations and doctoral theses are important sources of knowledge in Africa as the publication outlets are either unavailable or limited. This can only be achieved if we dispel the unreasonable belief or stereotype that acceptable knowledge is one that is disseminated by the Western academe and in

acceptable Western languages (English, French, and German). The African research supervisor, therefore, should understand that literature review simply involves searching for both theoretical and empirical evidence to justify or support one's claim, no matter where one finds it and in what form it takes, particularly from indigenous sources. Agreeing that evidence is evidence regardless of its source will go a long way to ease the pressure on African students with limited access to online journals and other online materials.

Another important concern is whether or not a-theoretical research should be accepted and African proverbs should be employed as theoretical frameworks. To all this, a better response will be 'Why not?'. Because African researchers are expected to cast their research within some theoretical frameworks, African problems being studied become redefined in the light of those theories. Reconceptualizing the African problem via the use of Western theories leads to a situation where solutions found afterwards will only be applicable to societies with the redefined problems studied. This means that a-theoretical research should be accepted by all well-meaning Africans in search of solutions to African problems. Indeed, African proverbs are sources of indigenous models and theories that should be tested in research. Even if we do not wish to refer to them as models and theories, we can view them as principles and hypotheses. This way we can empirically test, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the veracity of the African psychologies and philosophies. Abubakar (2001) presents a good attempt. Abubakar demonstrates how proverbs could be sources of philosophical ideas about African education. And of course, the implications of these proverbs can be empirically tested with the most suitable methods available or invent new methods.

Having discussed what the problem-oriented epistemology should entail, let us turn our attention to what the pedagogy to be used for knowledge transfer should comprise.

4. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

As described earlier, the current form of education is focused on teaching graduates to reproduce concepts, models, theories and solutions to human problems conceived, assembled and packaged in western settings by western scholars and researchers. This is as a result of the nature of knowledge production as well as authoritarian teaching style and single-loop learning. To address this, we must introduce approaches that reverse the current trends. One approach is to use critical pedagogy, which applies double-loop learning as a method. This is because critical pedagogy holds that 'the purpose of education is for social transformation toward a fully democratic society, where (a) each voice is shared and heard in an equal way, (b) one critically examines oneself and one's society and (c) one acts upon diminishing social injustices' (Bercaw & Stooksberry 2004: 2). Similarly, Cartwright (2002: 69) also points out that the 'intent of double-loop learning is also transformation; the transformation of deeply held perspectives of the world in which we work and act'. Critical pedagogy requires that one (1) reflects on his or her culture or lived experiences, (2) takes a critical look at one's world and society, and (3) works towards transforming the society towards equality for all its members.

By adopting critical pedagogy, African educators will be required to change their teaching style from authoritarian style in which they expect unquestioned obedience to authoritative style in

which the educators are sensitive to the student's maturity and are firm, fair and reasonable. Dunbar (2004: 9) articulates that authoritarian teachers place firm limits and controls on the students as well as discourage verbal exchange and discussions whereas authoritative teachers place limits and controls on the students but at the same time encourage independence as well as being 'open to considerable verbal interaction, including critical debates'. African educators should adopt authoritative teaching styles to enable them create the learning atmosphere that encourage critical thinking through dialogue or discussion in and outside the classroom.

Another approach is for the educators to ask the right questions either in oral or written examinations. In fact, Tamakloe, Amedahe, and Atta (2005) identify, among other reasons, that teacher questions lead students to make observations and to draw inferences for themselves. They classified the teacher questions into two: lower-order questions (such as 'what' and 'describe' questions) and higher-order questions (such as questions that require students to apply, analyze, synthesize, examine, compare, discuss, and evaluate something). The higher-order questions are key to critical pedagogy and double-loop learning. Related to this questioning is the realization that Western social science is imperialistic and that all forms of Western knowledge revolve around the central theme of the cultural superiority of middle class male Caucasian and the deep-seated belief in enterprise or shareholder capitalism.

Of relevance here is Frantz Fanon's psychopolitics; Fanon's psychopolitics involves 'explicit politicisation of the psychological' or the 'critical awareness of the role that political factors (i.e. relations of power) play *within* the domain of the psychological. An understanding of both how politics impacts upon the psychological and how personal psychology may be the level at which politics is internalised and individually entrenched' (Hook 2004: 85). An important question to always ask is: 'What is the underlying politico-cultural belief of this concept?' Given the communal nature of Africans (Gyekye 2003: 35–51), students should be encouraged to ask the question, 'Is the underlying philosophy inimical or supportive of our communal nature?' Other relevant questions include: Is this African problem an actual problem or simply a product of someone's imagination or stereotypes? It is worth noting that concepts, models and theories whose underlying philosophies are opposed to communalism will make elegantly designed development policies fail. No wonder the non-Western educated African differentiates between 'book knowledge' and 'home knowledge'. It is essential to note that communalism is roughly equivalent to stakeholder capitalism that allows self-interest and collective interest to coexist, rather than communism and enterprise capitalism.

5. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE REVISED EPISTEMOLOGY AND PEDAGOGY

Psychological literature suggests that behaviour is a function of the person's characteristics and the environment in which the person finds himself or herself. This means that we need to understand the enabling environment for the current pedagogy and epistemology. This will enable us to arrest the situation in order to create a conducive environment for the new paradigm. Yankah (2012: 51) has rightly pointed out that the continuing reliance on 'western academic models for self-assessment in local academia' is 'a natural sequel to the wholesale adoption of

western paradigms in our academies'. What this means is that the imitative tendency of African academies should cease. They cannot become anything by trying to be like Western academies.

Yankah's depictions of the western educated African academic as developing a handicapped personality as a result of the western education can be extended to the academic institutions themselves. He portrays the western educated African academic as being 'half steeped in euro-western modes of knowledge production' yet is 'rejected by the western world as not quite in tune with western trends, and therefore marginalized together with his geographical area of specialty – Africa; he is also looked on in his own locality as a misfit' (Yankah 2012: 50). The same can be said of African academies as they would become half steeped in euro-western modes of knowledge production but will be rejected by the West as not in tune with western trends. That is why African institutions of higher learning in Afrique Noire will never match up to their western counterparts.

The truth is that world universities' ranking has a deleterious effect in forcing African academies to become like those in the West and in the process lose any chance of solving African problems with home-grown African solutions. Like Yankah (2012) intimated, we should not forget that global trends involve promoting the local culture and ideas of a group of people to replace the culture and ideas of another locality. The numerous and often 'useless' ranking of universities without recourse to the uniqueness of the socio-cultural milieu is a cause for concern. My recommendation will be that world universities should first be ranked regionally and their ranks converted into standard scores (z-scores) and then be ranked using their corresponding standard scores. The use of standard scores will enable those researchers to compare 'apples' with 'oranges'.

African universities should, therefore, look for more contextually relevant modes for staff assessment for promotion. Greater reliance on publications in the international journals as a criterion for staff promotion will only ensure that the 'good boys' and the 'educated illiterates' with no real understanding of African problems get promoted. Meanwhile, whatever those 'good boys' produce is unlikely to solve Africa's problems. As a result, it is being recommended here that assessment criteria for staff promotion should be revised to include publication in domestic journals, staff contributions to solving African problems, and the number of postgraduates they have successfully supervised. These new criteria should be given more weight than publication in the so-called international journals. On the issue of international journals, Addae-Mensah (2008: 19), a former Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana, Legon, had the following to say:

Quality of publications is linked to the quality and reputation of the medium of publication. Currently, most of the reputable journals are based in the developed countries, and are usually not keen on publishing work that may be absolutely crucial or relevant in a local African setting, but may be considered as "not being of adequate universal interest". But whose relevance must be paramount when it comes to African problems? How "International is a Faculty-based journal in a university in Finland when compared with say the East African Medical Journal or the Journal of the Pharmaceutical Society of West Africa?" Yet for promotion purposes, it will not be surprising if an African university gives greater weight to an article published in the Finnish journal than in the East or West African Journal.

Addae-Mensah (2008: 19) suggests, on the basis of the above statement, that ‘African universities must themselves try and grow their own journals that are of a high enough quality to meet international standards of scholarship while at the same time catering for local needs and relevance’. Since postgraduate research is a major source of new knowledge, any country that encourages it stands to gain as the researcher would investigate locally relevant topics. However, some African academics, regardless of where they train, either feel incompetent to supervise PhD projects or deliberately discourage PhD students in order to entrench their faculty positions. As scarcity of doctoral-level lecturers translates into longer tenure for them, even post-retirement contracts will not become time-bound. Consequently, assessing successful supervision of postgraduate research to completion will compel them to even search for and mentor brilliant students to completion; this can help address the problem of high drop-out and lower completion rates for doctoral studies in Africa (Tettey 2010: 7–8), though it is not necessarily an African problem (see Ali & Kohun 2006: 22). Ali and Kohun (2006) report an average doctoral attrition rate of 50% for the US with rural universities (33%) reporting rates lower than urban universities (68%).

In addition to establishing and growing our own domestic journals, we must be ready to respect these journals. This is because the inferiority complex that has been inculcated in many African academics through western education (Ake 2012: 11) will lead to a rejection of products of their own effort by saying that ‘it is local’. I dare say that the more western education an African receives the worse he or she becomes as a human being as he will reject his own yet will be disowned by the West as being originally from somewhere. Is too much western-type of education worth it? Yankah (2012, 60) points out that ‘many of our non-literate mothers and fathers have always suspected western education as an agenda for cultural suicide, and the displacement of the indigenous systems of knowledge and education’. He recounts the life story of a well-known Ghanaian singer-philosopher, Nana Kwame Ampadu, as an illustration of his point.

When Nana finished elementary school, he was so intelligent that his teacher immediately recommended further education at the secondary school. But his father would not allow it, even though some of his children had been to famous colleges like Achimota. His father explained proverbially why he was denying his son further western education: *Ndwan a eko adidie mmae a yennsum bi ngu mu*. (“When your flock of sheep has not returned from the pastures, you do not add to their numbers.”) Further western education given to his brothers yielded nothing but a journey farther and farther away from home – alienation of the mind and disrespect for indigenous values (Yankah 2012: 61).

The possible result is that Africans will once again denigrate their own and in the process denigrate themselves. This is what most ‘good boys’ do not know or understand. The image of quality higher education being possible in Africa is collectively owned. Both African scholars trained at African academies and those trained abroad share a common group identity, and one ‘bad nut’ spoils the lot while the group image has beneficial impact of individual identity. As a result, attempts by some western-trained African academics to denigrate African educational systems end up destroying them in the process. Like babies, they are thrown away together with the dirty water they created. For this breed of African academics, they gain in status by debasing African academies as status is gained by having others below you (Akwas Afrifa, senior lecturer in psychology at University of Ghana, Legon, 2006, personal communication).

Another important measure is to introduce all African graduates to critical theory and critical pedagogy. The critical theory will expose the African graduate to relevant literature that will enable the graduate gain insights about the inconsistencies in the imported or received knowledge. Frantz Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961 and Walter Rodney's *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* published in 1972 deserve special mention here. The use of critical pedagogy should encourage African graduates to challenge the underlying assumptions of received knowledge while developing indigenous concepts, models, and theories. The contemporary African educator should be accommodative enough to allow the African graduate do this.

To further strengthen indigenous knowledge production, African academies should strongly support postgraduate studies, particularly at the doctoral level. This is because it is at the doctoral level that new knowledge is produced. It is also only through such domestic doctoral studies that relevant endogenous knowledge will be produced to solve domestic problems. On this issue of promoting domestic doctoral studies, Oppong (2012: 23) wrote:

It is widely acknowledged that university faculty research and its doctoral graduates constitute its research output; the research output is a useful indicator in the ranking of world universities. If Ghanaian universities produce few doctoral graduates annually and few faculty participate in research on local problems (Bailey, Cloete, & Pillay, 2012), what knowledge have we been transferring all this while? Like Sadler said, we cannot transfer knowledge based on others' experience and expect to get results in our context. This means that Ghanaian universities cannot say that they are engaged in knowledge transfer if they do not produce locally relevant materials. It is, therefore, imperative for Ghanaian universities to actively promote contextually-relevant knowledge through faculty and doctoral research and then use them as teaching and learning materials as well as home-grown doctoral programmes that focus on addressing local problems.

This demonstrates that the link between increase in indigenous knowledge production and increase in domestic doctoral research output is, indeed, inseparable. South Africa is evolving into an intellectual powerhouse on the continent, attractive to students globally because they have established and nurtured domestic doctoral programmes. Their graduates do not often have second thoughts about pursuing doctoral studies at South African academies as they believe in their own institutions.

Unfortunately, this cannot be said about others on the continent, particularly Ghanaians. For instance, Opoku and Akorli (2009: 350), in a study examining Ghanaian consumers' attitude towards local and imported products (focusing on rice and textile products) reported that the 'Ghanaian consumer holds the "Made in Ghana" label in low regard relative to foreign labels'. Similarly, it has been reported that Nigerians have a preference for foreign-made textile products (Asen, Eke, & Kalejaye 2011: 19; Ladipo, Bakare, & Olufayo 2012: 1). In contrast, Egyir, Adu-Nyako and Okafor (2012) have recently provided evidence that suggests that Ghanaians do not hold the 'Made in Ghana' poultry label in low regard relative to foreign labels. This disdain for the local is a sequel of colonization, uncritical acceptance of western knowledge and the mass media. Though the perception that the US academic qualifications have a higher reputation is not particularly African, studies also suggest that:

The most important reason for deciding to study in the United States, rated as a 1 or 2 in importance by 83% of respondents, was the reputation of academic qualifications or degrees in the United States. Students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East found it comparatively more important than students from Europe (Obst & Forste n.d: 19).

Evidence from these studies can be adduced to support the view that the African has developed an inferiority complex due to years of subjugation. Despite the disregard for the 'African Brand', the cost is also prohibitively high for a number of African students willing to pursue doctoral studies at African academies. What is worrying is that though some African academies aspire to 'world-class' status, they are unwilling to do what most world-class institutions do – that is, waive fees for doctoral studies while making available other sources of funding. As a result, foreign academies are more attractive to African students. Indeed, the poor student in Africa are better off with foreign doctoral education as she/he is more likely to obtain some form of funding at foreign academies than at African academies.

Of relevance to this discussion is the distinction that Adair (1999: 411) makes between the scholarly leaders who develop the theories and set the trends that others follow, and the majority other 'who will produce the incremental research that forms the basic character of the discipline'. He refers to the former as the 'front' and the latter group as the 'mass'. Adair (1999) asserts that the 'front' sees and assesses the deficiencies inherent in the imported discipline or knowledge applied to their culture, and thoughtfully devises and promotes indigenous concepts, models, theories and approaches. Though it is the 'front' that sows the seed for theoretical and conceptual development, it is the 'mass' who will nurture them to grow. For the 'mass' to be the fertile ground for the growth of indigenous concepts, models and approaches, they should be both open and competent to research and apply these concepts to develop a broad base of indigenous knowledge (Adair 1999: 411).

The import is that some of us should be ready to take the mantle of intellectual leadership for others to follow. Many may shun such adventures as they want to be in the mainstream or are still immature (at the stage of demonstrating their competence by following the steps of their western mentors) or afraid of the uncertainty associated with such an enterprise. However, it is worthwhile to die and be remembered for standing out than to die forgotten in the ocean of the nameless. It is true that the life of a 'front' will be lonely and sometimes less financially rewarding, but it pays off in the end when one becomes the pioneer of a field; so delaying gratification to endure such a life will lead to greater joy in the future. So is there room for foreign knowledge? Of course, there has always been room for such knowledge except that African scholars are now being admonished to avoid the often uncritical acceptance of such knowledge while concentrating on developing their own indigenous knowledge. In areas where there are no well-developed domestic doctoral programmes as a result of scarcity of doctoral supervisors, it only makes sense to agree that interested Africans should be encouraged to obtain their education abroad. Despite this, the African should be aware of the biased nature of the knowledge so imparted in the foreign academies.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This article sought to highlight problems associated with uncritical acceptance of western education as received wisdom, the conditions that support such educational practices, and the implications for Africa's development. The paper, first, showed the relevance of indigenous knowledge and the 'uselessness' of imported knowledge for solving African problems. It was suggested that the current overreliance on positivist-empiricist epistemology to study the African situation should be minimized; this is because it has created a situation in which African research has become method-driven instead of problem-driven. Similarly, a conclusion was reached that the current pedagogical approach that is authoritarian should give way to an authoritative teaching style.

With an authoritative teaching style, African academics would create the enabling environment for intellectual development needed to invent African solutions to African problems as they would be firm but at the same time they would encourage independence and open discussion and critical debate; open discussion and critical debate are two ingredients needed to stimulate intellectual growth and creative thinking. It was resolved also that the African scholar must be educated on how to apply critical theory to screen imported knowledge while African academics should also rely less on publications in the so-called international journals and more on publications in domestic journals, staff contributions to solving African problems, and the number of postgraduates successfully supervised. The lonely and less financially rewarding life of the scholarly leaders or 'front' was discussed. However, African scholars who want to stand out and be counted are encouraged to explore the uncharted course so as to leave an undying legacy.

NOTE

- * Seth Oppong is a Lecturer in the Department of Psychology and Development at Regent University College of Science and Technology in Accra, Ghana

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