

Beyond Euro-Western dominance: An African-centred decolonial paradigm



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ABSTRACT

In search for Africa's solutions to solve African-centred problems, an African-centred paradigm provides a starting point towards knowledge generation. Africans continue to be confronted with models and paradigms that are export-oriented in a quest to serve as import substitutions for explaining obstacles prevalent on the African continent. Faced with this realisation, hegemonic discourses abound, which only serve to misdiagnose prevailing problems. Thus, when African scholars compare realities with Euro-Americans, there is a glaring consensus to move towards an adoption of more centred paradigms to respond to the poverty of existing theoretical formulations. This article therefore proposes an African-centred decolonial paradigm in response to Kwasi Wiredu's call for 'Africa, know thyself'. Though albeit not prescriptive, the author seeks to map out the contours of an African-centred decolonial paradigm predicated on three existing paradigms. Firstly: the Afrocentric paradigm proposed by Molefe Kete Asante. Secondly: the pillars of Africanity as a combative methodology and paradigm proposed by Archie Mafeje. Thirdly, Afrikology is discussed, which emphasises a universal transdisciplinary approach. Based on these three paradigms, the author posits that if Africans want to play a much larger role in knowledge generation that is responsive to human needs and existential problems, an African-centred decolonial paradigm offers a multi-transdisciplinary framework, which may be used to foreground African scholarly endeavours.

Keywords: Africanity, Decoloniality, Afrocentrism, Afrikology

1. INTRODUCTION

An African-centred decolonial paradigm argues for centring, Africanization and decolonisation of existing paradigms in order to analyse and explain Africa from within. This paradigm posits that the primary site of studying African realities cannot be located outside the context of Africa. And as such, because Africa and African subjects remain a contested terrain that has endured numerous forms of misrepresentation, intellectual and ideological terrains can no longer be imported from the West. This is because African philosophers have paved a way for Africanists and Africans to re-invent, re-claim and re-assert the imagery of Africa and Africans from the

neo-colonial impositions and related condemnations. The apparatus for re-birth include African decolonisation of prevailing paradigms. Nabudere (2006: 28) defines African decolonisation as a reclamation of African voices through recognition of heritage and knowledge systems brought about by oral tradition.

An African-centred decolonial paradigm therefore seeks to propose a paradigm that redresses the epistemicides which endanger the scholastic communities in their endeavour to contribute to responsible and affective scholarship. It is a paradigm that is premised on the history, lived and existential conditions and relations of African people without denigrating into analogues or analogies. Given the social imagery of African subjects as backward and lazy, with no voice, an African-centred decolonial paradigm makes a case for scholars to ‘unlearn, to rethink, to reconceptualise and deconstruct the hegemonic discourses’ (Dei 1992/3: 18, cited in Gibson 2000: 5).

The proposed paradigm maps out the contours by looking at the dominant works of four scholars: Molefe Kete Asante’s *Afrocentrism*, Archie Mafeje’s *Africanity and Combative Ontology*, Dani Wadada Nabudere’s *Afrikology, Interdisciplinarity and a Restorative Epistemology*, and Keto Tshelolane’s *African-centred Paradigm*. The central argument that runs through these paradigms is the call to centre studies on Africa and African communities and the diaspora, within Africa. The call for centring is premised on the fact that, when one is centred in his or her intellectual corpus, any solutions proposed will be culturally relevant to the communities and may result in sustainable problem solving in line with the pan-African ideals.

2. AFROCENTRISM

The origins of Afrocentrism can be traced from Egyptian or Kemetian (circa 2000–4000 B.C.E) philosophy and emphasizes the idea of ‘holism’, which includes both the physical and the spiritual aspects of being (Verharen 1995). As Verharen (1995:73) puts it, ‘*the essence of afrocentrism is holism, the philosophy that all humans are united not only with one another but also with the planet and the universe*’ (my italics). An aspect of both African culture and Afrocentrism is predicated on the emphasis on discerning similarities or commonalities of a people, their condition and experience. As such, Afrocentrism moves away from discerning and emphasizing individual differences. Rather as a paradigm, Afrocentrism gives prominence to the group, the collective which is the basis on which ubuntu or Ubutology is premised on (Schiele 1990). In Asante’s words, ‘Afrocentricity represents a deepening of the conceptual frames which bring us close to ourselves and a sharpening of the distractions which will help [us] rid ourselves of the peripheral vestiges of a Eurocentric reality’ (Verharen 1995: 99). It is on the basis of this that Africans can retain or regain a sense of ‘agency’. What this means is that afrocentrically and with affirmation of an individual as a person capable of reasoning, African people can thus project their experiences in their own terms. From these experiences, African scholars can therefore develop paradigmatic discourses that are rooted in the consciousness of existential conditions (Asante 2007; Mazama 1998).

Afrocentrism is therefore ‘a consciousness, a quality of thought, and an analytical process based on Africans viewing themselves as subjects, that is agents in the world ... a consciousness,

quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek from agency [transcontinentally and trans-generationally] to assert subject place within the context of the African history' (Mazama 2007:16). Mazama (2007: 2) states that is not *just* a mere theory but a paradigm that is a revolutionary shift in thinking, which results in reconceptualisation of the social and historical reality of African people. Since its aim is to raise consciousness, this paradigm involves 'shifting' centrist, namely acentrism. Acentrism denotes a "*view that no single group can claim a center stage except in the context of incomplete descriptions. Each group must constitute its own center, but these polycenters must coalesce to form the whole*" (Verharen 1995: 66).

Secondly, Afrocentrism allows for a trans-continental, trans-generational explanation of phenomena. Thus, the new thinking therefore leads to a 'reconceptualisation of the social and historical reality of African people' (Mazama 2007: 2). Hence Verharen (1996) describes centredness as acentrism.

In addition to a conscious raising thought, Afrocentrism is also used in this study to guide data analysis. An analysis of data that places at its centre a critical understanding of a lived experience requires a researcher to assume a centred position. Centredness or location refers to one's standpoint in relation to a deep engagement and awareness of cultural values. Asante (2007: 22) describes centredness as a 'centering of the African person in the center of his or her own historical context, reality and time'. Centredness serves to demarginalise knowledge that has been marginalized. The implications of an oversight of this stark reality are by and large on epistemological and ontological theoretical formulations, which seem to neglect the experiences of one group in what can be termed as epistemic racism. Epistemic racism denotes scholarship, a discourse that 'disregards the epistemic capacity of certain groups of people ... [*which result* – my emphasis] in the recognition of others as fully human beings capable of reasoning [*paraphrase*]' (Maldonado-Torres 2004: 1).

The decolonial epistemic framework reinforces what Afrocentrism implies, which is that one cannot study phenomena from a vacuum. Therefore, the diversity and multiple complex realities of each space should be considered to understand and examine the lived experiences and locate it within its history (Asante 2003: 25). Secondly, centredness requires an assumption of place which enables an Afrocentrist to 'unmask' the privileged positions of theories, paradigms and discourses, which universalize and dominate scholarship and are inadequate to explain African experiences and culture (Asante 1990: 9; Mazama 2001). In addition to the third central aspects of centredness is 'reclamation'. Reclamation refers to the resurrection of identities which are pertinent in reinforcing humanity, selfhood and being. In summary the implications of Afrocentrism are described by Asante (2007: 29) as follows:

an afrocentrist is seeking to uncover the imagination of the author. What one seeks to do is to create an opportunity for the writer to show where he or she stands in relationship to the subject. Is the writer centered or is the writer marginalized within his own story?. It is in answering this question that the researcher establishes the author's first response to their own works because the answer to the questions about centeredness and marginalization assists the researcher in making an analysis. Do I really know you? Can I know you if you do not know yourself? Where do you stand in this text or outside this text? Where are the people of this text (Asante 2007: 29).

Consequently, centredness implies an emergence of new knowledge, and a new reality on the subject which transforms an African subject from a state of victimhood, servitude and powerlessness to a state of victory, participant and an agent. Agency seeks to answer the following questions: ‘How do we break open the psychological and intellectual prison that holds humans in mental bondage? How do you bring about justice in situations where there is only injustice? How do you create conditions of freedom when the ruling powers deny people the resources for life?’ (Asante 2007: 49). In fact, Asante (2007: 49) further remarks as follows:

Afrocentricity is not data, but the orientation to data ... it is not so much the data that is at the question but how people interpret the data, how they perceive what they confront, and how they analyze the African issues and values that are contained in the data If you do not approach data correctly, then you are prone to poor conclusions.... One must create the methods that will lead to transformations in the text, phenomena and human lives ... [as] we do not often hear this voice in history, philosophy and politics because the world creates views of Africa that muffle the voice. Africa’s paradox is that it is perhaps the richest continent with the poorest people (Asante 2007: 47–54).

The practical implications of Afrocentric paradigm to African centred discourses are clear in its orientation towards the African subject. This is because of the functional aspect of the paradigm, which is predicated on a presupposition that scholarship should have a liberating effect on the colonised, fragmented people of African descent (Mazama 2003). Framed this way, what Afrocentrism seeks to advance is a scholarship that transcends ‘knowing to doing’ (Schiele 1997: 200).

However, despite the contribution of the Afrocentric paradigm to the study of Africa and its people, several criticisms of the Afrocentric paradigm abound from its definition to its epistemological standpoint. Afrocentricity has been criticized for its lack of a clear, concise definition. In fact, both the academic community and the community at large, particularly in the United States, describe it as a ‘ghetto gimmick’. Carruthers who states that ‘the concept afrocentricity is a “misnomer” on the grounds that most current “isms” and ideologies accept the Western worldview in that they share the same cultural orientation, the same view of history, the same view of science and so on’ (Carruthers 1999, cited in Nabudere 2011a: 140). In fact, Carruthers claims that for an epistemology to serve the liberatory and emancipatory purpose, it must have an ‘African all-inclusive and universal’ worldview and that ‘it recognizes the existence of other racial human groups in their own cultural contexts’ (Nabudere 2011a: 140).

In response to this critique, Mazama (2001) and Asante (2007), in the Afrocentric Manifesto, explain that these criticisms are largely caused by misinterpretations of the paradigm. Both authors stress that “*Afrocentricity is not a closed paradigm ..., its definitions are multiple ... scholars often choose to emphasize particular aspects of the paradigm to suit their own purposes*” (my italics) (Mazama 2001: 389). Arguably and unapologetically both Mazama and Asante posit that to be ‘African is not necessarily Afrocentric.... and that Afrocentricity stresses the importance of conscious victory as opposed to dwelling on oppression’. Further, Mazama quotes Asante (1988: 87–89) and reiterates that Afrocentrism places Africa at the centre of African people’s world while stressing all people’s entitlement to practice and celebrate their own culture as long as it does not interfere with the collective well-being (Adams 1993: 34, cited

in Mazama 2001: 389). In addition, the word paradigm in Afrocentrism is based on the Thomas Kuhnian conceptual framework (see Thomas Kuhn 1962; 1970), which denotes that a paradigm must address the affective, cognitive and cognitive aspects of a human being. In Afrocentrism, this implies ‘approaches to data, centrality of human experiences, and the community leading to a new political discourse and praxis in for African people’ as described in the preceding sections (Mazama 2001: 404). However, what the paradigm, even though it claims to centre the experiences of African people, fails to address are the multiplicity and uniqueness of African experiences. But because Afrocentrism fails to clearly articulate and re-articulate the centrality of intersectionality in women’s lives, it falls into the category of gender neutral theories. Asante (2007: 48–49), however, remarks to this criticism by stating that

all African experiences are worthy of study When an Afrocentrist speaks of “all African experiences”, this is not a statement that is to be taken as representing the patriarchal point of view. Women are not relegated to some second-tier realm as they have been in Western thought. The reason for this stems from the idea that men and women derive from the same cosmological source in Africa Women and men are equally important in any construction of knowledge (Asante, 2007: 48–49).

But Collins (1991: 206) strongly argues that for ‘one to be an Afrocentrist, he or she must be located within an African value system’. Thus, any paradigm that explains the existential socio-cultural circumstances of African people must be centred or located within Africa. Even Mafeje (2000: 69,70,71) who endorses Afrocentricity, mentions that

black African Americans are first Americans and second anything else they choose, like all Americans and irrespective of what they do, black Americans cannot hope to re-appropriate Africa. Any attempt to do so would lead to intellectual confusion and conceptual distortions ... (Mafeje 2000: 69).

Archie Mafeje’s response to this impasse is that ‘Africa must be studied from within’ in order to reclaim one’s identities. Mafeje’s intellectual contribution to the development of thought within Africa is described next.

3. AFRICANITY

African scholar and social anthropologist, Archibald Monwabisi Mafeje, observed that social science disciplines suffer from what he calls ‘epistemology of alterity’. Epistemology of alterity refers to scholarship that is rooted in Western thought. Mafeje proposes Africanity to overcome the poverty of existing social science disciplines. Africanity, unlike Afrocentrism, reiterates an

insistence on Africans [to] think, speak, and do things for themselves in the first place. This does not imply unwillingness to learn from others but a refusal to be hegemonised by others, irrespective of color or race.... By insisting on Africanity, the Africans are staking their claim. For this reason, it would be incongruous if the instruments for establishing Africanity were forged elsewhere. In the same way that Afrocentrism cannot be imported from America, Africanity cannot be nurtured outside Africa. As ontology, it is inseparable from the projected African renaissance. It

is an attempt to put an end to domination and self-alienation and the collective level but anchored in this denied, hot piece of land, full of strange venomous creatures (Mafeje 2000: 71).

Adesina (2008:135) best describes Mafeje's scholarly contribution as 'the most eloquent and elegant enunciation of the twinned agenda of the determined negation of negation and the pursuit of endogeneity'.

Thus, Adesina speaks to what Mafeje observes about academic discourses and in particular social sciences that lack 'rigor' in redressing the impact of colonialism in studying social formations and structures in society. His observation is based on the fact that endogenous (African centred) methodologies, ontology and epistemological frameworks continue to be relegated to the periphery in favour of Euro-Western hegemonic epistemologies. Mafeje warns that the reliance on borrowed paradigms lead to the formulation of paradigms which like 'white phosphorus float above the water' (Mafeje 2008: 65). What he means is that adopted methodologies and epistemologies fail to advance intelligible scholarship and cannot be applied in practice in Africa. According to Mafeje, a starting point for scholarship on African people should be emphatic on endogenous methodologies. Endogeneity refers to 'an intellectual standpoint [that is] derived from rootedness in the African conditions' (Mafeje 2000: 66).

What is significant about Mafeje's scholarship is his emphasis on a 'combative' methodology that is endogenous. That is, the subject is allowed to speak from his or her vantage point, to voice his or her feelings. In this way the formulation of epistemologies and paradigm puts emphasis on the richness and primacy of the individual's experience in order to avoid 'epistemic othering' (Adesina 2008: 139). Thus Mafeje's work is in line with the proponents of African philosophy such as Kwame Nkrumah, who observe the paradigmatic state of discourses, particularly social sciences and related disciplines reinforce a

legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of alienated intellectual discourse. The underlying belief that this will issue is authentic representations.... Indeed it is only logical to suppose that when Africans speak for themselves, the world will hear their authentic voice, and will be forced to come to terms with in the long run. ...[I]f we are adequately Afrocentric the international implications will not be lost on the others. [*Because*][my emphasis] ... if what we say and do has relevance for our humanity. Its international relevance is guaranteed (Kwesi Prah 1997, cited in Mafeje 2000: 66).

Indeed the practical implications for scholarly research would be 'the freedom to allow the data to speak to the writer ... [so that an] authentic interlocutors [can be] able to decode local vernaculars: that encoded local ontology and modes of comprehension' (Mafeje 1991: 9-10; 2000: 66, 68, cited in Adesina 2008: 146). But, being an authentic interlocutor does not necessarily imply that one has to be a 'native' of the community being studied. Rather the task of an African scholar and scholarship is to take 'one's locale seriously enough to produce works of epistemic significance' (Adesina 2008: 146). The relevance of these observations for African social science disciplines cannot be overemphasized. An African centred epistemological framework and ontological location espouses a level of groundedness in the lived realities in order to contribute to the generation of knowledge and avert epistemic othering, epistemicides caused by dislocatedness.

The aim is to advocate for epistemic justice by allowing the silenced populations to speak about their own experiences.

However, despite Mafeje's conceptual and theoretical groundedness, one of the criticisms of his scholarship is that it represents protest and or vindication scholarship. Perhaps this critique is largely as a result of a failed understanding of a seeming monolithic approach to data as premised by Mafeje. What Mafeje fails to observe was the contribution to African scholarship of a multi-intradisciplinary and transdisciplinary framework. Mafeje (2000, cited in Adesina 2008: 144) notes that transdisciplinarity would lead to an 'epistemic disaster whereby you end up with people who are neither conceptually rigorous nor methodologically proficient. They [scholars] are more likely to regurgitate than be profound.' However, Adesina (2008: 144) mentions that 'while knowledge production is inherently inter-disciplinary, inter-disciplinarity works because each discipline brings its strength to the table of knowledge production'.

This is one of the contributions of Dani Wadada Nabudere's scholarship. In addition, because Mafeje's scholarship was largely based on agrarian land reforms, his propositions on studying Africa from within were not developed into a paradigm. Further Africanity fails to promote gender relevant and specific methodologies that take into account the gender-specific histories of women. As such, Africanity also assumes that by virtue of being African and indigenous, endogenous methodologies can be universal and do not have to take primacy of individual differences within indigenous communities. However, because of the emphasis on studying African social formations from within, this study, in conjunction with the contours of Afrocentrism as a developed functional paradigm, adopts Africanity. In this way, the current formulated paradigm rests on the assumption that a multi-intradisciplinary approach predicated on African centredness assists in unthinking the current phenomena. Afrikology, by Dani Wadada Nabudere, unpacks the contours of an African-centred paradigm by placing emphasis on multi-intradisciplinary.

4. AFRIKOLOGY

Similar to Afrocentrism (Molefe Asante) and Africanity (Archie Mafeje), Nabudere sketches a history of dislocatedness and deculturisation of African people and the diaspora. He observes that 'Africa and its peoples have been subjected to a process of disorganization, fragmentation and disintegration of their historical-cultural and civilisational achievements' (Nabudere 2006: 9). Nabudere (2006:9) further quotes Anta Cheikh Diop (1974) who argues that the colonial experience has resulted in African people who have 'raped; plundered, despoiled and dehistoricised' (Diop, 1974 cited in Nabudere 2006: 9). Diop espouses that the decentering of African people from their cultural origins have led to the deculturisation of African people. It is the efforts by Africans such as the former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, (through his African Renaissance) to

renew [African people] psychologically, spiritually and politically, in order for the African continent to engage in the process of "recovery", "re-awakening", and/or "re-birth," that can break us out of the Eurocentric intellectual jails in which Africans find themselves caught and imprisoned (Nabudere 2006: 9).

Thus, in agreement with Mafeje, Nabudere observes the lack of centredness in studies aiming at solving African challenges. In addition Nabudere proposes a universal approach to studying Africa, namely Afrikology. Afrikology is a paradigm that aims to clarify and provide a starting point for an epistemology grounded in the lived experiences and realities of African people. It is a paradigm that ‘seeks to build on the achievements of African people and the rest of humanity in order to emancipate themselves from the dehumanization imposed by Western civilization’ (Nabudere 2011a: 159). As such Afrikology is

an all embracing philosophy ... its methodological approach has to be hermeneutical for what is at issue here is not just “knowledge” that science claims to be able to produce through “reason”, but a whole new way of looking at the world that involves the relation between temporal and spiritual world. This of necessity requires the deployment of a dialectical interface of the dualities of existence in the world and the realities within it (Nabudere 2006: 13, 23).

The philosophical basis and the universal approach proposed in Afrikology is that which would enable African intellectuals to go beyond the normal limits of fragmented disciplinary regimes. Even Cheikh Anta Diop strongly advises that an epistemology should ‘reconcile man with himself [in order] to rid ourselves of the crisis of reason created by a narrow scientific approach’ (Diop 1981: 361, cited in Nabudere 2011b: 12). To which Nabudere (2006: 7) reiterates Mafeje’s contention and advises African scholars to

pursue knowledge production that can renovate African culture, defend the African people’s dignity and civilisational achievements and contribute afresh to a new global agenda that can push us out of the crisis of modernity as promoted by European Enlightenment. Such knowledge must be relevant to the current needs of the masses, which they can use to bring about a social transformation out of their present plight. [As] there cannot be no such a thing as the advancement of science for its own sake. Those who pursue “science for its own sake” find that their knowledge is used for purposes, which they may never have intended it for.

Edward Said (1978, cited in Nabudere 2011b: 12) also mentions that ‘Eurocentric knowledge is not produced for its sake. Its purpose throughout the ages has been to enable them to “know the natives” in order to take control of their territories, including human and material resources for their benefit. Such control of knowledge was used to exploit the non-European peoples, colonise them both mentally and geo-strategically, as well as subordinate the rest of the world to their designs and interests.’

Through Afrikology, as a universal, restorative transdisciplinary paradigm, an assumption of African originality from a psychological, social, spiritual, cultural and political vantage point will emerge. This would lead to knowledge generation that has both epistemic significance and related community contributions and relevance. In turn what this would require is a deep involvement and commitment to the initiation of dialogue with the community, and regards the community members as repository sites for knowledge generation.

Hence Nabudere (2006: 19) proposes the use of open-ended hermeneutical methods and approaches as a counter-hegemonic discourse that enables a deconstruction, reconstruction and regeneration of knowledge and perhaps resonates with the ideals of a pan-Africanism (Nabudere

2003: 6). Therefore the current study adopts this Afrikological approach as will be discussed in the chapter on methodology. This is because Afrikology in addition to endogeneity and centredness suggested by Mafeje and Asante, respectively, is based on the acceptance of pluralism and cultural diversity ‘that allows for cross-cultural communication and exchange of ideas and opinion to promote understanding between all knowledge systems in their diversities’ (Nabudere 2003: 7–8). Nabudere also believes that an essential element of learning is to encourage self-learning, which addresses the real needs and interests that the learners can bring to their learning environments. In this new approach Nabudere introduces what he calls ‘site-specific’ knowledge, which tries to correct the Euro-centric tendency to universalize knowledge around privileged Western-based centres and sites of knowledge. Therefore, this approach to data and fieldwork results in an epistemology that requires an inter-multi-trans-disciplinary approach. This is important because to understand African realities, African stories must preclude disciplinary boundaries (Nabudere 2006: 29). Hence, inter-multi-trans-disciplinary approaches to enquiry aim to:

recreate the image of social life, if not in all physical details, then at least without disfiguring it through oversimplifications. Social life is not one-dimensional. People do not have one life catering primarily for the body needs, with another separate life engaged in social relations, and yet another embracing art, philosophy, education and so on. All these different strands are woven together to form a single whole (Nabudere 2006: 29).

Therefore the process of allowing the data to speak enables a ‘cultural revolution and re-education’ to develop a ‘spiritual and intellectual’ relationship with the research subjects. This is in line with Vilakazi (2002:203) who observes that when studying African subjects

the biggest spiritual and mental challenge to African intellectuals is that in this massive re-education process, (which is necessary), the only teachers they have are ordinary African men and women who are uncertificated. This way, African intellectuals shall be doing fieldwork among their own people as part of a truly great effort aimed at reconstructing Africa and preparing all of humanity for conquering the world for humanism ... while interdisciplinary approaches can as a matter of defence, be used to embark on a study of our societies, this must be done consciously from outside with a view to problematising them as we build new approaches as we move inside to rediscover ourselves, thus providing a new epistemology of knowledge production (Vilakazi 2002: 33, cited in Nabudere 2006: 33).

While the contributions of Afrikology are noted, it is perhaps important to point to the gender-neutral assumptions of this body of knowledge. Gender-neutrality refers to a theory or paradigm that does not ‘in principle make a distinction between genders and is valid for all genders’ (Imam 1997: 3). Regrettably, both Mafeje and Nabudere, unlike Asante, did not live to respond to this critique. However, the importance of the primacy of gender and engendering knowledge in and about Africa is obvious in this statement by Imam, who says

a social science that does not acknowledge gender as an analytical category is an impoverished and distorted science, and cannot accurately explain social realities and hence cannot provide a way out of the present crisis in Africa (1997: 2).

Indeed, gender identities are situated in time and place, and masculinities and femininities are fluid. It is the nature of these gendered realities that must and should be explained through engendering decolonized paradigms. Influenced by Afrocentrism and African philosophy, Keto Tsheloane responds to the crisis of gender neutrality by proposing an Africa-centred paradigm that is policy relevant and thus advocates gender complementarity. Keto (2001: 54) mentions that instead of a feminist Western-centred paradigm, the Africa-centred paradigm rests on the assumption of gender complementarity, which is negated by feminist western-centred discourses. Gender complementarity is predicated on the acknowledgement of historical imbalances and discriminatory practices against women and the fact that ‘women and men still need each other to make the world function and to guarantee the future of humanity’ (Keto 2001: 54).

Locating the gender specific needs of women in Africa, Keto (2001) argues that for women’s rights, emphasis was placed on group rights that ensured group solidarity. As a result, when women fought for gendered reforms, these served the interests of the nation, the country with collective implications. As such, the gains by women in the name of group rights failed to transcend to individual freedoms and liberation for women in the domestic and private sphere. Thus, group rights guaranteed and ‘assured women of collective power and control over important public affairs’. Consequently what emerged were:

Highly publicized tokenistic gestures of individual women and substantive peripheralisation of women as a group in public affairs. [...] women were granted individual rights that lacked an internal [economic] material resource base to sustain them. (Keto 2001: 54).

Accordingly, as a paradigm that seeks to contribute to policy formulation:

Any centering knowledge about Africa cannot afford to ignore the majority of Africans who are female ... *because* women ... are primary cultural transmitters. As cultural transmitters, they are critical to the socialization of generations yet unborn. They hold the key to African-centered socialization and the African Renaissance Without the full participation of its women who are the majority, the future of the African world and indeed the whole world will represent a partial and stunted growth. It is not a matter of male generosity to include women as co-equal partners with men in the study and development of Africa and African communities. It is a matter of necessity and survival for these communities (Keto 2001: 55).

In line with Ketso, Motsemme (2011) notes that what is emerging among African scholars is to forgo the ‘taken for granted assumptions’ that centres on women’s subjective positions in society. For African women in particular who have been relegated to the academic periphery as scholars and or subjects, Motsemme (2011: 13) observes that ‘the determination to carve our own theoretical spaces has arisen out of the misfit we have often experienced between our academic training and what we as African women scholars have witnessed and experienced in our own communities’.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aforementioned epochs of an African-centred decolonial paradigm serves to identify the alterity of existing African discourses. Afrocentrism, Africanity and Afrikology seek to unmask Eurocentric hegemony, which floats on African scholarship to explain African experiences. This is because African scholars continue to rely on imported paradigms of universalism and essentialism of African experiences continue to dominate locally produced knowledges. The contours described above argue for scholarship that aims at liberating, emancipating and decolonising existing knowledges about African subjects and subjectivities through the lived and embodied experience.

Thus the aim is to enhance the ability for independence, self-understanding, self-worth and self-discovery. Indeed when formerly colonised and marginalised groups are treated as active participants in order to reclaim their humanity, African Renaissance may be achieved. This contributes to the building up of new vistas of knowledge and paradigmatic discourse that recognise the history of African subjects and locate the power structures and being to achieve total liberation and emancipation. Indeed since all problems are diverse, multidimensional and multifaceted, it is necessary that they be investigated in a multidimensional and holistic manner. This calls for interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity that allow indigenous and existing knowledges to prevail in existing discourses.

An African-centred decolonial paradigm proposed in this article suggests an alternative framework for the analysis, understanding and explanation of the African subject, subjectivity and subjectivation. The article contributes to existing scholarly endeavours that aim to move the discourses on and about Africa and Africans beyond Euro-Western dominance and imperialism. The paradigm is predicated on a noted search for Africa's solutions to solve African-centred problems. It is further a starting point towards knowledge generation in order to respond to the poverty of existing theoretical formulations.

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