"Postgraduateness"—A Project for Constructing a Renaissance Africa: A Decolonial Approach

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role of postgraduate research in the construction of a renaissance Africa where African ways are represented in African research. The study contends that, through postgraduate research, African institutions can effectively impart significant intellectual development which will allow the continent to actively answer African questions through the development of indigenous knowledge. Through a desk research approach, this study finds that problems on the African continent could be better tackled using Afrocentric approaches. As such, constructing an African renaissance requires thinking African, imagining African, researching African, and in a way, learning African by slightly unlearning the European and American. While the study does not propose totally discarding Eurocentric approaches, we propose the idea of hybridity, where existing Eurocentrically minded research can be used to conceive of and implement indigenous frameworks and methodologies which could be employed in addressing problems in Africa. Importantly, research work in Africa should begin to mirror African societies, with the objective of constructing a reborn African continent.

Keywords: decolonisation; Afrocentrism; Eurocentrism; postgraduateness; renaissance

Introduction

In Chawane's (2016, 78) study, he proposes that black people should observe knowledge from an African perspective. He suggests that blacks consider situations from an African standpoint and that we misconstrue Africa when we use terms other than those which are African to study Africa. It is within this context that this paper is

predicated on the assumption that research and educational endeavour in Africa are largely underpinned by Eurocentric ideology. Eurocentrism is a focus on European culture. This is a point conceded by Arowosegbe (2014, 308), who states that the power undergirding the construction of African studies is managed within "the epistemic modes of Western intellectual thought," thus making African studies a colonised field of enquiry. As such, theories, methodology and analytical frameworks are all developed, propagated and better suited to European styles, thus making African studies either directly or indirectly contextually European.

In a similar vein, Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013, 1) challenge African researchers and scholars to attempt alternative techniques of questioning the investigation and conservation of indigenous knowledge for the evolution and empowerment of African peoples. For them, "African researchers need to persist in developing and using alternative methods of studying our reality and refrain from sticking to the research pathways mapped out by Western methodologies, within which many have been trained" (Owusu-Ansah and Mji 2013, 1). It is within such a context that this study attempts to proffer possible leeway for the inclusion of the African stance in studies across the African continent, by instilling new and Afrocentric research ideologies, for example Ubuntu, in emerging African scholars.

Unlike earlier studies which have sought to examine how excessively Eurocentric African studies are, and why African studies should be largely Afrocentric, this study differs a little by identifying the postgraduate study stage and suggesting that this stage particularly could essentially be the level where Afrocentric-minded researchers can be groomed and developed. Nyika (2014, 2) recognises that "research programmes at the postgraduate level contribute remarkably toward the efficiency of universities, and to a large extent the continuous availability of resourceful and innovative researchers for the future, which in turn makes universities across the world strive to collectively produce such researchers through their postgraduate research programmes."

Thus, since postgraduate study is often the stage at which researchers are trained, it provides an ideal opportunity for emerging researchers to begin to consider fresh ways of addressing African social problems through African theories and methodologies. As such, it becomes crucial that African universities enlist actions to ensure that their postgraduate projects successfully convey the profound intellectual comprehension of research methodologies required (Nyika 2014). This study therefore contends that for African institutions to effectively encourage significant intellectual development, a foundation which allows them to actively answer African questions using African means may be useful and should be supported at all costs if indigenous knowledge is to be preserved and solutions found for African problems.

While it is apparent that an inclination for research is instilled in young and emerging researchers at postgraduate level, for a renaissance to succeed in Africa, Afrocentric inclinations also need to be imparted at this level, since studies currently emanating

from Africa offer little or no significance in allowing for African problems to be solved. Jones (2015, 114) affirms that "of all the continents of the world, Africa is conceivably the most subjected to outer analyses, diagnoses and prescriptions which purport to provide solutions to its internal socioeconomic and political ills." This is perhaps as a result of the fact that the African people have been exposed to several decades of ideological construction at the hands of European scholarship. As such, most African studies have continued to contribute to a European intellectual space, thus causing African countries to depend on the intellectual arenas of other continents.

Through a desk research approach, this paper examines an Afrocentric research propensity and proposes that it should be inculcated in emerging researchers at the postgraduate level. The paper reviews research works from scholars who have contributed immensely to the study of decoloniality. From the critical viewpoints of the studies, we draw strength for our argument that the postgraduate level may be instrumental in achieving a renaissance Africa through hybridisation and by disciplinarising African ideologies.

Clarifying Key Concepts

Since it is important to ensure accurate and clear expression of thoughts in academic writing in order to explain complicated ideas (Hoogenboom and Manske 2012), defining relevant and complex, and perhaps controversial, concepts should be considered paramount. In light of this, and in order for the authors and reader to concur, we present a succinct definition of certain concepts which are perceived as being intricate.

1. **Postgraduateness:** According to Agu and Odimegwu (2014), postgraduate research can be likened to a form of apprenticeship performed under the mentorship of experienced academics, and this is considered a major avenue for sustaining and preparing students to become independent researchers, whilst also effectively initiating them into the academic community. This is the stage in their academic development where mentoring and supervision are offered to advise, motivate and guide students to become habitual researchers in the future, as they can in turn contribute competently to the growth of the literature available in their fields (Chan 2008). This description should now make it apparent that postgraduate study is the level at which new researchers are born. Thus, for an Afrocentric approach to be instilled in an African researcher, this stage is considered important. The experienced researchers may exploit this stage to develop emerging researchers that are Afrocentric-minded.

2. **Decoloniality:** Doxtater (2014, 629) sees decoloniality as involving a re-engagement with "indigenous knowledge within a given culture, rather than within a merely performative one, in which indigenous knowledge of education is emancipated, including governance, sovereignty, agriculture,

architecture, mathematics, astronomy, communications, medicine and healing." In other words, and for the purposes of this study, decoloniality centres on perceiving modernity in the context of one's society or environment.

3. **Renaissance Africa:** Former South African president, Thabo Mbeki, in a speech delivered in Johannesburg, challenged Africans on the need to promote developmental agendas which would somersault Africa to a competitive position in the global world economy. If this is to be achieved, Africa has to originate the development of new learning structures which are different from those heavily laden with European influence that already exist. From this vantage, Cossa (2009) notes that it is essential for African scholars to assist in reflecting on how to position Africa equitably amongst the other continents in the world; thus, the indispensability of a call for an African reawakening or renaissance of sorts. For Cossa, in such a call lies a challenge which requires careful consideration of the concept of an "African Renaissance" as a descriptor of Africans' attempts to redefine their future. In redefining this future, conducting research on the strengths of Africa as a continent is paramount. Thus, the need for an Africa which looks inward by teaching, learning, instructing and researching Africa-related issues from African perspectives.

The Decolonial Approach

In recent times, debates concerning decolonisation have permeated South African higher education institutions and have received serious academic attention. These debates, as well as many other occurrences and calls by students to decolonise education, have resulted in academics researching and wishing to locate decolonisation within their fields of study. Thus, publications from different academic domains now mirror how the teaching of these disciplines can be made relevant to students by perhaps changing what is taught, and how it is taught. It is against this backdrop that the idea of decoloniality has taken a strong hold across higher education institutions, particularly in South Africa.

To Mignolo (2011, 54),

> decoloniality seeks to unmask, unveil, and reveal coloniality as an underside of modernity that coexisted with its rhetoric of progress, equality, fraternity, and liberty. It is a particular kind of critical intellectual theory as well as political project which seeks to disentangle ex-colonised parts of the world from coloniality.

For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, 489),

> Decoloniality is born out of a realization that the modern world is an asymmetrical world order that is sustained not only by colonial matrices of power but also by pedagogies and epistemologies of equilibrium that continue to produce alienated Africans that are

socialized into hating Africa that produced them and liking Europe and America that reject them.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) sees decoloniality as the future of Africa. This research sees decoloniality in the sense of a rethought and reborn Africa, where our ways are Africanised, which could be achieved by the quest of emerging researchers whose research questions and answers are founded on African problems. Discussing the decolonial approach to political economy, Grosfoguel (2012, 96) adds that "decoloniality departs from both 'Eurocentric fundamentalism' and 'third world fundamentalism.'" What Grosfoquel posits is the idea to perceive decoloniality beyond epistemic racism (Western-centric) and focus more attention on critical thinking emanating from places that have been historically considered inferior to the West. This is what Mignolo (2011, 3–5) observes as constituting "epistemic disobedience," which is part of a search in the global South for "independent thought and decolonial freedom." From another perspective, the decolonial approach is a project which opposes the "epistemic privilege of the first world" which permeates the classification of knowledges.

As such, Wiredu (1992) argues that considering the global privilege of Eurocentric knowledge in the world, in Africa, the motto for the moment should be: "African know thyself." This is a far removal from the current situation of things. Thus, Wiredu foregrounds what he refers to as epistemic awakening, which rejects seeing and knowing Africa through Eurocentric lenses, but rather through Afrocentric lenses in what he considers to be African self-knowledge.

Huerfano, Caballero and Rojas (2016, 78) view the decolonial approach as a theory that challenges and reformulates "communicational scientific discourse from criticism of the mediating power of Anglo-American hegemonic thinking to become a native paradigm." In Grosfoguel's (2011, 21) assertion, this theory resists the perceived modernity residing in "the oppressed and exploited subjects of the colonial difference in favour of a decolonial liberation struggle for a world which exists beyond Eurocentric modernity." Bekithemba and Dipane (2017) perceive it as being a theory which evokes the need to revalue and rework local epistemologies that have been rendered insignificant and unscientific by the West.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, 489–90) premises his decolonial units of analysis on three levels, namely, coloniality of power, knowledge and being. His coloniality of power, focusing as it does on both political and economic power, investigates how the current "global-political" has been designed into a racially hierarchised, hegemonic, asymmetrical and "modern" power structure. His coloniality of being focuses on relevant questions of the making of modern subjectivities and issues of human ontology. His coloniality of knowledge, from which this work draws its strength, raises epistemological issues in terms of how knowledge is generated, as well as who generates which knowledge, and for what purpose. To him, "both endogenous and indigenous

knowledge are now understood as being 'the barbarian margins of society'" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, 490).

It is within Ndlovu-Gatsheni's premise of the coloniality of knowledge that this study thus examines issues of knowledge generation in postgraduate research in Africa. This is done whilst bearing in mind the necessity for discussing and offering ways in which indigenous knowledge can be located within African research, and consequently lead to new data which will more definitely answer African problems. This will lead to the development of an Africa that uses its own epistemic underpinnings to address African problems, and which in turn produce realistic and achievable African solutions.

Locating Indigenous Knowledge in African Research: A Discussion

Returning to Ivan Illich's 1971 book, *Deschooling Society*, published in the twentieth century, he makes an interesting point regarding the ineffectual nature of institutionalised education. Illich (1971) writes,

> the current search for new educational funnels must be reversed into the search for their institutional inverse: educational webs which heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing, and caring. We hope to contribute concepts needed by those who conduct such counterfoil research on education.

Although not categorically stated, Illich's ideology is informed by the need to involve general society in the teaching and learning process, a factor absent in the current educational system of Africa, which is largely Europeanised. Illich's mentality suggests that social impact be brought into the educational space, which is one of the foci of deschooling education. Although not without its cons, Illich's *deschooling* principles such as flexibility, inclusiveness, adaptability, and personalisation are relevant to the topical study. For Illich, "schooling has created a hegemony where relevant learning instruction happens only within the school rather than addressing humans as a casual learner that masters skills and lessons naturally from learning activities" (Illich 1971, 11).

Illich observes that the underpinnings of educational discourse and its historical influences lie in the West, and thus offers the option of de-educating society: a proposed system which allows for general society to become involved in education. It is not recent news, however, that current educational strategies do not permit this from an African perspective given the dominance of Eurocentric contents. Schiele (2000, 3) also suggests that the European political, economic and scientific hegemony in education has unfortunately also led to a hegemony of knowledge production and validation, particularly within academia, which marginalises the indigenous worldviews of people of colour.

Heleta (2016) advocates for the paramount need to introduce fundamental epistemological change at institutions of higher learning. While Mbembe's (2016) and Heleta's (2016) contributions may be skewed more towards undergraduate students, by extension the same educational parameters apply to the postgraduate sector, since postgraduate students are encouraged to conduct research on issues in which their background knowledge may be purely colonial. Mbembe (2016, 32) enjoins that institutions of higher learning still adhere to the hegemonic Eurocentric epistemic canon which attributes truth only to a Western manner of knowledge production (Mbembe 2016, 32). This bodes well for what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) terms coloniality of knowledge, which probes how knowledge is generated in Africa and the purposes for which it is generated.

Arowosegbe (2014, 318) argues that "knowledge production within the field of African studies is compromised, crippled and tied to a Eurocentric order that is not only inimical to the construction of an Africa-centred scholarship and endogenous knowledge systems but also detrimental to the developmental needs of the continent." Since a significant way of producing new knowledge is through research, for effective African knowledge production, researchers, and primarily emerging researchers, should begin to attempt fresh means and methods of studying and researching. Using Claude Ake's corpus, Arowosegbe (2014) suggests that researchers should begin to counter Eurocentric claims of universality through the cultivation of an alternative discourse. Such alternative measures should see research work premised on African theories and methodologies, which is the thrust of this study along with its new suggestion of postgraduate involvement.

Like many other scholars, Schiele (2000, 2) asserts that the knowledge base of academia is permeated by a "European-American cultural hegemony affirming the existential experiences, paradigms and theories which have emerged from Western intellectual history and thought." Consequently, problems have been created as Africans have, either consciously or unconsciously, adopted the Western perspective to the complete elimination of their own perspective of the world. The object therefore is to displace Western ways, and to replace them with ways that are familiar to African experiences using African methodologies. As early as 1986, in fact, Mazrui (1986) averred that Africa has survived long enough to have generated for Africans a distinctly African ethos.

Chawane (2016) opts for the choice of Afrocentricity in his statements on the relevance of African knowledge from an academic perspective. He focuses on the fact that the methodology, theory and ideology employed in academia are pertinent to the proposed change to the intellectual colonialism already prevalent within institutions of learning. Thus, research should put Africans at the core of any investigation of African phenomena—"Africanness" (Stikkers 2008).

Therefore, as an academic phenomenon, Chawane (2016, 80) notes that "the concept of Afrocentricity serves the purpose of binding together the various elements of African and African-American studies, and transforming them from an interdisciplinary assortment into a unified discipline, with ideological and intellectual goals, political purpose and a set of commonly understood methods and theories." The idea of commonly understood methods and theories therefore provides the thrust of this study with the notion that, although existing Eurocentric theories are learned, their relevance to and congruity with African societies are still an issue. Hence, common theories with a direct involvement in African societies may be more pertinent in African research. Perceived as a cry for the recognition of an African standpoint, Chawane (2016) buttresses the notion that Afrocentricity does not imply the replacement, but the correction, of existing Eurocentric methods which often eliminate submissions made by Africans in the development of the world.

To a large extent, Thabede (2008) covers the overt and covert aspects of the inclusion of "Africanness" in education with his proposition that Africans should perceive matters from an African viewpoint, which is often determined by African society. For Thabede, Africa needs to create space for the oppressed African-based epistemologies where African-based theories/ideas are significantly acknowledged within the scholarly intellectual space. In other words, events should be perceived from the point of view of Africans themselves, thus offering Afrocentrism as an alternative perspective to understanding phenomena through the African worldview and epistemology.

Motta (2013, 88) also proposes that "the process of constructing knowledge needs to be reclaimed and remade as a critical act of opening possibility through developing pedagogies (as method and content) with students." Importantly, "Afrocentric domains should form part of both the knowledge base and general practice alongside current Eurocentric intervention theories and practices" (Motta 2013, 88). In doing so, it will be understood that African knowledge is relevant in addressing African social issues, and thereby departs from foreign frameworks and notions currently being used to analyse Africans socially. Thabede considers it entirely inappropriate to apply Eurocentric theories in explaining African problems.

Through valid declarations supported with factual literature, the above tendencies have examined the place of African knowledge in the academic milieu, particularly in relation to research. Given that the aim of research is to produce new data and knowledge, African theories and methods should not be subjugated if new knowledge that will contribute to African development is to be produced. Moreover, it should be noted that for such new knowledge to be developed, a platform which allows for these kinds of creativity and innovation should be made available. As such, theories and methods which will contribute to the advancement of African knowledge should be encouraged and driven with utmost capacity and potential. From their own perspectives, Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) also concede that African research should be driven by African knowledge and methods of knowing if it is to be meaningful to its peoples.

Envisioning a Renaissance Africa through Postgraduate Research

Differing from other similar studies, this paper not only focuses on the tenets of education, it identifies research as a strong culture in the construction of an African renaissance, and thus encourages researchers particularly to begin to look inward through concave lenses. This is also a noteworthy point by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, 10) when he cautions that "what Africans must be vigilant against is the trap of ending up normalising and universalising coloniality as a natural state of the world. It must be unmasked, resisted and destroyed because it produced a world order that can only be sustained through a combination of violence, deceit, hypocrisy, and lies."

In an attempt to unmask coloniality and reject its hitherto normalisation, this paper probes the roles of research in that quest with particular regard to postgraduate research. Olibie, Agu, and Uzoechina (2015, 164) extend that the successful mentoring of "postgraduate students should be built upon effective characteristics and values through several curriculum enhancement strategies, so that by the bettering of research mentoring, the improvement and enhancement of the research progress of postgraduate students can best be achieved." To develop an Afrocentric-minded researcher, a new curriculum strategy may be developed with the specific purpose of assisting the new methods of thinking and doing research.

Recognising the struggle to inculcate decolonisation in current academics, Heleta (2016) correctly observes that decolonising higher education will possibly require new generations of academics who are not so involved with the old system. It is against this backdrop that this study's authors strongly propose that academic mentors and supervisors begin to support their postgraduate students in exploring new aspects of decolonised research theories and methods. There is, however, a fundamental challenge for current academics who have emerged from the old Eurocentric system and have already been indoctrinated in it (Maserumule 2015). However, one of the many traits of the academic is flexibility, and the ability to engage in fresh areas of research and produce new knowledge and data. It is important that existing academics participate in unlearning processes that afford them the opportunity to eliminate the already existing Eurocentric-mindedness.

As a suggestion, academics may engage in workshops, seminars or training sessions where decolonisation is discussed from different spheres of education. In such a gathering, areas in need of decolonial attention would be examined and solutions provided. If existing academics are provided with avenues to confidently discuss decolonisation within respective disciplines with the notion of identifying areas that may be reviewed or repurposed, postgraduate students, through their research projects, can thus be saddled with the responsibility of investigating new ways and methods using African-related principles and beliefs.

By implication, existing academics may begin to publish on new theories and methods which can be found within the African epistemological space. On the other hand, academics, based on their research experience, can act to oversee postgraduate students who are still learning research tactics in order to infuse a culture of performing research within the African epistemology. To achieve this, there needs to be a conscious effort from academics to unlearn and relearn new methods by collaborating not only with themselves but also students. This point is echoed by Keet, Sattarzadeh, and Munene (2017, 5) who assert that a way of locating the decolonial rhetoric in the academy is to cooperate with serious thinkers (students included) on the decolonial. As research supervisors, a critical engagement with the postgraduate student on how decolonial perspectives can be incorporated in the research project will bode well for the decolonial direction in postgraduate research.

In so doing, existing academics can act as guides for emerging academics who could introduce and build methods of research through the different characteristics of African knowledge. Since the aim is not to do away with Eurocentric approaches entirely, existing and experienced academics still have an important role to play in ensuring a hybridisation of both the Eurocentric and Afrocentric research approaches that will place Africa at the centre of African research. In consultation with their postgraduate students, academics need to re-evaluate the current ways of researching by bringing Africa to the core of their research. Keet, Sattarzadeh, and Munene (2017, 8) also concede that academics, with their students, through critique, contribute to the self-clarification of the struggles within our universities.

As with Chawane (2016), for example, this study does not suggest a total departure from Eurocentrism; what is however suggested is a system which allows for greater inclusion of Afrocentric views in academic research. In a similar vein, Kaya and Seleti (2013, 33) contend that "decolonised academia must reject the utilisation of dominant Western worldview of knowing and knowledge production as the only way of knowing." It is important to note at this juncture that emerging researchers particularly should exhibit contextually applicable and socially intelligent responses to pressing African questions and problems.

The call for hybridity is hydra-headed. It is a task that requires contributions from different parties. For instance, fusing the Eurocentric and Afrocentric approaches requires some caution and thoughtfulness. It should be a consensus rather than the responsibility of some individuals. Hybridisation in this sense should be critiqued exhaustively by discussing possible challenges and prospects before arriving at a solidified decolonial approach for postgraduate studies. Though the task is challenging, it is achievable with the right methods and strategies.

Importantly, African governments have a huge role to play. Decolonisation should not be considered as purely an academic initiative. Just as there are education ministries, there is the need to also set up well-funded government parastatals or agencies solely

focusing on decolonisation. In such parastatals should be policy makers, experienced academics and students who would critically examine existing Eurocentric approaches in terms of their relevance to African knowledge production. Such parastatals should be tasked with developing ways of balancing Eurocentric and Afrocentric concepts and research in Africa in a bid to ensure that knowledge production in Africa is not lopsided.

Beyond that, institutions of higher learning may replicate this method in faculties and their centres for teaching and learning by setting up a board that will examine and re-examine how research works in Africa can employ elements of Africanness in answering African questions. Thus, potential academics would develop a decolonial posture (Maserumule 2015) which allows for Africanness to take a stronghold in research works that focus on the African continent by using the features and characteristics of African epistemological knowledge.

Our idea of hybridity is aptly captured by Green (2013), who proposes that the academy needs to observe knowledge from diverse perspectives so that a more productive relationship between formal scholarship and kinds of knowledge that have been initially excluded can be established. In essence, hybridisation even becomes stronger when we consider the fact that two different approaches are fused into one.

Against the consensus that African knowledge is inconsequential, various African ideologies, such as Ubuntu and Ujamaa, can be developed into theories and methodologies of their own if academics begin to apply their experience to doing so. In what Bekithemba and Dipane (2017, 244) refer to as the "disciplinarisation of indigenous knowledge," academics, in their quest for indigenous knowledge, do face the challenge of a lack of "disciplinarisation," i.e. a formal arrangement and documentation of indigenous knowledge. To them, indigenous knowledge resides in the minds of the people and not in libraries.

Chirimuuta, Gudhlanga, and Bhukuvhani (2012, 3) also observe that a generation of elders is dying out, leaving unknown and untapped the richness of their knowledge and skills which are applicable to the survival, and academic and social development, of posterity. Thus, as with this study, they also recommend that African ideologies should be documented and "disciplinarised" as a means of promoting the sustainability of indigenous knowledge, even when its custodians are no more. As difficult as this may seem, it is indeed an achievable task when one considers the array of ideological and epistemological stances available in Africa. For the purposes of this study, some of these ideas are mentioned and discussed within the tenets of the "characteristics of African indigenous knowledge" as highlighted by Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013).

Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013, 4) posit that "the African worldview includes wholeness, community and harmony, and that these are deeply rooted in cultural values." Sarpong (2002) echoes this by stressing that a person is considered human only because of others as both individual and collective harmony are primary tasks in seeking to become a true

person. This ideal of humanity, Sarpong believes, resonates with knowledge in that it is collective and community-oriented. Mkabela (2005) also affirms that relevant to the African viewpoint is a firm orientation towards togetherness i.e. "collective ethic"— admitting that survival of the group derives from harmony. This is akin to the popular ideology of Ubuntu in Africa, which implies humanity, and which Metz (2011) believes to be a moral and human rights concept.

Metz (2011) suggests that the idea of Ubuntu deals with a broad understanding of intuitive human rights, which can in turn serve as solid guidance for resolving day-to-day disputes concerning justice. Lefa (2015) intimates that Ubuntu relies on the African way of life and impacts on Africans' wellbeing. If such is the case, it is wondered why "Ubuntuism" has not become a full-blown and popular theoretical research inclination and analytical framework of its own through publications from academics which use this ideology as a theory on which postgraduate studies can be based. Although scholars, and perhaps also decolonised academics, have discussed Ubuntu in their different ways by appreciating its ideology, they have failed to develop and disciplinarise it as a theory as Bekithemba and Dipane (2017) have observed. Scholars have often examined it somewhat evasively but have not gone deeper in attempting to understand it as a conceptual framework.

It would be interesting to see some African research work theorised using "Ubuntuism," with analytical frameworks that emerge from the concept, and a methodology derived from this idea. In so doing, one can assume that "Ubuntu" as a concept has been disciplinarised in line with Bekithemba and Dipane's (2017) request to turn African ideologies into disciplines. To disciplinarise is to have a formal documented account of a concept that can be studied and researched. Therefore, to disciplinarise these African concepts, the following ideas may be useful for a start: (a) make African ideologies objects of research, (b) develop terminologies for the concepts, and (c) develop research and analytical methods for these concepts. Perhaps an impressive way to begin would be for potential postgraduate students to consider African concepts as their areas of research while being guided by interested supervisors or mentors.

Africa has witnessed figures arise in the field of decolonisation through their actions, developments and strategies. Tanyanyiwa and Chikwanha (2011) pontificate that prior to the arrival of Western methods, African knowledge had directed its peoples in different spheres of life such as spiritual, social, educational, agricultural, political and economic. This position supports the fact that there are many ideas which can be drawn from African indigenous knowledge, and such ideas only need to be subjected to critical evaluation before development. For example, the former president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, introduced what he termed the Ujamaa village policy in 1975 in the hope of creating a high literacy rate, as well as improving the agricultural, social and economic resources and facilities of Tanzanians. The Swahili word *Ujamaa* implies "familyhood," and was a concept introduced to encourage the social and economic development of Tanzania. The Ujamaa policy was predicated on his vision for national self-reliance by

mainly encouraging rural cooperatives and self-managing rural communities through agricultural production and education. Sheikheldin (2015, 79) considers Nyerere's philosophy as wanting rural development to be the backbone of economic development for Tanzania.

Though he may be commended for integrating Tanzanians and reducing inter-tribal rivalries in the country, it is important to note that this policy resulted in various negative impacts, such as the crippling of some financial firms and banks, and a decline in the transportation networks of the country. Hence, Sheikheldin (2015, 78) concedes that the vision and strategy of the policy are worthy of serious contemplation and perhaps revival, though he cautions that future development schemes should address similar concepts with more care. From this perspective, Ujamaa as a concept remains a very pregnant and still unbundled social ideology in Africa. Despite its limitations, further investigation of the policy should have been encouraged which might have emphasised its positives in terms of favourable outcomes.

Tanyanyiwa and Chikwanha (2011) also concede that it is impossible to conclude that African indigenous knowledge has no limitations. Nevertheless, just as other types of knowledge are subject to change as a result of economic, environmental and social circumstances, its acceptance must also be exposed to critical observation and analysis. Nyerere contributed a few ideas which can be located within African society. However, most of these ideas have been left unnurtured, undeveloped and unresearched, despite some positives derived from them. Nyerere used Ujamaa as the basis for a national development project centred on collective agriculture and an increased level of national self-reliance. A further investigation into the concept may reveal useful ideas for the renaissance of Africa.

The above instance, coupled with many more, could build new knowledge for Africa if carefully explored and developed. The philosophical ideas of the Ghanaian Kwame Nkrumah have also left behind a vacuum which has not been filled. His ideas regarding "consciencism" and the African personality may likewise be found useful as social theories. Thus, Nkrumaism supports the notion that Africa is capable of managing its own affairs. Research should now begin to focus on the social approaches of Nyerereism or Nkrumaism, and whether disciplines can be developed from these concepts. The work of Nsamenang (2006) also stresses that indigenous inception of knowledge emphasises the social domains of functioning and is quite distinct from the academic knowledge which dominates Western concepts of these constructs.

Since knowledge is an instrumental weapon of power (Ake 1979), being knowledgeable and not being able to transfer such knowledge to general society renders this power useless. As such, this instrumental weapon of knowledge will fail in fighting what it is meant to fight against. In other words, African knowledge may liberate, redefine and bring a new renaissance to Africa; Eurocentric knowledge may not serve this purpose,

since there is already a discrepancy between the issues and the platforms from which such issues are tackled.

Ake (1979) emphasises a need to advance a form of scholarship which considers its local intellectual contexts seriously, whilst also seeking to become globally reputable. This process should entail that academic research be demystified and rendered into distinctive components examined within the tenets defined by an individual's milieu and social experiences. This is well-aligned with the intentions of this paper, with its strong recommendation that postgraduate students should be used to drive this purpose since they are still at the very early stages of their research journeys.

Drawing from Chawane (2016), therefore, Afrocentric research should focus on those areas which were left unattended by Eurocentric scholars. An example of this would be contributions made by Africa and Africans to the development of the world. Thus, the Afrocentric approach may help to resolve the contemporary challenges and demands of African students. In Nigeria, for example, Olibie, Agu, and Uzoechina (2015) affirm that research mentoring is underutilised at postgraduate level—a factor which may also be found true of many other African countries. Thus, based on the above suggestions, there is a need to improve on research mentoring strategies to ensure that they do not simply continue to transmit only Eurocentric knowledge, but also encourage postgraduate students to think laterally in developing approaches which are more Afrocentric-friendly. Postgraduate students should be inspired to consider new research strategies that will contribute to their construction and application of research knowledge in a quest to address the challenges faced specifically by African societies.

Conclusion

If research problems, objectives, questions and their accompanying significance are constructed using Eurocentric thought, and therefore tackled using Eurocentric approaches, theories and methodologies, Afrocentric findings cannot be provided, which implies that the answers found to African social problems cannot be considered significant to African development. Hence, envisioning a new Africa requires thinking African, imagining African, researching African, and in a way, learning African by unlearning European and American to a certain degree.

It is important to note that this study does not propose the complete banishment of Eurocentric approaches, as in fact an entire departure from Eurocentric approaches would be problematic. Envisioning a new Africa will not be achieved by neglecting all European influences. Instead, this paper's authors propose the notion of hybridity, where existing Eurocentrically minded research can be used to identify and conceive indigenous frameworks and methodologies to be employed in addressing African problems. Hybridity, in this sense, is concerned with the combination of African ideologies with European ideologies to answer societal problems in Africa through research, rather than in the current situation, where African societal problems are

answered purely by using European ideologies, with little or no influence from African ideologies.

We are of the opinion that research work in Africa should begin to mirror the thinking of African societies with the objective of constructing a reborn African continent. If research work is intended to answer societal problems, it is essential that research questions and objectives focus on the problems of the specific societies in which these problems need to be solved. What becomes of great importance is the backdrop from which such questions are answered in terms of the theories and methodologies used. Undoubtedly, the next generation of new researchers, if well mentored and guided, can develop and explore any new knowledge discovered based on existing African knowledge.

Hence, institutions of higher learning should thoroughly reconceive, reimagine, reassess and reconceptualise the curricula and methods of postgraduate research and bring Africa to the core of academic and research endeavours. Such curricula should be devoid of Western epistemological domination, Eurocentrism, epistemic violence or any worldviews originally designed to degrade, exploit and subjugate the people of Africa. As such, acclaimed researchers should not accept everything European as the norm, but should begin to embolden postgraduate students to attempt new and indigenous ways of conducting their research. In this respect, research emanating from Africa should be as relevant to the political, economic and social realities of the African continent as is possible.

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