Building Capacity for Gambian Researchers

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Abstract

Building capacity for Gambian researchers is the result of a research inquiry in The Gambia, exploring the politics of knowledge and geo-political interests through an African or Afro-centric approach to such research. The study responded to the call from African scholars and politicians to rethink African research development using an Afro-centric framework.

Critical dialogue about modern science and indigenous knowledge, new and old ways of knowing and thinking took place with researchers at The Gambian Chapter of the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa, (ERNWACA), and the Gambian Economic and Social Development Research Institute (GESDRI), and with other academic researchers, practitioners, students, elders, African knowledge producers, politicians and theoreticians. The exploration created conditions for dialogue between the different dimensions and paradigms in a discussion of what it means to be African in the 21st century.

This research was part of an inquiry into the paradigmatic characteristics of indigenous knowledge in the Gambia. Knowledge was explored as an integral aspect of the ontological theory held by local indigenous Gambian African people, where knowing is relational and participatory. Reports indicated that the general acceptance in Africa of Western knowledge systems and knowledge transfer has meant a loss of African identity, and has created a formal/informal knowledge gap in African society. Western frameworks for research promote a narrow view of research that dismisses non-traditional methodologies. The critical social science research presented in this thesis challenges the status quo, its

influences and assumptions, and seeks to positively change these by influencing policy

approaches to research development.

Dedication

For my grandchildren, who were all born during this research process

Riley Sean Tucker

Ava Jean Northcoat Graham McLaney

Mia Jane Tucker

Max Robert William McLaney

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many individuals whose work, assistance and support has been critical in developing and writing this thesis. Without their guidance, vision and contributions, this thesis would not have been possible. This research has become much more than the interviews and analysis for a post-graduate degree; it has been a valuable opportunity to establish and enhance relationships as well as positioning my agency toward re-establishing African people's worldviews.

Firstly I wish to pay tribute to my Gambian African family. For many years I have been a witness to your joy of life, family, extended family, generosity, faith and commitment to hard work while being constantly challenged and contested by various constraints. Thank you to my Gambian colleagues at ERNWACA and GESDRI and research mentors, for the countless ways of support and assistance given to me, from organising my research process to the philosophical questioning and interpretations of my research.

To my supervisor and mentor Professor Marilyn Waring; without your assistance, encouragement and knowledge, this thesis would not have happened. I sincerely appreciate your time and effort bestowed upon my thinking and writing as well as your insight, depth of analysis and expertise. I acknowledge and congratulate you for your continued and relentless work on public policy development. To my other supervisor Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, I am grateful for your advice, guidance and encouragement. Thank you for supporting me and facilitating a space to explore new theory through your knowledge of Pacific Theory.

Ma waira e taurima
Te marae i waho nei
Ma te tika ma te pono
Me te aroha e
Who will be the custodians of this marae / whenua
Will they be Integrity, Truth and Love/
Truth unique to each marae / iwi.

This was given to me at the beginning of this research study by Kuia Aunty Irene from my community in the Hokianga, Far North, Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institutions of higher learning.

Jennifer Tucker

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ADED	Academy for Educational Development
APRC	Alliance for Patriotic Re-orientation and Construction
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERNWACA	Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GESDRI	Gambia Economic and Social Development Research Institute
GNI	Gross National Income
GTTI	Gambian Technical Training Institute
HDI	Human Development Index
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISFRA	Institut Supérieur de Formation et de Recherche Appliquée (Institute for Training and Applied Research)
LINKS	Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a Global Society
LSE	London School of Economics
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIA	National Intelligence Agency
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
SPA	Strategy for Poverty Alleviation
SWAPs	Sector Wide Approach
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education and Scientific & Cultural Organisation

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis asks: what are the foundations of and capacities for indigenous epistemologies as a) a potential process and /or b) an analytical framework for strategic research development in The Gambia? This introductory chapter begins with the thesis question, outlines the motivation for the research, describes the importance of carrying out the research and identifies the gap in Gambian society. It moves to specify the objectives of the research, the researcher's background, and describes and introduces the research partners. The introductory chapter concludes with a presentation of an outline of the organisation of the thesis.

Motivation for research

In the late nineteenth century, Africa came under 'Western' rule. New political and territorial orders were imposed and the African continent was divided by the colonial administrations, which cut across African kingdoms and ethnic groups. A good example of this was the division between The Gambia and Senegal, with English and French administrations respectively. Colonisation provided a legal framework for the dependence of African economies on Western economies, and African economies became producers of raw materials for industries in the advanced capitalist societies. The colonial style of governance was embedded.

The West

Colonial control set the subsequent dominant paradigm, for example, governance and education. References to the West are made frequently in this thesis. What does the Western World or the West mean in the thesis context? Originally the term had a literal

geographic meaning, contrasting Europe with the countries of Asia. In the current context, 'Western culture' more often is used to refer to social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, religious beliefs, political systems, and specific artefacts and technologies that have originated in Western Europe and the United States of America (USA), and which are now spreading globally, including ideas about what 'knowledge' is.

The nineteenth century was a period of profound change in the political geography of Africa with the demise of old African kingdoms and Empires. "By 1900 much of Africa had been colonized by seven European powers - Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Italy. After the conquest of African ... states, the European powers ... establish[ed] the colonial state systems" (Iweriebor, n.d., A Period of Change section, para. 3). Western processes of influence and imposition began with the creation of these colonial empires, which brought about the expansion of Western institutions. These institutions persist despite self-determination movements from subjugated people.

Colonial control set the subsequent trade patterns, investment arrangements and political alliances with hidden advantages for the West. Western solutions have not worked for Africa. Most countries on the continent are debt-ridden and debt servicing takes huge chunks of national budgets. African states struggle with impositions by Western agencies. For over five decades, Africa has pursued "development along the path traced out by Western experience" (Nyamnjoh, 2010, p. 2).

Consultancy syndrome

Consultants from the outside come into Africa on short-term assignments. Mkandawire (2010) believed, "this process is producing a type of knowledge that is rarely useful to

Africans, either because it is hidden from them in confidential reports or it is in not easily understood languages" (p.29). Nyamnjoh (2012) expanded on universally designed goals by writing, "the consultancy syndrome has triumphed over academic values such as excellence in teaching, research and publication" (p. 140). Donor and international lending organisations advised by academic and consultancy experts concerning aid, concessions, trade, investment, education, defence and security usually overlook indigenous activities because they do not fit with the prevailing localised views about the nature of development. To date, the policies and programmes in The Gambia and other countries in Africa designed to alleviate poverty have largely been ineffective in overcoming disadvantages faced by African people. Mkandawire (2010) suggested;

> The aid establishment today commands much of the intellectual resources devoted to development through its own research agenda, through the consultancy industry and through its selective support of research programmes and epistemic communities in developing countries. The reward system that the aid establishment dominates favours the report over the peer reviewed journal paper. (p. 24)

The activities of consultants undermined African knowledge capacities within Africa and also knowledge of others about Africa. The African elite exploited the advantage by recycling information and feigning ignorance, to attend lucrative workshops. Such consultancies can be worth up to four billion US dollars a year (Mkandawire 2010).

Aid and dependency

The aid industry is big but is not driven by what development should be about. Circular aid models emerged that totally disregarded indigenous African philosophies and practices. The majority of African citizens are not formally employed, leaving only a small working class to provide the financial backbone to the state. These two communities rarely interact.

A lot is lost in this 'gap'. African cultures have been divided by European modes of knowing. Those in dominant positions have significant consequences on people's ways and self-image. Colonial attitudes strongly influenced political agendas, policies and education systems and determined peoples' attitudes. Nyamnjoh (2012) wrote, "The colonial epistemology has survived in the continent more because it suits the purposes of the agents of (neo) colonialism than because of its relevance to understanding African situations" (p. 146).

After years of dependency on Western social science paradigms it is not surprising that foreign research results are valued ahead of those of the local peer group in many places. Most of the financial resources for research are situated in the West. This is also where most scholarly journals are based. Researchers often turn to better-paying consultancy work. Here they produce reports for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations, Western governments and their agencies. Most of these reports do "not contribute to [Africa's] pool of knowledge that will inform policy and shape strategies to answer Africa's fundamental problems and challenges" (Mlambo, 2006, p. 172).

Today as African social scientists begin to compare their realities (historic, cultural, economic, and political) with those of advanced industrial societies … (the response) is to challenge the basic constructs and epistemologies on which African development (is) based (Alfonja, 2005). Although contemporary policy frameworks, rationalities and mechanisms may appear to be different from historical colonisation practices, they are informed by the same underlying structures.

What are epistemologies?

Runes (as cited in Meyer, 2003, p. 77) defined epistemology as "the philosophical science of the nature of knowledge and truth." It answers the questions: What is knowledge? How do we know what we know? African epistemologies were marginalised and as such, indigenous African knowledge and language as a development instrument received no attention in colonial Africa. "This meant that indigenous African discourse was excluded from policy formulation in the social, economic, judicial, constitutional and educational areas" (Lebakeng, 2010, p. 24).

Nyamnjoh (2012) agreed, and explained, "In Africa, the colonial conquest of Africans - body, mind, and soul – has led to real or attempted epistemicide - the decimation or near killing and replacement of endogenous epistemologies in Africa with the epistemological paradigm of the conqueror" (p. 129). Nyamnjoh used the term "endogenous" in opposition to "the rather limited and limiting notion of "indigenous", to evoke … adaptability and capacity for autonomy and interdependence, creativity and innovation in African societies and beyond" (p. 136). The term indigenous referred more to people of a particular geographical region in contrast to endogenous which is a more biological term.

Since colonisation, African cultures have been associated with primitivism and paganism, which in turn were seen as the root cause of socio-economic underdevelopment in Africa. Development on the continent "was seen as a process of acquiring western style systems, standards, expertise and problem solving methods" (Rwabyoma, 2013, p. 102). Omitting indigenous African knowledge systems, which were assumed to be negative, was not accidental. It was part of the colonial conquest of the mind.

Indigenous African knowledge and some of the indigenous science and technology innovations survived. Survival in some cases has been "a function of the resistance and choices made by Africans to protect their natural environment and knowledge heritage" (Lebakeng, 2010, p. 25).

What does 'indigenous' mean in this thesis?

The world's native and indigenous people's rights, have been the subject of study by scientists from many disciplines for several centuries. The terms they have used to refer to this group of people included indigenous, native, aboriginal, primitive and other more explicitly denigratory terms such as barbarian and savage.

In this research, the term indigenous will apply broadly to groups of people who are identified with a specific place and region whose cultural traditions continue to reflect their environment and their sense of sacred ecology. In coming to terms with the words native and indigenous, I am concerned to find ideas and perspectives that might serve as a common point for indigenous people outside of the common colonial experience (Royal, 2002).

Maori elder Ranginui Walker described indigenous culture in the following ways:

- Indigenous culture has a universal set of principles held in common

- Small scale in size ranging from basic family unit through extended family, to tribal confederations

- Their mythology and spiritual beliefs credit them with divine origins and descent through cultural heroes

- Rule was exercised by the chiefs, elders, and priests; but the powers that they held was tempered by kinship bonds and the need to validate leadership by generous and wise rule

- Consensus decision making was the method of operation for the achievement of social and political goals

- They think of themselves as holding a special relationship to Mother Earth and her resources; as an integral part of the natural order; recipients of her bounty rather than controllers and exploiters of their environment. Therefore Mother Earth is to be treated with reverence, love and responsibility rather than abuse and misuse

- Spiritual and social values, e.g. mana/ tapu/ generosity/ sharing/ caring/ hospitality/ service/ fulfilling one's social obligations were the cardinal values. (as cited in Royal, 2002, p. 25)

Scholars have suggested that indigenous knowledge generally referred to alternative and informal forms of knowledge based on locally, ecologically and seasonally contextualized truths. (Higgs, Higgs, & Venter, 2003; Horsthemke, 2008; Odora-Hoppers, 2002). Indigenous epistemologies are narratively anchored in natural communities. These natural communities are complex kinship systems of relationship among animals, the cosmos from which knowing originates.

For this research, 'indigenous' is used to mean a culture or cultures whose world-views emphasised the unification of the human community with their natural world. The knowledge tradition or system has arisen from a specific environment or place, has grown from a lengthy tenure by people there, and is intimately connected with their traditional location. Indigenous knowledge or traditional knowledge, in this case African knowledge, is now a priority concern on the international development agenda. United Nations Education and Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is focused on the eradication of poverty and the development of a knowledge society. These priorities recognised the importance of local and indigenous knowledge as a major resource for combating marginalisation and impoverishment.

According to Sall and Bangirana (2010a),

> Indigenous African epistemologies and languages are inestimable treasures, and the fact they were not integrated into colonial knowledge systems is not an excuse to relegate them to the periphery of the modern knowledge system and replace them by the so-called 'universal' systems which are, essentially, products of Western scientific tradition (p. 1).

African solutions for African problems

This thesis does not aim to address Afro-centrism epistemologically or methodologically. In this research study Afro -centricity is used as a practical framework to demonstrate a collective process of transformational learning and as 'an antidote to Euro-centrism through which all knowledge about Africa has been filtered ' (Mafege, 2000, p. 106).

The Afro-centric paradigm suggests that if the research is to be Afro- centric, African people must be in control of and participate in the entire research process. Research was approached as a negotiated partnership between the researcher, ERNWACA and GESDRI and was based on their request 'to build capacity for Gambian researchers'. Gambian partners discussed and supported the idea, were responsible for the research process, the selection of participants, the publicity for the conversation forum or *bantaba* and the collating of the proposal (p.208–238) and presenting it to UNESCO.

Some key elements of indigenous research method and methodology and which are discernible within the thesis include;

1) Putting Gambian culture at the centre of the research consideration

2) Taking for granted the validity and legitimacy of indigenous culture, values, practice and knowledge

3) Positioning the researcher appropriately by declaring openly limitations of the researcher

4) Acknowledging Gambian cultural ethics, values and practices

5) Engaging in face to face meetings with individuals and groups

6) Utilising research methods and methodologies that are inclusive, collaborative and group orientated rather than focusing only on individuals

Using Gambian learning values demonstrates how Afro-centricity is culturally sensitive in a Gambian African learning context.

Mkandawire (2010), in his inaugural professorial lecture, as the first holder of an African Chair for African Studies at the London School of Economics (LSE), lamented the erosion of an African knowledge base. He argued that the knowledge base should be the foundational driver of development so that "aspirations driving it are not foreign impositions but part of Africa's responses to its own historical experiences and social needs" (p. 11). "Catching up requires that countries know themselves, and their own history" (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 18).

Reinventing the future will be determined more by brains than brawn. Mkandawire (2010) described an Africa that had often witnessed success which had been eroded by outside influences or played down by leaders who sought self-aggrandizement at the expense of their people. For any future progress Africans needed a deep understanding of themselves, their identity and their culture, not only for self-affirmation, but to capture these strengths as a way to see their societies through rapid social change. Francis Nyamnjoh (2011), one

of Cameroon's most distinguished writers and a key writer on African affairs[1] claimed that

Western educational systems have "internalised [a] sense of inadequacy in Africans and …

devaluation or annihilation of African creativity, agency and value systems" (p. 144).

Investment in "education is not just the inculcation of facts as knowledge, but a set of

values that in turn appraise the knowledge being acquired" (Nyamnjoh, 2011, p. 139).

Francis Nyamnjoh (n.d.) said:

> Education in Africa can be hopeful through a meticulous and systematic
> creative process of cultural restoration and endogenisation…. If Africa is to be
> party in a global conversation on knowledge production and consumption, it is
> appropriate that it does so with the interests and concerns of Africans as the
> guiding principle. (p. 1)

The Gambia and changes in education

The Gambia is a small nation in West Africa, and is one of the world's least developed

countries (see Chapter Two for extensive background on The Gambia), yet a new

educational curriculum is being introduced. While the researcher was there in 2011, the

curriculum was being developed. The paradigm is raising the issue of Gambian knowledge

and wisdom to the forefront as a practical policy issue. In the past, there has been a huge

disconnect between home and school. When children go to school and begin their education

in English, their non-English speaking parents do not understand them and the children are

cornered between two worlds.

The aims of this new paradigm are to bridge the divide between home and school with

primary school course curricula designed using traditional languages, stories, riddles and

proverbs. Five indigenous Gambian languages in different schools are being introduced in

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[1] a Professor of Anthropology and Head of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town who also
served as Director of Publications, CODESRIA, 2003-2009;

the first three years of primary school in the sciences, social studies, and maths, with English being taught as a subject. This is a small but very important step towards using indigenous knowledge.

This small step is a beginning in addressing the knowledge gap between the informal and formal societies and Gambian students' separation from the realities of their societies. Education is not meant to detach children from their society. Using local languages, culture, history and tradition, make education more meaningful and more realistic. It will enable children to make sense of their world as to who they are and how they got there. It is a start to the suspension of epistemological beliefs designed by a particular cultural system. This beginning places Gambians at the centre of their own school curriculum, and demonstrates the Gambian Ministry for Education's political will to change.

In order to change this situation there has been a shift of thinking by introducing a curriculum that appreciates students' cultural backgrounds and languages and builds creatively on their existing knowledge and learning styles. Local knowledge practices take up existential issues and epistemological perspectives.

Dr. Muhammand Shamsaddin Megalommatis, (2012) writer, orientalist, historian and political scientist believed that African education requires a vast restructuring with African language, cultural and indigenous practices at its centre. Megalommatis stressed the importance of local languages being available as optional languages beginning in primary and secondary education, and believed the transition to national languages would take an entire generation to achieve.

My experience in Africa

The gestation of this thesis has now spanned more than two decades. Re-thinking African development has absorbed me for a very long time. In1993 I began working in West Africa. My first experience of Africa was in The Gambia. In the following twenty years I learned through practical experience and being part of many conversations with friends and colleagues both there and in other West African countries, many things about African self-determination, especially pertaining to dominant systems, like the separation of the state and society and the non-level playing fields between Africa and the West.

I was awarded the Government of Canada Innovative Research Award, "Measuring Sustainability of International Development Projects," which was completed in February 1999 and submitted to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Government of The Gambia. I was responsible for proposal development and introduction of funding for The Gambia Economic and Social Development Research Institute (GESDRI), which enabled its establishment. In 2001 I was responsible for producing a twenty-six minute documentary, funded by CIDA and filmed on location in Ghana, which explored international aid and development programmes. In 2005 I worked with the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) and GESDRI to write a proposal *Capacity Building for Gambian Researchers in Health, Education, Community Development and Collaborative Research*. I was appointed as an international colleague of GESDRI in 2001 and as a member of ERNWACA scientific research team in 2000.

Through my roles as International Administrator, Developer, and Special Advisor to the President (International Affairs), Okanagan University College, (OUC), now University of

British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO), British Columbia (BC) Canada (1989-2005), I worked in the areas of post-secondary education, and was responsible for the initiation, proposal development, management, monitoring, evaluation and liaison between partner groups and governments in Canada and three West African countries, The Gambia, Ghana and Senegal.

Through this work I became involved in the development of relationships between the First Nations peoples of the Okanagan, BC, OUC and Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi, Whakatane, Aotearoa New Zealand, through Maori scholars based at the University of British Columbia, (UBC) Vancouver.

During these years, especially in The Gambia, I established long-lasting relationships with local people through mutual understanding, respect and acceptance. Without these close relationships with colleagues, friends and family, it would have been impossible to carry out this research. Based on the evidence of my international development project work in Africa, as an outsider looking in, I was confronted by the severity of the disciplinary constraints imposed on my African colleagues. They had very little voice, authority and representation during the process of implementing international 'projects' and research. Both projects and research were dominated by Euro-centric thought and not rooted in African meanings. Policies and programmes were usually researched and managed by Western donors to match Western priorities. Despite cosmetic words about sustainable development, ethical responsibility, and well-intentioned altruism, I recognised racism both in research approaches and in the fact that project goals, objectives and processes with their specific results were "written in stone" by the donor and unable to be changed. In other words, power over relations and dominant-subordinate policies were firmly in place.

Objectives of the research (critique and creating space for dialogue)

This research concerns Phase One of a three phase research plan.

- To extend Gambian research capacity through a critical inquiry into the nature of Gambian knowledge

- To raise new issues in, or new perspectives towards, Gambian research

- To develop a Gambian-centric research framework

The research was an inquiry into the paradigmatic characteristics of indigenous knowledge in The Gambia. The purpose was to open a new creative and knowledge space and stimulate innovative thinking and knowledge exchange across two distinct knowledge systems.

A purpose of this research was to create space for African research revisioned, to represent African voices, goals and objectives, to locate African research, from an African viewpoint, seeking African agency in every situation, analysis or critique and an African stance on everything that affects Africa.

One approach to dealing with strategic development in Africa is from the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), using CODESRIA's Strategic Plan (2007-2011, 2012-2016) as a tool for re-thinking African Development. This study explores CODESRIA's Strategic Plan[2], (2007-2011, 2012-2016), to re-think African

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[2]CODESRIA's Strategic Plan is conceived as part of a novel perspective planning approach designed to run over a period of twenty-five years from 2007-2032. It is structured to sign post some of the key institutional targets which the Council intends to work towards at different phases of its growth and development. Strategic Plan 2012-2016 retains Re-thinking African Development as a key objective.

Development, through more comparative research, the valorisation of indigenous knowledge to gain new insights, and the promotion of prospective research or future studies. 'African solutions to African problems', has become a catch cry, and self-determination a priority. Central to this position is the observation that an African identity needs to be established for Africa's own self-certainty (Nnaemeka, 2009).

The first location of anything African starts with the re-evaluation of pedagogy, the science of teaching, and social, political, and economic paradigms. An editorial in a CODESRIA Bulletin:

> As the world realigns itself, we in Africa need to reaffirm our commitment to our continent and people, and confront the bitter truth of our time in which the foundations of many of our states are shaky and the dignity of our people is barely guaranteed in the face of ferocious global competition for resources - including our own. That is the condition for Africa to take its rightful place in the international community (Sall & Bangirana, 2010b, p. 2).

Knowledge was explored as an integral aspect of the ontological [3] theory held by local indigenous Gambian African people. Knowing was relational and participatory.

Learning and building capacity was understood through participation in this research forum. In action learning, participants were co-researching their own practice through critical self-reflective processes. Being aware of their practice potentially enabled participants to transform and improve their professional practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The participants explored their own Gambian epistemology through engaging in discourse and in a process that was a reflection of their own indigenous Gambian African ways of building knowledge.

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[3] Ontology is about the essence of things, tied to cosmology, beliefs, structures and practices that uphold specific values, ways of engaging and understanding the world (see chapter 3, p. 58).

An intended outcome of this research was to encourage the development of Gambian researchers' capabilities including students, development workers, politicians and scientists, to draw from both knowledge systems. Creating new and innovative solutions at the interface would require African culturing of people, giving them the ability to reflect, question and enquire, to integrate, innovate and articulate within two knowledge systems. This type of human development could bring new capabilities to engage in other paradigms, with experience in new processes and tools to facilitate creative dialogue, understanding and knowledge (University of Waikato, 2008).

This research and processes were intended to enhance communities' strengths, and training of young Gambian researchers, while building positive collegial relationships across sectors, including different ethnic groups, ministries and other government and non-governmental groups, educational sectorial boundaries, and many other mixes.

Building capacity

Brain drain and capacity building are major issues of concern in The Gambia. "Brain drain" is the term used when qualified Gambians leave the country for other better-paid opportunities abroad. "Capacity building" is a process where individuals acquire new skills, information and knowledge to perform more effectively in what they do. Capacity building, both institutional and individual, is of prime importance in The Gambia's human development. There is a realization that sustainable development cannot occur without sound human capital, with education and health being key components. "Illiteracy is a major constraint to sustainable development….This in spite of considerable investments by Government, donors and non-Governmental organisations engaged in the education sector" (Wadda, 2000, p. 4).

Since the 1970's, capacity building, originally called institutional building, has been a major objective within the UN system for action and thinking. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) called for:

> The creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks, institutional development including community participation (of women in particular), human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems…. UNDP recognizes that capacity building is a long term, continuing process, in which all stakeholders participate (ministries, local authorities, non-government organisations and water user groups, professional associations, academics and others). (UNDP, 1997)

Research partners

Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA)

ERNWACA is a network of researchers in a range of countries in West and Central Africa. It has conducted research with culturally appropriate outputs since 1993 and has been instrumental in convening annual research conferences. Their research centre identified building local research capacity as a priority area for future development. ERNWACA has worked effectively with local community and political groups on education, health and related matters.

ERNWACA was created to increase research capacity, to strengthen collaboration among researchers and practitioners, and to promote African expertise, practices and policies with education and health. ERNWACA members include several hundred researchers in countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The regional coordination is housed at the Institute for Training and Applied Research (ISFRA) in Bamako, Mali.

A steering committee determines the broad strategic orientations of the network and a scientific committee oversees the quality of research and publications. The coordinators of national Chapters link members with broader public exchange and lobbying. Partners include Ministries of Education in West and Central Africa, universities, teacher training institutes and national research institutions in the region, including The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canada, The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), USAID-Washington, The Academy for Educational Development (ADED/SARA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), and the United Nations Education and Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO/Breda) (Aspin & Tucker, 2006). That is, the work of ERNWACA is supported, extended and partially funded by these and many other national and international bodies.

The Gambia Economic and Social Development Research Institute (GESDRI)

The mission of GESDRI is to provide an independent and multi-disciplinary forum for researchers to carry out socio-economic research, with a view to informing and influencing policy issues as they impact on the sustainable development of The Gambia.

GESDRI works in partnership with the University of The Gambia, and other similar institutions in the mobilization of the country's research potential for the task of national policy at all levels. GESDRI is committed to building capacity for social sciences researchers in The Gambia (Aspin & Tucker, 2006).

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

Given the importance of development and knowledge, there are promising innovations and academic writing through African think tanks such as CODESRIA to bring back knowledge as the heart of the development process.

CODESRIA is a pan-African institution created in 1973 by social researchers in Africa to develop skills and scientific tools to interpret social realities in Africa and contribute to debates on global issues. CODESRIA's objectives include;

- To develop social sciences in Africa mobilizing social scientists to undertake research work aimed at social problems

- To develop a scientific and comparative continental perspective expressing the specific nature of the development processes in Africa

- To promote cooperation and collaboration among African universities, training and research centres as well as with professional associations

- To promote publication and distribution of results from research works done by African experts

- To promote and defend the principle of independence of thought and research and freedom of researchers

CODESRIA's headquarters are in Dakar, Senegal and it is one of the most important institutions supporting the understanding and application of knowledge in Africa. The 2012 report, *Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program,* from the University of Pennsylvania, International Relations Program, ranks CODESRIA as one of the top ten best think tanks in Africa, and ranks it among the best 34 international development think tanks in the world.

The organisation has observer status at the United Nations, and a cooperation agreement with the African Union (AU) (CODESRIA, 2012, Description section).

A goal in CODESRIA's strategic plan is to "catalyse the social research community to overcome the impasse in development theory and policy that has so heavily penalized Africa" (CODESRIA, 2007, p. 1). This seeks the development of frameworks for African solutions to African problems.

Based on ERNWACA and GESDRI's request to 'build capacity for Gambian researchers' the research was anchored in an Afro-centric world-view of unity and integration an action research process supported this through;

- re-thinking about Gambian African people

- re-shaping relationships between the people, the Government and international agencies

- re-claiming what it means to be African in The Gambia

- re-valuing Gambian traditional knowledge

- acknowledging Gambian traditional values

Research mentors built their own capacity through an exploration of Gambian African culture by studying their own realities, processing ideas to heighten awareness, stimulate thinking and generate discussion on the wealth of indigenous knowledge. A collaborative proposal which represented Gambian voices, goals and objectives to locate Gambian research from a Gambian viewpoint was written by participants and the researcher to develop phase two of the research 'to develop a Gambia-centric research framework' as a theory for change. This proposal was submitted to UNESCO.

Action research

The methodology of this study is action research. It is not merely an analysis of how a global system came to be imposed on indigenous peoples, but also an exploration of how this system operates in practice, and how Africans can effectively intervene in their own knowledge evolution. Afro-centricity is characterised as a "response to global (Eurocentric/Orientalist) racist attitudes about African people and their historic contributions" (Megalommatis, 2012, para. 1) (see Discussion of Afro-centric knowledge in both African and African diaspora communities in Chapter Three, p. 69).

I chose action research because all participants have a voice and it is possible for change to come willingly because everyone is part of it. Through action research, participants' can reflect on issues often ignored, looking for causal factors, rather than blaming anyone for a problem. It can be a powerful way to change the perception of peoples' problems. Sharing and discussing a problem, "listening to different input and viewpoints … helps us to be flexible and therefore it is easier to find the solution (Wood, 2012, p. S23).

Action research also increases enthusiasm, through involvement. It has been defined as "researchers and participants working together to examine a problematic situation or action to change it for the better" (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007, p. 1). The distinguishing feature is the nature of the relationships with the participants and the incorporation of action into the process.

Although I am familiar with, and have awareness and understanding of Gambian culture, through living and working in The Gambia, it is necessary for me to define myself, and the perspective I bring to this research, including who I am historically, socially, culturally and politically. Schreiber (2000) wrote, "Afro-centrists ... encourage scholars to identify the

reasons for undertaking the project, their epistemological position, as well as many other personal idiosyncrasies, which may have influenced the research process or interpretation of data" (p. 661). According to Woodyard, "Unlike traditional social scientific approaches, Afrocentrism aligns the method of scholarly inquiry with the cultural attributes of the group under consideration, in this case Africans (as cited in Schreiber, 2000, p. 655). Schreiber (2000) went on to write that from "this culture-specific approach, epistemology and methodology emerge from the worldview of the culture ... rather than from the worldview of the researcher or the academy" (p. 655).

The participants were located and grounded in their culture's world-view, and the research programme evolved from this centre. Asante (1998) suggested introspection and retrospection as a means of identifying and voicing the researcher's position regarding the intercultural phenomena under investigation. This research strategy attempted to reduce the power distance between dominant (researcher) and subordinate (participant) positions. The researcher put herself in the position of student rather than expert. Participants were invited "to actively contribute to design, execution, analysis, dissemination and application of research" (Schreiber, 2000, p. 661) through ERNWACA.

The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in The Gambia, West Africa, specifically in Banjul, Bakau, Serrekunda and Brikama. The total amount of time the writer spent in the country was two months, March 03-May 05, 2011, with a total of fifty Gambian people, half of whom were women, participating in the research. In accordance with the methodological framework of PhD research, the study was supported by The Gambian Chapter of ERNWACA and GESDRI. I am an international member of both institutions,

appointed as a member of ERNWACA, and The Gambia Chapter, in 2000 and as an

International Development Colleague with GESDRI in 2001 (as noted on p. 12).

Public action in Africa

Public action in Africa was clearly apparent during my time in The Gambia.

- Civil war in Libya began on March 19, 2011 with French fighter jets making reconnaissance flights over Libya, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Ivory Coast.

- Ivorian past President Laurent Ghajbo was arrested by supporters of the elected President Alassane Ouattara with the support of French troops, April 11, 2011.

- Chaos descended in Burkina Faso which began through student protest after the death of a colleague. Six students were killed. The military joined the protests along with traders (Marima, 2011).

- May 01, President Obama announces Osama bin Laden, founder and leader of Al-Qaeda, had been killed by American military forces in Pakistan.

On Monday April 18, 2011, The Point newspaper (Banjul) published a statement from the

Gambian Government regarding these four issues, which stated that the Government of

Gambia would not recognise any African leaders who were imposed by outside forces. By

contrast, CODESRIA (2011) wrote that the uprisings in "Egypt and elsewhere in North

Africa have made promises of democratisation and development of Africa much more real"

(Africa of the 21st Century section, para. 3).

This thesis is not about

This thesis does not deal directly with 'development' except as in strategic research.

However the influence of 'development' perspectives on Gambian/African society will be

seen in the concepts used within this thesis.

Also I am not using post-colonial theory. Post-colonial theory refers to a period which comes after the end of colonisation. This thesis addresses how African thinking about theory might produce an alternative epistemology for the analysis and understanding of African orature (for an explanation of orature, see Chapter Three) and literature.

Post-colonial theory has obscured theories created by Africans and excludes the epistemological infrastructure through which most Africans pass on their histories and aesthetic structures created by their ancestors. This thesis attempts to enable Africans to find a theoretical continuum that circumvents the post-colonial construct and redefines their own theory perspective, different from the concepts of Western academies. It seeks to dismantle the epistemologies of intellectual hegemony cultivated by the West through African modes of discourse. The thesis intends that the Gambian participants develop their own research frameworks to challenge the Western academy as the only source of validation.

Bridging local knowledge and global science

The importance of dialogue between different knowledge systems is increasingly acknowledged. Attempts are being made to build bridges between indigenous knowledge traditions and Western science. Efforts to build conceptual frameworks that will work for people with different world-views to bridge different ways of knowing or epistemologies in Africa could be one of the most valuable contributions to transformation.

Organisation of the thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters with Chapter One, an introductory chapter, to situate my research journey by examining the reasons for the subsequent dominant paradigm. It introduces stage one of a critical research inquiry into the nature of Gambian/African

knowledge and raises new issues or perspectives towards extending Gambian/African research.

Chapter Two examines some of the background of Africa and The Gambia, disclosing the underlying assumptions and rationales that may have perpetuated the systematic inequality of dominant colonial interests. It exposes the history of colonial policy systems acting as a tool of oppression and social control. It discusses the situation in The Gambia (2011-2013).

Chapter Three reviews relevant literature on the position of dominant policy theories presented from African, Pacific and Aotearoa New Zealand Maori perspectives. This provides new and complex notions of new theories for research to represent an absent link of traditional theory. It is argued that these two theoretical research frameworks can complement each other. This chapter provides the philosophical thinking that guided this research.

Chapter Four provides a discussion of action research and critical dialogue and its application to Afro-centricity as a means of addressing the complexity of research and policy in Africa and considers the methodological steps, of research design, selection of participants, data collection methods and processes, steps on data analysis and ensuring rigour, validity and reliability. This chapter also includes ethical considerations.

Chapter Five is the first of three chapters to discuss the qualitative findings from conversations with Gambian participants through an in-depth investigation of Gambian knowledge, both traditional and modern. Twelve common themes that emerged from the data are highlighted and described.

Chapter Six provides a detailed discussion of the key research findings presented in Chapter Five. The results of this study are also discussed in relation to previous research studies or claims made by academic scholars and practitioners. The chapter highlights a major outcome of the research, a proposal from Gambian participants to take this research into the next two phases.

Chapter Seven presents a summary of the entire research journey that includes motivation, the identification of gaps from the literature review process, the methodology adopted to carry out the research, the findings that emerged from the data and the contribution of the findings to current knowledge.

Summary

This chapter introduced the main thesis question and the conflict between Western and African 'ways of knowing'. I describe my background and interest to explore in some depth the re-thinking of African research development. The chapter then proceeded to highlight the gaps in current research development. Following this, I discussed the objectives of this the first phase of the research and introduced the research partners.

After discussing the introduction of this research, there is a need to illuminate the basic information about The Gambia. It is also necessary to discuss the role of history both in The Gambia and Africa in general. These matters are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Background of The Gambia, the role of history, African philosophy and epistemology

As this thesis is dealing with The Gambia, it is imperative to describe some of the background with aspects of the country's geography, population, history, politics and human rights issues. There is a brief overview of African Gambian history, both contemporary and pre-colonial, describing the relationship of history to politics, and its role in re-shaping perceptions of both the past and the present.

The Gambia: A profile

The Gambia is the smallest country on the African mainland and gained its independence from Great Britain in 1965. It is situated on the Atlantic coast in westernmost Africa and surrounded on three sides by Senegal. It is named after The Gambia River, which flows for 200 miles (322 km) through Gambia to the Atlantic. The country averages 20 miles (32km) in width. The land area is 3,861 sq miles (10,000 sq km) and the total area is 4,363 sq miles (11,300 sq km). The population estimate in 2011 was 1,797,860.with the capital Banjul having a population of 436,000. Life expectancy is 63.51 and the literacy rate is 40%. The population is 99% African with Mandinka 42%, Fula 18%, Wolof 16%, Jola 10%, Serahuli 9%, others 4%, and non-African 1%. Ninety per cent of the population are Muslim, the rest are Christian (U.S. Department of State, 2011, People section).

The Gambia is identified as one of the world's least developed countries and symbolizes the struggles of the entire African continent. European colonising activities were more intense in West Africa because of the abundance in minerals and natural resources, and the close proximity by sea to Europe and America meant it was a key source for slaves. The Gambia's frontiers are the result of 19th century agreements between European nations

cutting across territories of African kingdoms and ethnic groups. The boundaries were demarcated and finalized by mapmakers. As noted by Perham (1961):

> For the most part the boundaries within which Africans are now trying to form nations were drawn some sixty to seventy years ago (i.e. in the late 19th Century). They enclosed hundreds, even thousands, of completely independent units of all shapes and sizes." (p. 27)
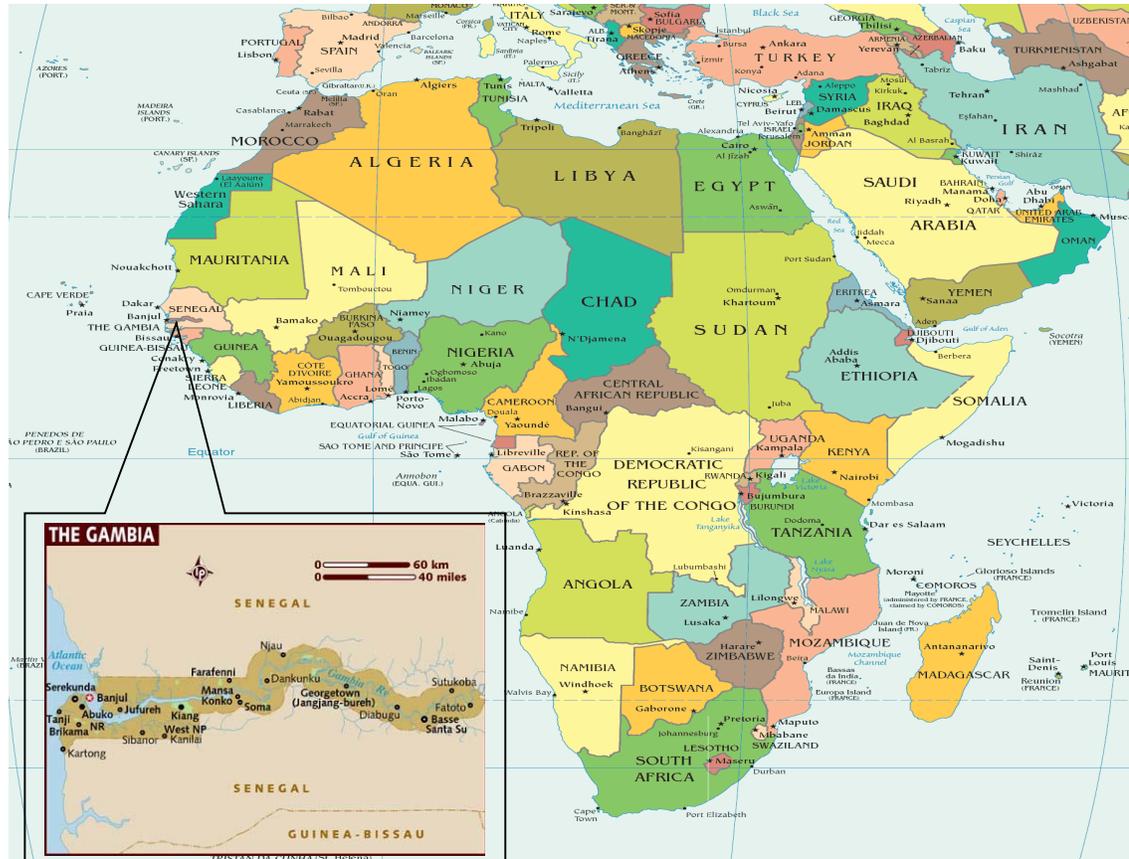
Figure 1: Map of Africa with Gambia inset

The Gambia is a Sovereign African state lying almost entirely in the Savannah-Sahellian belt of West Africa extending for a distance of over 200 miles into the interior of Africa and except for a small seacoast of 71 kilometres is surrounded on three sides by the Republic of Senegal, bounded on the north and east by Senegal proper and on the south by the territory of Casamance. The boundaries of The Gambia are completely artificial, and remain a legacy of nineteenth century European imperialism.

In the Gambia, living standards and the level of community and social development is low. Forty percent of the population fall below the food poverty line and the signs of poverty persist. As Africa's smallest insular nation, there has always been doubt about the country's viability as an economic and political entity. Although English and French serve as official languages in The Gambia and Senegal, the ethnic groups in both countries remain distinct. The region is known as the Senegambia.

Brief overview of five ethnic groups

There are five main peoples in The Gambia: "namely Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jola and Serehule, with about six smaller groups" (Wadda, 2000, p. 4).

- Mandinka, were descended from the Mali Empire, founded in the 13th century. They are the largest group in The Gambia and are mainly Muslim.

- Fula are the second largest ethnic group in The Gambia and also live in other West African countries. Their main occupations are cattle herding in the country areas and retail business owners in urban areas.

- The Wolof people are the third largest ethnic group and are neighbouring Senegal's largest ethnic group. In the urban areas of Gambia, Wolof is spoken and is a common second language for other ethnic groups due to The Gambia's cultural and social relationships with Senegal.

- The Jola originally came from the Casamance and Guinea-Bissau regions of West Africa. They reside mostly in the east of the Kombo area but also live

in the urban areas. The Jola people speak many of the other Gambian

languages, which is leading to a decline in their own language.

- The Serahule people are descended from the Ghana Empire and are a

  prominent ethnic group in Mali and Eastern Gambia. The Serahule speak

  multiple other languages as most other ethnic groups do not speak Serahule.

  Like most of the other ethnic groups, they are predominately Muslim and are

  known as successful business people.

With the other smaller ethnic groups Gambian people live in harmony with each other,

intermarry, and "share many commonalities with culture and language" (Ceesay, 2011,

p. 9).

The Gambia mission statement

The Gambia Mission Statement and overall orientation of Vision 2020, on the official

Gambian Government website reads:

> To transform The Gambia into a financial centre, a tourist paradise, a trading,
> export-orientated agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free market
> policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well-educated, trained,
> skilled, healthy and self-reliant and enterprising population and guaranteeing a
> well-balanced eco-system and a decent standard of living under a system of
> government based on the consent of citizenry. (*The Gambia Incorporated
> Vision 2020*, 1996, Foreword section).

Development in The Gambia

Poverty reduction is the most difficult challenge facing The Gambia and the greatest

obstacle in the pursuit of sustainable socio-economic growth. In 1991, the Government of

The Gambia embarked on the development of a Strategy for Poverty Alleviation (SPA) to

obtain better understanding of the nature and dynamics of poverty in The Gambia, with a goal of formulating more effective poverty alleviation and practices.

The UNDP *Human Development Report 2011* ranked The Gambia 168 out of 187 countries with a HDI of 0.42. This ranking means the country dropped from its 2007 ranking of 155 with a HDI of 0.502. The Human Development Index (HDI) measures a county's average achievements in three basic aspects of human development, which are:

7) Health, life expectancy at birth,

8) Education, expected years schooling for school age children and average years for schooling in the adult population and

9) Income, measured by the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (US$).

The Gambia is ranked below many countries in the region including Ghana (135), Nigeria (156), Senegal (155) and above some countries such as Sierra Leone (180), Mali (175) and Liberia (182) (UNDP, 2011).

The ability of the government to implement the pro-poor policy has been constrained by the large share of government resources allocated to debt- servicing obligations. "The Gambia is facing the challenge of a heavy debt burden estimated at 55.6% of GDP for 2011 and has taken actions to control public spending and to curb new domestic borrowing at close to zero in 2014 and beyond" (African Economic Outlook, 2012, p. 2).

The implications of macro-level development policies "on vulnerable groups such as the poor, women and children, who are in most cases disproportionately and adversely affected by such policies, need to be constantly recognized and addressed" (Wadda, 2000, p. 5).

In addressing this issue The Gambian Vice-President and Minister of Women's Affairs,

Dr. Isatou N'Jie Saidy, said:

> An analysis using the gender equity index, as stated in the 2010 report, noted
> that investments in girls and women to have equal education and employment
> opportunities, access to health services, participation in decision-making at all
> levels, is a catalyst to a nation's human development given its multiple effects.
> (as cited in Jahateh, 2011, para. 6)

She went on to note that The Gambia was poised to achieve universal primary education by

2015, and significant progress had been made to achieve Millennium Development Goals

(MDG) 4, 5, and 6 with relevant targets such as child and maternal mortality, HIV and

AIDs and malaria reduction.

Capacity building

Capacity building, both individual and institutional, is of prime importance to The

Gambia's sustainable human development. There is the realization that sustainable

development cannot occur without sound human capital, with education and health being

key components. Lack of education is a major constraint to sustainable development,

The economy is heavily reliant on agriculture and in 2008 the sector earned 22% of Gross

Domestic Product (GDP), employing about 70% of the total labour force. Groundnuts are

the country's main export earner. Small-scale industrial activity accounted for less than 8

per cent of GDP but tourism contributed about 10% of GDP (UNDP, 2007).

Politics and human rights in The Gambia

After independence in 1965 The Gambia became a Republic in 1970. A military coup

toppled the first republic and led to the second republic, following elections in 1996.

President Yahya Jammeh has ruled since leading a coup of junior army officers in 1994,

overthrowing the government of Sir Dawda Jawara. Since 1996, when Jammeh restored

civilian rule under a new constitution and established the Alliance for Patriotic Re-

orientation and Construction (APRC), he has won four presidential elections, the most

recent being November 24, 2011.

Human rights

Jammeh's continued hold on the Presidency is despite the controversial nature of his rule

and The Gambia's very poor human-rights record. There have been well-documented

attacks by the security forces on journalists and opposition politicians. There are many

examples of "detentions for long periods without trial; the use of torture on detainees;

'disappearances' and murders (Ceesay & Perfect, 2010, para. 1). Minteh (2007) reported

that Jammeh held elections that are "fraudulent, deceptive and an insult to democratic

principles and norms" (para. 2).

Most African dictators are known to have hidden accounts and business investments under

pseudo names with the help of international actors and mostly with the help of global

players and the forces of globalisation. Human rights abuses are, in this context, totally

disregarded, leaving innocent citizens at the mercy of outright bold and absolute

dictatorship.

> In The Gambia, whilst human rights abuses continue, ... [j]ournalists continue to be
> murdered, citizens tortured, with the unwillingness of the government to shed light
> on their disappearances, detentions incommunicado, the extra-judicial killings of
> members of the security and armed forces, the brutal murder of student
> demonstrators, the murder of 55 West African nationals including 44 Ghanaians, the
> murder of Journalist Deyda Hydra, and a former Finance secretary of state Ousman
> Koro Ceesay. (Minteh para. 5)

These are some of the challenges the African continent is facing. Military rulers enjoy

recognition and assistance as a result of the forces of globalisation, irrespective of

systematic and widespread human rights abuses (Minteh, 2007).

> The government continues to stifle political and social dissent. Members of the
> National Intelligence Agency (NIA), army and police arbitrarily arrest and
> detain government opponents, human rights defenders, journalists and former
> security personnel. Reportedly, President Yahya Jammeh publicly threatened
> human rights defenders and those who co-operated with them. The authorities
> threatened to resume executions after more than 20 years (Amnesty
> International Report, 2010, para. 1).

The Gambian Government has been criticised by international rights groups for its

attitude to civil liberties, especially freedom of the press.

> Reporters Without Borders (RSF) says there is "absolute intolerance of any
> form of criticism" in The Gambia, with death threats, surveillance and
> arbitrary night-time arrests, the daily lot of journalists and others "who do not
> sing the government's praises" (Gambia's Yahya Jammeh, 2011, para. 12).

On May 31 2012 Amnesty International published a public statement expressing alarm at:

> President Yahya Jammeh's recent instructions to the security forces, including
> the Inspector General of Police, staff from the Ministry of Defence and other
> security forces to "shoot first and ask questions later" in an attempt to rid the
> country of "armed robbers." (para. 1)

Amnesty International (2012) called on President Jammeh to

> Immediately announce that the use of lethal force is only allowed when strictly
> unavoidable … to protect life. The President must ensure that the security
> forces carry out their duties in compliance with The Gambia's international
> human rights obligations and international standards on the use of force and
> firearms. (para. 2)

On 22 May 2012, Jammeh launched "Operation Bulldozer" to rid the country of all

criminals including "drug dealing, paedophiles, homosexuals, murderers, drug traffickers,

human traffickers" (Amnesty International, 2012, para. 5). Amnesty International warned

that this would lead to more human rights violations. "Amnesty International has

documented many incidences of human rights violations within the criminal justice system

… including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, unfair trials …. [and other

violations] carried out by the NIA, the police and the army. Detainees were rarely informed

on their rights or reasons for their arrest…. Torture continues to be routinely used to extract

confessions and as punishment. (Amnesty International, 2012, para. 6)

In 2012 the outgoing U.S. Ambassador, Pamela White spoke about The Gambia's

"sickening political culture and embarrassing governance system" (Jallow, 2012, para. 1).

According to Jallow, "beneath the surface tranquillity, The Gambia is a country in turmoil"

(para. 1). Jallow wrote: "Over the past decade and a half, The Gambia has succeeded in

creating the only society in West Africa where mediocrity and amateurism trumps

professionalism and excellence; a country that values ignorance and timidity over

intellectual curiosity and creativity" (para. 2). Jallow continued:

> Gambia is now a place of make-belief; a place where deceptions, deceit and
> hypocrisy is the new normal. It is a social anomaly motivated by the necessities
> of self-preservation. It is a phenomenon that is particular to autocratic societies
> like The Gambia, where the rule of tyranny has replaced the rule of law. (para.
> 2)[4]

I was advised to make no comment on anything political while in The Gambia. If critical

comments were made there was a good chance someone would report me to the authorities.

There was a system in place for this. Usually the person who made the comment would be

'picked up' by the NIA.

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[4] Matthew K. Jallow is a Gambian journalist, writer, human rights advocate and political activist exiled in the
USA.

The role of history

History lives in current understandings of consciousness and can be an invaluable tool to direct the future. Discussing what has been, and what went wrong, has a role in the modern Gambian/African world. History can teach what is worth knowing. This knowledge can assist thinking about the 'distinctiveness' of people. History can help remember what is valued, and is more than stories of hope, horror and nihilism. It is genetic inheritance that everyone can recognize, name, watch and learn from. Historical understandings are shaped by those who speak it, write it and teach it. "History is a dynamic tool" (Meyer, 2003, p. 56) that "inevitably can change our present understandings and alter our future directions" (p. 54-55).

Brief history of The Gambia

Archaeological evidence in the form of stone areas and broken pottery is evidence of habitation in the Gambia River region around 2000 BC. The 'Gambia' may be used to refer to the River Gambia, which is one of the finest watercourses on the African continent. The beautiful river is sourced in the Futa Jallon Mountains. The river cuts through a low sandstone plateau, which declines as it approaches the Atlantic Ocean.

The Gambia was historically associated with both Western Sudan and the Coastal Forest. It was within the terminus of the Trans-Saharan trade routes and the fulcrum of the ancient cities of Western Sudan. The Gambia attracted trade moving between the interior and the sea. Before Europeans established themselves on the coast, the area at the mouth of the river was a centre for trade in salt. There is evidence of caravans crossing the Sahara by 1620 bringing cloth, hides, ivory and ornaments. These were exchanged for salt at the river ports (Faal, 1999).

The Gambia was once the nucleus of a viable political system:

> "For over 400 years a group of Kingdoms clustered along the river's banks between the Atlantic Ocean and Barrakunda Falls... These kingdoms were Niumi, Baddibu, Upper and Lower Niani, and Wuli on the North Bank and Kombo, Fogny, Kiang, Jarra, Niamina, Europina, Jimara, Tomana and Kantona on the South Bank of the river. The people of these sites were distinguished by the predominance of their Mandinka speaking populations, by their political organisation, and their river-orientated economies. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they occupied an area of about 6000 square miles, including the area of the modern state, though they spilled over at several points into what now is the Republic of Senegal" (Faal, 1999, p. 1).

During the nineteenth century The Gambia became a crown colony established by the British to suppress the slave trade and to encourage 'legitimate' commerce along the River Gambia. For most of the nineteenth century the crown colony was important to both the British and French interests in the control of the hinterland.

The Senegambia has long been the home of numerous people each with their own distinct languages, customs, and methods of government. The area had pastures for their cattle, sheep and goats as well as abundant game and fish. The soil was relatively fertile and the early Senegambians cultivated cereals, rice and vegetables to supplement wild herbs and fruit. The trans-Saharan trade played an important role in the rise of states in the Senegambia region, conducted between North African traders and their counterparts in West Africa. This trade had economic, social, as well as political effects in West Africa including Senegambia.

One major effect was bringing in the literate Islamic culture through the Muslim traders from North Africa. "The history … it is said, revolves around three themes: trade, state formation and Islam. These themes … grew as a result of contact and conflict between the peoples of North and West Africa" (Faal, 1999, p. 17).

The role of Islam

According to Olaniyan, "the role and impact of Islam on the African continent" (as cited in Lebakeng, 2010, p. 25) has been immense. Ninety percent of the population are Muslims (U.S. Department of State, 2011, People section). "Like its western colonial counter-part, it wreaked havoc on the continent. In North Africa, ... indigenous African ethnic groups were physically and culturally annihilated through Arabisation and Islamisation" (Lebakeng, 2010, p. 25). The historically Arab led slave trade of Africans predated the Atlantic slave trade by about one hundred years. The impact on the social fabric and history of Africa was significant.

The coming of Islam to The Gambia

In the eleventh century Islam was brought to the people of West Africa by North African traders on the trans-Saharan routes. By the fifteenth century, there were marabouts attached to the chiefs' courts in The Gambia region. These early converts prayed for the chiefs and served as court secretaries. They were rewarded with land and permitted to establish their own villages. By the seventeenth century there had been substantial Muslim villages established. "The Muslim communities supported Koranic schools, kept fast during the month of Ramadan and followed Islamic dietary laws (Faal, 1999, p. 18). Islam spread into the general population. The contact and conflict led to the political and socio-cultural developments, which can be traced in Senegal and The Gambia to this day.

From the second half of the sixteenth century, trading in slaves had begun to overshadow the gold, ivory, wax and other products in West Africa. By the eighteenth century slave trading was the main preoccupation of all European nations on the West coast of Africa.

The slave trade

The slave trade had disastrous effects on West African society. It caused a massive drain of human resources and had a devastating effect on the population. According to one estimate, some twenty million West Africans were taken to the 'new world' during the period of trade. Also there was an unknown number who died in the slave raids and wars, or while being kept in the castle dungeons or during passage across the Atlantic.

This demise of the population had a destructive impact on the demographic, economic, political and cultural development of West African society. Records showed that those who were taken were the young, healthy and able, around fifteen to thirty years of age. Progress in arts, crafts, agriculture and industry declined considerably as a consequence.

One of the most important legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade after it was abolished was the founding of the British Colony of Bathurst in 1816 and the subsequent extension of Britain's sphere of influence throughout Africa. Bathurst, an island, previously known by the local people as Banjulo, was renamed St Mary's Island. In time the British Garrison developed into a sizable settlement and was given the name Bathhurst, after Lord Bathhurst, the then Secretary of State for the British Colonies. Later, after independence, it was renamed Banjul (Faal, 1999).

Colonial classifications

One of the first missions of the colonial authorities was to enact legislation to regulate affairs in the Colony. English law operated, much of it modelled on existing English law with very minor modifications.

In the colonial period the British upheld certain cultural institutions and suppressed others in order to cement their grip on the population. The local Kings were removed and chiefs were appointed in their place. This was a new concept for the people. The responsibilities of the chiefs remained cultural and traditional.

Pre-colonial history of Africa

The main problem that has hindered the proper study of Africa or its national history has been the nature of colonial rule in Africa. Colonial rule rested on two main pillars:

- Military conquest derived from the superiority of European to African technology,

- Ideological brainwashing based partly on the denial that 'Negro' Africans like Mandinka and Serehules could establish empires such as Ghana or Manding (Faal, 1999).

Most in the African world are still responding to African history within the 15th century discovery paradigm created at the moment of European conquest. The current narrative still shows Africans as the victims and someone else as the conqueror or saviour. Africans are depicted as having no agency. Any study for Africa "must deal with these distractions ... [to] create a new lens for understanding … an authentic discourse into African history" (African Holocaust Society, 2011, para. 7).

Cheikh Anta Diop (1997) wrote that the ancient Egyptians laid the basis of African and European civilization. He contended that the ancient Egyptians were 'Black Africans.' This was emphasised so there would be no mistaken identity. The 'Black Africans' of the Nile Valley gave the world astronomy, geometry, law, architecture, art, mathematics, medicine and philosophy. Diop (1981) challenged leading scholars, defeating their arguments with science and established Africa's own path to African history. He championed intellectual

debate promoting unity and liberation for Africa and the return of African dignity to renew Africans' self-confidence. Christian, Islamic and Jewish history is also African history. In Jerusalem for thousands of years there has been an Ethiopian quarter, still occupied by Ethiopian monks. Africans were in attendance at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. "African people were there at the first Muslim call to prayer (adhan) … [and] on the front lines of the Ottoman army in World War 1" (African Holocaust Society, 2011, para. 5).

Boubacarr Barry (2000) a History Professor at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal and a research fellow at CODESRIA, wrote that the first collective exploration of African history was published in Africa in 1986, written by Bogumil Jewsiewicki and David Newbury. These authors had asked both African and non-African historians the following questions: What kind of history and for what kind of Africa? The historians said they were experiencing difficult academic conditions, which had impeded the development of historical studies. Barry wrote that these two articles opened the way to retrospective reflection to fight against silence and forgetting.

The reconstruction of African history opened Africa to universal concepts through Pharaonic Egypt and affirmed African cultural unity (Barry, 2000). There is no doubt much of the history of Africa predates what is now regarded as 'standard' world history.

In 2012, the term 'Africa' described a modern appreciation of the histories of people who are victimized because of their African origin. Africa has an ancient history but "the politics of 'African' history is a modern paradigm ... only a few hundred years old" (African Holocaust Society, 2011, para. 4).

A modern intellectual fallacy is that knowledge systems were introduced to Africa through colonisation. Colonisation introduced Western knowledge systems which were imposed in a systematic attempt to destroy indigenous knowledge systems (Lebakeng, 2010). Lebakeng, wrote;

> This was underpinned by a specific philosophical-cultural package: a package that denied the humanity - as encapsulated in the past, history and civilisation - of indigenous African peoples. Denying the humanity of other peoples by the colonisers has always been a way of justifying oppressing, exploiting and/or exterminating them. (p. 24)

Pre-colonial Gambian society

A study on cultural rights in The Gambia, commissioned through the Gambian National Commission for UNESCO discussed pre-colonial Gambian society (Ceesay, 2011). Ceremonies, festivals, languages, royal processions and oral performances such as storytelling and proverbs were enjoyed. Cultural practices which included marriages and initiation ceremonies were a daily routine for all ethnic groups, as were drumming, dancing, singing and sports such as wrestling, fishing and hunting.

> Nearly all ethnic groups in The Gambia have masking traditions. Masks such as the Wolof Zimba, the Mandinka Kankurang, Aku Hunting, Jola Kumpo and the Fanal evoke spirituality and esoteric freedom that even colonial rulers could not erase, which is why they remain as strong symbols of cultural resilience and expression. (Ceesay, 2011, p. 10)

Naming ceremonies, rain and harvest ceremonies continue among ethnic groups in The Gambia. These ceremonies have survived colonial repression despite the wholesale import of Western educational systems.

African philosophy

The debate on the existence of African philosophy is no longer necessary. Metaphysical and epistemological issues intersect with the philosophy of life, traditional beliefs, knowledge systems and the practices of ordinary Africans. The embedded philosophies are vital to the integrity of Africa. African scholar Towa (1991) wrote, "Africa will not really attain its cultural maturity as long as it does not elevate itself resolutely to a profound thinking of its essential problems, that is to say, to philosophical reflection" (p. 187).

Socrates, the first major philosopher in the Western tradition, is known entirely for oral arguments, through the reports of others. This tradition developed into written arguments. But the methods of philosophy developed in the West through analysis of texts are not found everywhere. In sub-Saharan Africa writing was only introduced into oral culture over the last few centuries.

Only through oral traditions, music, folk songs, folk tales, myths and legends, proverbs and other oral arts do African people utilise various African means of knowing. Collective testimonies and recollections of the past, inherited from earlier generations, and transmitted in various forms of verbal testimonies are examples of these living oral traditions. Orally transmitted information inherited from past generations has been shared in both structured and unstructured contexts in this research. These oral traditions represented old forms of thought. For this traditional oral material to continue it now has to be in the form of the printed word.

Most works in African philosophy, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, have been carried out by African intellectuals under the influence of philosophical influences from their colonisers.

Philosophy in Africa has changed greatly since the Second World War and even more as African states gained their independence. The colonial legacy significantly shaped modern philosophical education in Africa, so there have been critical debates addressing what it is that makes a philosophy African.

In Africa, philosophy is expected to be pragmatic, to render a service and make an effective contribution toward the amelioration of the lived and existing human condition (Muwanga-Zake, 2010). According to Ntuli,

> The assumption that Africa was a "clean slate" (tabula rasa) until Europeans arrived has been proved to be based on a narrow perception of knowledge as a universal resource. This view is based on the misconception that western cultural knowledge orientations were used to determine the value of blacks' ideas, belief systems and religion (as cited in Maila & Loubser, 2003, p. 278).

Uncovering African epistemology

Western cultural systems of knowledge were considered by colonists as the only way to determine Africa's beliefs, ideas, and general way of life. African scholars have been active in questioning the status quo and querying whether Africans themselves can provide an alternative logic based on their own world-view. The popular epistemologies of Africa built bridges between the so-called natural and supernatural, physical and meta-physical, rational and irrational, objective and subjective, scientific and superstitious, visible and invisible, real and unreal, explainable and inexplicable, making it impossible for anything to be one without also being the other. The emphasis is on the whole. Truth is negotiated as something consensual, not the result of artificial disqualification by colonisers (Nyamnjoh, 2004). Barry (2001) wrote, "Yet a country which stops thinking about its past is bound, in the long term to lose sight of the truth and go dangerously off course" (p. 38).

Research on ancient African civilization suggested that Africans perceived the world differently from the Europeans. Strong interpersonal, harmonious relationships with others, peace with nature, communalism, and spirituality characterized African epistemology.

> Evidence of African epistemology dates as far back as 4000 B.C.E (Before the Common Era). Although much of African history has been passed down by oral tradition, there were many scripts which gave clues to ancient African epistemology. These included the three scripts of ancient Egypt: hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic; Meritic and Coptic scripts of Nubia, Sabean and Ge'ez scripts of Ethiopia; the Toma and Vai scripts of Liberia; and the Mum script of Cameroon. A strong emphasis was placed on the Egyptian scripts and history because Afro-centric scholars concluded that the greatest world achievements have come out of Egyptian civilization. .... The Egyptians had established a spiritual system of law, order, truth, and righteousness. .... African epistemology places great emphasis on ethics and morality, spirituality, symbolic imagery, science, self-awareness and tradition. .... The great achievements by Egyptians indicated ... rationality and scientific logic. (Bakari, 1997, p. 3)

Indigenous African epistemology /building capacity

The question of an indigenous African epistemology or knowledge system is a growing discourse that demands the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems in African research and policy. In the light of Africa's colonial legacy, African philosophy is confronted with the problem of establishing its own unique African order of knowledge (Higgs, 2010).

African people have a body of knowledge constructed and reconstructed from generation to generation covering various livelihoods and life-encountered experiences (Millar, 2007). Indigenous ways of knowing are based on locally, ecologically and seasonally contextualized truths. Indigenous epistemologies are narratively anchored in natural communities. These natural communities are complex kinship systems of relationships among people, animals, the cosmos, etc. from which knowing originates.

Oral tradition

In the Senegambia, the griotte (female) and griot, (male) were the guardian of oral traditions. They passed history, built on an oral tradition, down from generation to generation. The griot knew how to discern truth and knew how to accept it, at whatever the cost; knowing how to speak the truth everywhere and to everyone (Barry, 2001). The griot's told of the profound upheavals in empires and kingdoms through their stories, songs, chants and poetry.

The passage from the spoken to written word, the writing of history in Arabic, Pular, Wolof or Mandigo by Moslem scholars occurred in the 17th century, the end of the Songhay Empire. They also wrote of the events prior to the ancient empires of Ghana and Mali. These notes or tarikhs were often jealously guarded and handed down from father to son for generations. These helped people to recount history verbally in an oral orientated society.

The colonial conquest at the end of the 19th century was a major reason for a break from this form of historical expression conveyed by oral traditions and tarikhs. The colonial school began and the denial of African societies' historical value declined. This was the beginning of the double society, divided between the traditional elite holding on to ancient knowledge and a colonised elite obliged to learn about the history of its conquerors.

Who holds the history?

Questions to consider were: Who holds your history? Who tells your story? Who is your voice? (How do we know what we know?). In West Africa, written history is something new. It was written in European languages beginning in the late 1800s during the colonial era. It has been written in Arabic for centuries. Many societies in West Africa have kept

their own history in their own languages, orally and in the form of epics. This job was carried out by the griot.

The griot's role has changed over time. Once both male and female griots were "historians, genealogists, advisers to nobility, entertainers, messengers and praise singers" (Lott, 2002, para. 4). Today they are performers. In Africa orality is still the most important form of discourse on the continent.

Students of indigenous knowledge have contended that its study has profound educational, ethical and political relevance (Horsthemke, 2008). One of UNESCO's initiatives is a project called "Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a Global Society" (LINKS). LINKS projects' goals are;

- Strengthening local community control over processes of ecological, social, and cultural change. This goal is pursued by exploring linkages and synergies between indigenous and scientific knowledge that enhance biodiversity conservation, reinforce equity in resource governance and strengthen environmental and social impact assessments.

- Revitalising traditional knowledge transmission within local communities. This is affected by strengthening ties between elders and youth and evaluating the opportunities and constraints of existing educational frameworks.

- Evaluating customary rules and practices that govern knowledge access. It is envisaged that this will inform efforts to develop appropriate normative instruments for protecting traditional knowledge (UNESCO, n.d).

The LINKS programme is now into its second decade, 2005-2014. The programme continues the interdisciplinary approach of the first initiative 1994-2005. This includes;

The enhancement of local and indigenous knowledge systems, the transmission of knowledge and the empowerment of indigenous people. [UNESCO] also endeavours to ensure the full participation of indigenous peoples in elaboration, implementing and monitoring policies and action of direct consequence to them…. This renewed focus … is particularly timely given the historic adoption by the UN General Assembly in September 2007 of the Declaration

on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples… an advance in global attention to indigenous peoples' concerns (Nakashima, 2010, p. 2).

An epistemological agenda for indigenous Africans

Nyamnjoh (n.d.) wrote, "Calls to rethink education in Africa are yet to be translated into action in any significant way" (p. 14). He warned that rehabilitation of African culture "would be counter-productive 'to dig up the past and live it as it was'" (p. 14). Any rehabilitation between the two could only be carefully navigated between "the popular and the elite, the endogenous and exogenous in Africa" (p. 14).

Aotearoa's Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, wrote that there needs to be an epistemological agenda including indigenous knowledge systems both in Africa and across the globe. It is clear that Western understandings and research can falsify, frame and sub-merge African thought. However, some notable African philosophers such as Hountondji (1996), Director of the African Centre for Advanced Studies at the Universite Nationale du Benin and Professor of Philosophy, suggested that African epistemology is a myth and advised Africans to adopt Western knowledge systems, arguing that philosophy is universal. "In contrast, Ogunniyi ... strongly advocated indigenous Africans to curb imported ideas to encourage local initiative and create academic independence" (as cited in Muwanga-Zake, 2010, p. 70).

Antonio Gramsci (1971) reminded us that there occurs a specific moment in history when the ruling class has reached the point when though it is still dominant, (force and coercion) it is no longer hegemonic (ideas and consent). Crisis is a word that could be defined as paralysing, meaning a present so full and problematic it blocks the memories of the past and speculations about the future. Gramsci wrote that crisis means turning point, an opportunity for change. An opportunity for Africa's sustainable development through a new

conceptual framework "which defines the region as more of a learning entity, and less of a desperate emergency case requiring dole-outs and other temporary relief measures" (Kasekende & Kisubi, 2008, p. viii)

The Gambia has experienced the destructive forces of clan wars and the devastation of slavery yet remains one of the few African countries still burdened with the weight of political tyranny (Jallow, 2012)

Life in The Gambia has changed since my first visit in 1993. In 1994 President Jawara was overthrown in a bloodless military coup led by Lt. Yahya Jammeh. I visited The Gambia in 2000 just after the senseless massacre of sixteen protesting students. The attack happened a few days before my arrival. The smell of burning, and the fear and terror of my colleagues was apparent. Some of the student deaths had been in the courtyard of the Gambian Technical Training Institute (GTTI) where I worked.

This event and the assassination of Gambia's Finance Minister Koro Ceesay were events that Gambian people have not recovered from. Since those early events Jammeh's accumulation and consolidation of power, summary executions, murders, maiming, tortures, incarceration and intimidation of perceived political opponents and innocent citizens represents the most wretched chapter in The Gambia's history. No one dares challenge Jammeh's authority for fear of arrest, detention, imprisonment, or death. The ruination of Gambian society continues unabated.

Gambian people have not been able to muster the courage to end their political nightmare, nor has ECOWAS or the African Union (AU). Also silent has been Gambia's neighbouring country Senegal. Senegal shares cultural values, ethnic distinctions and common

geography. There was hope since the election of Macky Sall as Senegal's new president that Jammeh's power might be diminished (Jallow, 2012). However, with the execution of nine prisoners in August, 2012, which was condemned internationally, Jammeh's abuse of power and his control through a process of elimination could be at least on notice. There is no doubt this situation of misery, suffering and fear had a huge effect on this research, in terms of being advised not to take videos and to practice restraint in the conversations with participants.

Social change /praxis

Writing on the Maori Aotearoa New Zealand experience, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) wrote that when indigenous people become the researchers and not merely the researched "the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, people participate on different terms" (p. 193). This results in the development of new, indigenous methodologies that call for concrete positive outcomes attained by using culturally congruent methods.

In taking up the interests of the "traditionally marginalised, silenced and oppressed" (R. Smith, 1993, p. 76), it is possible for researchers to empower the oppressed through conscientising by engaging participants in collective action to change the world. As Giddings and Grant (2002) wrote, "everyone does not perceive injustice in the same way because an individual's viewpoint may be limited by false consciousness and ideology" (p. 18).

Such research is political, if it helps to emancipate people from unjust or oppressive social structures through rational transformation through empowering others to engage in transformative action. "Empowerment is the outcome of changed consciousness produced

by the process of praxis, involving cycles of collaborative planning, acting and critical

reflection" (Giddings & Grant, 2002, p. 19).

This transformation links with Fanon's proposition for the envisioning of a new human

'fusing the ethics of psychoanalysis with the ethics of the political' in order to articulate a

new ontology past but not oblivious to the binary politics and policies of western humanism

that has condemned the black man to a condition of inhumanity and injustice (as cited in

Karavanta & Morgan, 2008, p. 14).

> This recent recognition produces new discourses and epistemologies that do not
> simply challenge the philosophy of western humanism and narrate what bell hooks[5]
> has called 'the narratives of struggle' but also operate as a 'minority discourse' that
> resists its marginalized and peripheral role and instead undercuts the master
> narratives of history blurring the borders between texts, agents, voices and
> identities. Instead of simply resisting or opposing, this minority discourse affirms
> the conditions and claims of those humans 'whose humanity was only recently
> recognised' and reconfigures the question of the human now made to the measure of
> heterogeneous, albeit still greatly uneven world. (Karavanta & Morgan, 2008, p.15).

Indigenous knowledge

Most government reform in Africa is completely detached from the people whose living

standards these new reforms are intended to improve. Africans are asking for a

philosophical re-thinking, which is what this research called for. Currently, recipients have

no input into policy (Omoyefa, 2008). Mhone suggested that "there is a need to indigenise

the notion and practice of governance by exploiting and adapting indigenous knowledge

systems, particularly those prevailing in non-modern sectors of African society by which

the majority of African people live and abide" (as cited in Omoyefa, 2008, p. 28).

The idea of indigenous knowledge is a relatively recent phenomenon that challenges

Western thinking and conceptualisation. Advocates of indigenous knowledge maintained

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5 bell hooks uses lower case to write her name.)

that it has profound educational and ethical relevance. "Knowledge is a key commodity in the 21st century" (Tuhiwai Smith 2005, p. 92).

According to Stewart-Harawira,

> Indigenous knowledge once denied by science as irrational and dogmatic is one of those new frontiers of knowledge. The efforts by indigenous people to reclaim and protect their traditional knowledge now coincides and converges with scientific interests in discovering how that knowledge can offer new possibilities (as cited in Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 93).

Tuhiwai Smith's (2005) agenda for indigenous research included processes of mobilisation, healing, decolonisation and transformation. She also indicated that often in the eyes of non-indigenous researchers this can be politically sensitive and perceived as threatening. It can be judged by outsiders as not rigorous, not robust, not theorised, not valid and not reliable. At the same time, local communities can observe conventional research as not useful, not indigenous, not just, and not friendly. Reconciling these views is a major challenge.

Megalommatis (2012) wrote that if the African Renaissance[6] movement wants socio-political rebirth, the only way it can be achieved is if Africans can retain their own African identity. In other words, the African Renaissance movement has to delve into the Afro-centric movement in many key areas.

Afro-centricity as a theory of change locates the African person as a subject, and is the essence of an African cultural revival and survival (Asante, 1995 p.1). African scholars and other Africans are at the forefront of creating culturally specific methodological approaches to the study of African culture, people and experiences.

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[6] African Renaissance is an intellectual movement with the purpose of promoting ideas based on the values and constructs of African reality. It is related to the Afro-centricity movement to define African perspectives from an African point of view.

African knowledge systems have long been the subject of recorded reflections of African thinkers. The theme has been an integral part of the development of African nationalism from the emancipation of slavery through the struggle for de-colonisation and into the colonial era. African approaches to knowledge and transfer of knowledge to younger generations, were seriously disrupted during the colonial period. According to Laonde, "th[is] disruption is still being perpetuated by the north-south political and economic system" (as cited in Muwanga-Zake, 2010, p. 75). Afro-centricity addressed African epistemologies, methodologies, pedagogies, practice and philosophies.

Summary

In Chapter Two the examination shifts to history and the context of The Gambia, examining the underlying assumptions and rationalities that have perpetuated the systematic inequality and dominant colonial interests. This chapter highlighted an overview of some aspects of The Gambia's background with an overview of the role of history. Finally, the chapter discussed African philosophy, epistemology, oral tradition and African thinkers.

After considering background information about The Gambia, it is now vital to focus on the literature review. Since this study focused on the practice of research theory, the next chapter discusses the traditional exposition of dominant policy theories argued from African, Pacific and Aotearoa New Zealand Maori perspectives.

Chapter Three: Literature review: Part one

Part one of the literature chapter is a critical analysis of theories and practices of colonisation's power and dominance. The people of the Pacific Nations, Maori in Aotearoa New Zealand and African scholars have called for a redefinition of the context, objectives and subjectivities of social and political struggles as a replacement for domination of Western philosophies, theories, concepts, techniques and rules in social science research.

One of the major weaknesses of contemporary African research is its lack of careful attention to epistemological issues. Nwosu (2005, p. 61) suggested that communication behaviours in Africa are often examined from the prism of Western nationality, including the application of concepts derived in the West. Without Afro-centric underpinning to guide African research, there is a reliance on theories generated from a culturally different environment (Taylor & Nwosu, 2001).

What are the foundations of and capabilities for using Gambian epistemologies as (1) a potential process, and/or (2) an analytical framework for strategic research development in The Gambia?

Euro-centric paradigms

Based on the African call for their own approaches to African-focused solutions, there is a serious need to revisit the dominant epistemological or Euro-centric underpinnings and assumptions of prevalent development research which are foreign to many of Africa's people (Nyamnjoh, 2005). As Nyamnjoh (2010) indicated, "researchers have adopted research techniques designed to answer to the needs of Western society and which do not always suit African cultures or societies that are in the main rural and non-literate" (p. 2).

As a result, the vast majority of research done in Africa is done from a Western education and viewpoint. Euro-centric paradigms dominate as the universalising principles of human concerns and behaviour, irrespective of differences of race, gender or culture. Euro-centric education and political systems place emphasis on individuality and reason and presuppose that European values can be used everywhere. These assimilation processes have seriously eroded indigenous knowledge (Battiste, 2008, p. 497), as Euro-centric epistemologies have resulted not only in causing the colonisation of African imaginations, but also the displacement of African knowledge. Moreover, global values continue to be imposed on African people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012, p. xi).

There has been frustration among African scholars and others at the continued use of imported Euro-centric ideas and institutions in Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Emerging critical thinking and interrogation of Euro-centric theories by other, more critical theories, such as anti-racist, indigenous, feminist or Afro-centric theories reveal the fallacies that traditional social science is neutral. By unmasking these seemingly invisible, global imperial designs that work to keep Africa in a subordinate position, a new analytical framework could be a definitive entry of African subjectivities into new thinking and imagining of another world. Ultimately, many African scholars, for example, Claude Ake, Paul Tiyambe Zelza, Ali Mazrui, Achille Mbembe and Mahmood Mandani (as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012, p. xii), stressed the need for a new paradigm for the African state, based on African theory, re-connecting with the positive values of indigenous African political systems.

Euro-centric influence in African research

In Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, John Stanfield (1994) discussed qualitative research that has been shaped by Eurocentric biases. Stanfield had extensive research experience in African institutions and communities. While not African, Stanfield believed that through asking or stimulating the questions within a framework of opportunity, and the intention to advance African ideals, there is an opportunity to counteract the tendency of African researchers' reliance on Western sources and methodologies.

During my years spent in Africa, I have sought similar opportunities to be informed by and to work with communities in order to write and think from an Afro-centric viewpoint, but I am not African. African researchers know their environment better than any expatriate can and African researchers and research participants guided the questions and philosophy for this study. But my experiences, over 20 years in Africa, are also valid and assist reliability in data collection. "Describing African experience from an African view-point [or voice] would be to add to the knowledge base an indigenized perspective" (Brock-Utne, 1996, p. 608).

The challenge

By challenging Euro-centric knowledge production and questioning, and both the authority of the academy and the politics of representation in social science research, Troyna stated that one "is burdened with the responsibility of dealing with competing claims to truth" (as cited in Wahab, 2005, p. 33). According to Dei, "it implies risks for both researchers and researched" (as cited in Wahab, 2005, p. 33); researchers, presently Western or Western influenced, and the researched African, because knowledge projects have consequences for

both. In my experience of development work in Africa I have recognised the ways in which power relations have not been equal between the researcher and participants. This was because each 'side' occupied different race, gender, class and power positions which became even more apparent during the research process.

An example of this was in a Nursing Education Project in Ghana. Mid-way during the project, the Ghanaian University involved requested some changes from the objectives in the original contract. The Vice-Chancellor visited the Canadian donor in Ottawa to discuss the rationale for this. No plan change was allowed or granted as the original objectives of the project were 'written in stone.' This power positioning indicated the inflexibility of the Western donor and the ways in which decisions about representation and perspectives were affected. Developing local indigenous analytical research frameworks could translate fundamental principles as the situation demands and prove acceptable "in ways that are … more responsible and responsive to multiple and diverse situations" (Dillard, 2008, p. 287). It would give receivers of such projects an equal voice.

Using local frameworks "pose[d] a legitimate challenge to the fields of international development and comparative education" (Wahab, 2005, p. 48) in line with emerging critical thinking that accepts Euro-centric or Euro-American hegemony is no longer sustainable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006).

Epistemology, ontology and axiology

A deeper understanding of these indigenous concepts for Western trained researchers like myself has required entering a world of self-reflection and active-learning about the social and philosophical constructs that frame indigenous participants' lives. These three

constructs are epistemology, ontology and axiology. I will now begin my discussion to unfold the meanings of these three philosophical terms.

Epistemology defines people's ways of knowing and being in the world. It is the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge. The word epistemology is derived from the Greek words 'episteme' which means knowledge, and 'logos' which means theory. As such it addresses the questions about "what knowledge is, how it is obtained and what makes it knowledge" (Gormley 2005, p. 97). Over the centuries diverse people have interpreted and constructed what constitutes knowledge. Feminists and anti-racist researchers believed that 'the white male version' has dominated what constitutes knowledge in the Western world, with the result that knowledge has been "framed within a narrow lens" (Gormley, 2005, p. 97). The challenge to the status quo in Africa has been relatively recent, and has included multiple standpoints. This moved the meaning of African epistemology from a "static, passive view of knowledge toward a more adaptive and active one" (Gormley, 2005, p. 97). However, it is not possible to say exactly what this means in detail as a Gambian epistemology has not been articulated in the academic literature.

Intertwined with epistemology is the philosophical study of ontology, which is mainly concerned with the nature of existence and the science of being. It refers to socially constructed worldviews, through which people interact with their environment and one another, or, in other words, the thought structures through which societies organize themselves. Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined the ontological question as: "What is the nature of reality and therefore what is there that can be known about it?" (p. 108).

Many researchers, both Western and African, often begin their research with perceptions of reality that are usually influenced by mainstream or Western beliefs. In fact, few

researchers of Africa, even in African universities, have sufficiently questioned the theories, concepts and basic assumptions informed by Western dominant epistemology. In my experience, the tendency has been to conform to a world conceived without them. This means that the ontologies promoted by research are pivotally positioned and refer to a particular theory or system of thought that remains throughout the entire research process. These importantly, indigenous researchers such as Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) argued that many conclusions to research projects have been racist, due to the application of ontological structures which have been inappropriate and often injurious to the groups under investigation (Gormley, 2005).

The third philosophical concept under consideration here is axiology. The word axiology is derived from the Greek axios and means 'worth something' or value. Axiology is connected to the dimension of human action and is affected by interpersonal communication and is similar to epistemology and ontology as it is relational and about people. The Greek philosopher Plato saw axiology as absolute and identified with 'the good.' This understanding of external good laid the perceptual framework for historical Western research. Contrasting with this view are others like myself who believed values depend on context and are defined differently between people. Indigenous, anti-racist and feminist researchers argued that values depend on the person who is making the value judgements. They agreed that the hegemonic discourse of Euro-centric superiority obscures even its own value system. This narrow view of reasoning is one reason why many researchers approach their work without examining "inherent axiological 'truths'" (Gormley, 2005, p. 99). These truths, which are defined in a society's epistemology, ontology and axiology, can be looked

at from many viewpoints and, from the more comprehensive views of research methods,
can be clearly seen and understood.

Pacific and Maori: Epistemological development

Some work has been done in this context by Pacific people, and by Maori in Aotearoa
New Zealand. Both Pacific and Maori scholars have advanced their own epistemologies
toward research frameworks and their work could be used as a model for other indigenous
communities.

Contemporary Pacific studies calls for culturally appropriate research to identify and
promote a Pacific world-view, in which Pacific values and Pacific societies create meaning
and "integrate traditional knowledge with introduced knowledge" (Gegeo, 1998, p. 290).

Taufe'ulungaki (2001) agreed when she wrote that;

> One of the myths that we have internalised is the belief that scientific inquiry is
> neutral and objective.... The competing assumptions, questions and procedures
> of research contain values that represent different perceptions about authority,
> institutional transformation and social order. Embedded in research are issues
> of epistemology, political and cognitive theory as well as peoples' responses to
> their material existence. (p. 6)

Pacific people are taking responsibility for articulating indigenous ethical principles and
determining strategies for ethical research practice. Ethics systems and processes are central
to all aspects of the life of indigenous communities in the Pacific. Although long
disregarded in the privileging of Western ideals, Pacific ethics processes integrate
epistemological, pedagogical and methodological considerations (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-
Dunlop, 2009).

Ethics of knowledge production in the Pacific

In the Pacific, as in Africa, Western knowledge has predominated in research and higher education, which are underpinned by Western values, belief systems and epistemologies. Thus "assumptions about the world, societies, the human conditions, people's relationship with nature ... determine political structures, economic systems and educational philosophies, among other things" (Taufe'ulungaki, 2001, p. 5).

Research on locally-valued ways of thinking, learning and organising knowledge has been practised over the last two decades in the South Pacific, led by Pacific Island and Aotearoa New Zealand Maori scholars. Indigenous-centred epistemologies and the application of traditional wisdom are being used to solve imported and imposed problems that affect the Pacific. Indigenous epistemologies have been relevant and useful to local communities. Indigenous epistemologies reflect the critical praxis of the village. "Honouring, reciprocating, respecting, seeking out and applying indigenous knowledge….[are] deep culturally-embedded" ways of knowing (Quanchi, 2004, p. 10).

Renaissance in the South Pacific, Aotearoa and indigenous knowledge

When people gather to discuss problems in the Pacific, Talanoa, an oral based encounter, may be used, where people story their past, their issues, their realities and aspirations (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Vaioleti, 2006). Talanoa is a preferred means of communication that captures traditions and protocols of the Pacific Nations.

According to Maori scholar, G. H. Smith (2003), any transformative theory must have as implicit components;

i. A capacity to make 'space' for itself, to be sustained in a context of unequal power relationships with the coloniser and the critique that will inevitably be developed as such theorizing often contradicts and challenges the existing and accepted ways of knowing, doing and understanding in [places of learning].

ii. A capacity to sustain the validity and legitimacy of the theory in the face of challenge both from the colonising imperatives and from internal (indigenous) hegemonic forces

iii. A capacity to be "owned" and to "make sense" to the indigenous communities themselves

iv. A capacity that has the potential to make a positive difference - to move indigenous people to a better existence

v. A capacity to be continuously reviewed and revised by those whom the theory is intended to serve (p. 5)

Maori have developed their own research approach

In Aotearoa New Zealand, scholars have named

> their research approach as Kaupapa Maori [Maori philosophy and practice] or Maori research rather than using the term "indigenist." There are strong reasons for such a naming, as the struggle has been seen as one over Maori language and the ability of Maori to name the world, to theorize the world, and to research back to power. (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 90)

The indigenous renaissance in Aotearoa New Zealand has demonstrated a post-colonial renewal, which came out of the Te Kohanga Reo (Maori language) movement. This movement began in 1981 in response to Maori concern to ensure the continuing survival of the Maori language. Te Kohanga Reo resulted in political change. Ten years after it was introduced, Maori academic Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1992) analysed what had happened and suggested that the movement had provided a useful starting point to highlight the potential of culturally based imperatives and educational advancement for Maori. He claimed that it had created critical dialogue about self-determination and that the

philosophy and practice of being Maori had a valid and legitimate social political, philosophical intellectual and cultural authenticity.

Kaupapa Maori has developed as a theory of research methodology, which has been applied across different disciplinary fields, including the sciences. This approach has made a positive difference for Maori, which included a model of social change or transformation. This honoured Maori knowledge and ways of being and has set a framework for organizing, conducting and evaluating Maori research (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005). This approach is also active in building capacity and research infrastructure that supported community aspirations and development (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Kaupapa "Maori ... comes from practices, value systems and social relations that are evident in the ... ways Maori people live their lives" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 90). "Indigenist research also includes a critique of 'the rules of practice' regarding research, the way research projects are funded, and the development of strategies that address community concerns about the assumptions, ethics, purposes, procedures, and outcomes of research" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 90).

Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) wrote

> Our colonial experience traps us in the project of modernity. There can be no 'postmodern' for us until we have settled some business of the modern. This does not mean that we do not understand or employ multiple discourses, or act in incredibly contradictory ways, or exercise power in multiple ways. It means that there is unfinished business, that we are still being colonised. (p. 36)

"Denzin and Lincoln argued that most qualitative researchers, whether they are conscious of it or not, conduct their research according to a paradigm that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises" (as cited in Gormley, 2005, 100). Understanding this, I have found it challenging to engage in my Gambian research

project that was an attempt to examine the nature of Gambian knowing and the patterns of epistemology that underpinned it. Therefore this research was not structured linearly like the dominant theories (Daniel, 2008). When indigenous African, and in this case Gambian knowledge, experience and wisdom, is the base from which epistemology emerges, it engages both researcher and participants together as allies (Dillard, 2008). Using these philosophical points at a day-to-day level has reduced my own conscious and unconscious biases in my own perspective as a white researcher.

Indigenous Gambian knowledge

In order to begin to consider the possibilities for such a framework in Africa, it is useful to consider one country within Africa. The country selected for this investigation is The Gambia. Indigenous African knowledge such as Gambian indigenous knowledge is embedded in the context of civilization and history, which holds together the social, economic, scientific and technological identity of the community (Maila & Loubser 2003). Gambian knowledge represents a wealth of knowing from the ecological environment. Gambian people have skills and knowledge both to survive and sustain themselves within that environment (Battiste, 2008). Gambian people's relationships are also preserved in their local languages that have been transmitted and recorded from generation to generation. They have their own Gambian concepts of epistemology, and scientific and logical validity.

Indigenous paradigms allowed for the reclaiming of values, practices and beliefs. These are the ontological foundations that informed Gambian existence and survival. Indigenous norms and values in The Gambia are not part of governance or education frameworks in the post-colonial period. These norms and values have significant implications for issues of

constitutional structures, institutions and processes. By developing and using a Gambian analytical framework based on local epistemologies, the challenge will be to create research that is inclusive, creative, empowering and relevant to the lived experiences of Gambian people.

An African paradigm: three models

There are a number of ways of articulating Afro-centric frameworks. In this research, while adhering to Afro-centric protocol in terms of dealing with research participants and processes, for example Asante (1987; 1990) identified Ma'at and Nommo as principles intrinsic to African cultures. Ma'at is the quest for justice, truth and harmony. The ultimate goal of Ma'at is towards the creation of a more fair and just society. Nommo means the product of the word, and it describes the creation of knowledge as a vehicle for improvement for human relations.

The Afro-centric paradigm and vision used in this research was based upon the work of African scholars and other Africans who are at the forefront of creating a culturally specific methodological approach to the study of African culture, people and experiences.

Central to this discussion is a clear grasp of the relationship between 'worldview' and methodology. It is a culturally specific approach to understanding human phenomena, African in particular.
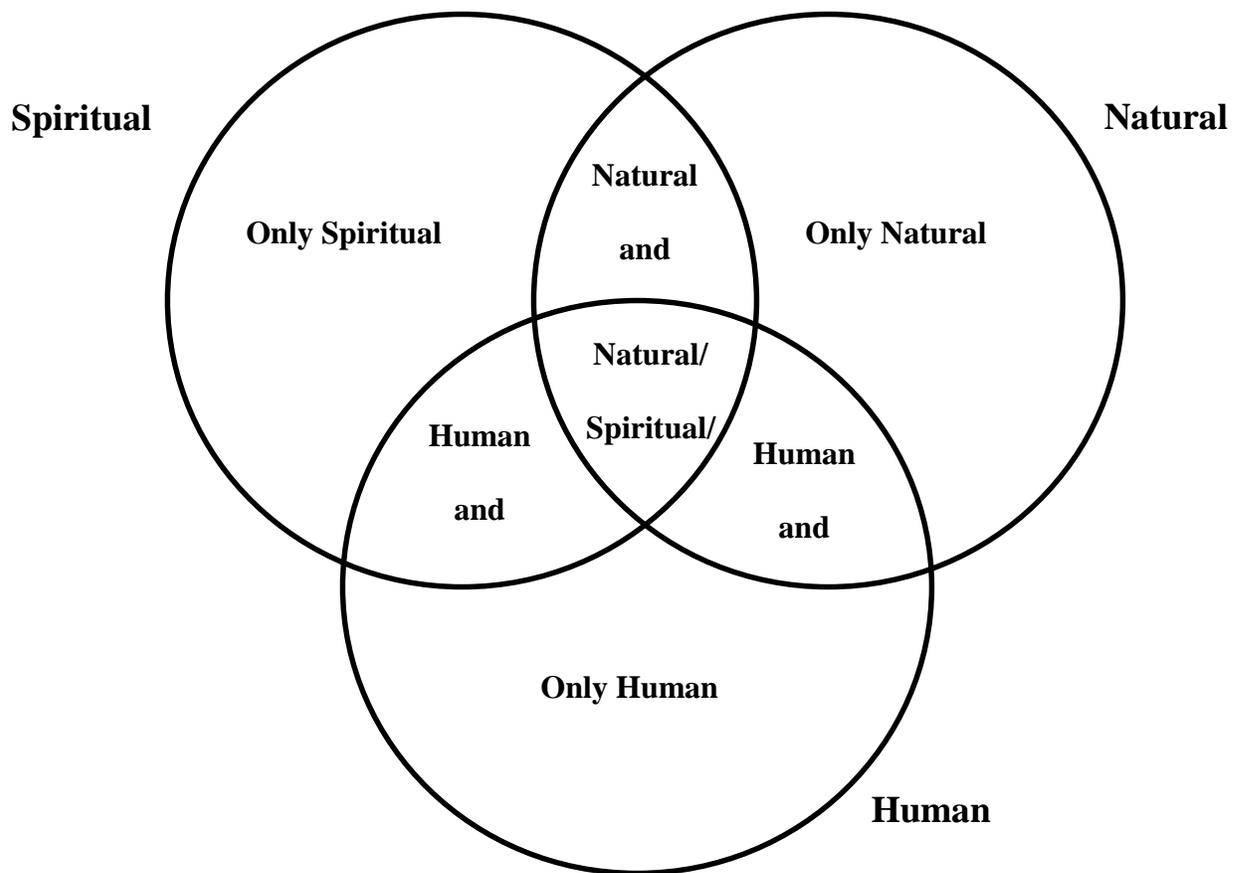
Figure 2: The three circles depicting African worldviews
Adapted from "Reconstructing epistemologies of African sciences," by David Millar, 2007.

Social/Human World, Spiritual World, and Natural World

The interaction of the three worlds implies the following constellations of knowledge:

- Knowledge resulting from Social interactions only

- Combination between the Social and Natural

- Combination between the Social and Spiritual

- Knowledge resulting from Natural interactions only

- Combination of the Natural and Spiritual

- Knowledge resulting from Spiritual only

- Combination of Social, Spiritual, and Natural

The last constellation is the perfect state, which strives for balance or harmony with itself (Millar, 2007, p. 296).

The traditional mode of African 'knowing' included interaction with ancestors, the community and the natural environment, the combination of the spiritual and the physical. The nature of most indigenous societies in Africa is that life and living provided a circular and revolving connection between all parts of society between "ancestors, the unborn and the living" (Avoseh, 2012, p. 52).

The four levels of inquiry in Afro-centricity are cosmological, epistemological, axiological and aesthetic. Cosmology refers to myths and legends, literatures and oratures[7] that interact at a primordial level and to how African people respond to the truths they see in the cosmos. The epistemological issues are those dealing with language, myth, dance and music as they question knowledge and truth. Axiology refers to the beautiful and the good and these combined give right conduct within the context of African culture. Aesthetics is an inquiry closely related to the issue of values, and good taste (Asante, 2009).

Afro-centricity social/ cultural/ political

As highlighted in the above three examples Afro-centricity challenged conventional practices and ideas, contested the status quo, developed understanding and aligned itself

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[7] Classical spoken and musical oral traditions, or 'orature', a term created by Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o, spans the entire continent of Africa. This is not to suggest that early inhabitants of Africa had not developed literature, or literate cultures; quite to the contrary, ancient systems of writing do exist amongst the people of Africa. The reasons for rising interest in the classical orature of African cultures is because so much of these ancient traditions have survived the test of time, due to griots and griottes and others whose lives are intimately intertwined with the living, breathing word.

alongside the praxis of other indigenous research and development frameworks such as

Kaupapa Maori Theory (Pihama, 2001) and Pacific Theory (Gegeo, 1998). Integral to these

frameworks is the focus on human agency, liberation and emancipation.

Afro-centricity addressed African epistemologies, methodologies, pedagogies, practice and

philosophies. According to the late Archie Mafeje, (2008)[8], Afro-centricity can be regarded

as a methodological requirement for:

1) Decolonising knowledge in Africa or

2) An antidote to Eurocentrism through which all knowledge about Africa has been
   filtered (p. 106).

Many Africans scholars have called for a return to indigenous languages, cultures,

traditions and values, "as a means to emancipate themselves from colonial domination in all

spheres of life and assert Africa's uniqueness in the world" (Cossa, 2009, p. 9). Afro-

centricity in this thesis is based on African epistemology, African reality and culture.

> The Afro-centric movement started from the academic discipline of History….
> Progressively, Afro-centrism expanded … to Philosophy, Theology, and Social
> Anthropology, but it always failed to systematize its aspects into a coherent
> ideology able to encompass all the types of theoretical concerns, academic
> disciplines, and social affairs. At its best, Afro-centric theorists tackled issues
> pertaining to education and cultural ideology, but again there they rather
> focused on the contents, but not on the method of successfully implementing
> 'African-centred education' across the continent (Megalommatis, 2012,
> Interconnectedness of the Two Movements section, para.3-4).

Afro-centricity in this literature review merged theory and practice as necessary elements to

raise consciousness. It sought to address repositioning of the African person and African

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[8] Mafeje was South African by birth, exiled during apartheid years, returning to the American University in
Cairo as Professor of Sociology and Anthropology. He was awarded the Honorary Life Membership of
CODESRIA in 2003 and in 2005 appointed as a CODESRIA Distinguished Fellow. He dedicated his life to
promoting endogenous knowledge. Archie Mafeje died in 2007.

reality from the margins of European thought, attitude and doctrines, toward a centred and located place. The Afro-centric paradigm and vision is a foundation to stimulate enlightened discussion about the definition, mechanisms, and purpose of the Afro-centric method as an appropriate research method for African culture and used as a complement to qualitative research methods. The addition of an Afro-centric perspective to existing research and policy on and about Africa may well produce better social outcomes.

Discussion of Afro-centric knowledge in both African and African diaspora communities

Afro-centric culture reflects the cultural values, symbolic forms and achievements of Africa, and claims recognition and respect from humankind both spiritually and physically. It has rich sources of oral and other literature, indigenous works of art and plurality of religions and languages. It places the emphasis on communality and a view of a human being that presupposes interpersonal relationships.

Cynthia B. Dillard (Nana Mansa II of Mpeasem, Ghana, West Africa) was born in America but, through her work in Ghana experienced wholeness, a sense of coming full circle. She now considers herself as African living outside Africa and part of the African Diaspora. Like many other African Americans such as Asante (1998) who named Afro-centricity as a research framework, Dillard (2008) called the African Diaspora "African ascendant" (p. 278), to describe people of African heritage. She subscribed to the notion that this description, African ascendant, "more accurately describes the upward and forward moving nature of African people" (p. 291) both in America and other countries as well as those who reside on the African continent. Dillard also argued that African ascendants belong to the African community even when they do not live in Africa.

Using this African understanding of community, Afro-centricity mandates research and educational practice as actions in service to the African community whether it is carried out in Africa or abroad. I agree with both Asante (1998) and Dillard (2008) that in researching African communities, it is vital to philosophise using a theoretical framework from an African epistemological point of view and from this point, an activist praxis becomes essential. From this Afro-centric perspective, research is thus defined as a responsibility, answerable and obligated to the people and the community engaged in the inquiry.

CODESRIA's (2011) literature on rethinking African development with African strategic priorities has focused on the creation and institutionalising of Afro-centric approaches advanced by Molefi Asante[9] (1987, 1988, 1990 & 1995). His idea of Afro-centricity as a theory of social change was introduced in the seventies "as a response to the historical oppression of African Americans… The objective…was to reconstruct the African American identity" (Bakiri, 1997, p. 1). "Afro-centricity is an intellectual perspective deriving its name from the centrality of African people and phenomena in the interpretation of data" (Asante, 2009, para. 1). Reviere and Jones-Darrell (1996) agreed that, "Afro-centrism is fundamentally about new orientations toward data and is attempting to formulate a new orientation by providing new yardsticks against which research should be judged" (p. 1).

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[9] Asante is Professor in the Department of African American Studies at Temple University, USA and elected in 2009 by the Council of African Intellectuals as the Chair for the Diaspora Intellectuals in support of the United States of Africa.

Application of an Afro-centric perspective to data has:

> Three major divisions, cultural/aesthetics, social/behaviour and policy/action. Under cultural/aesthetics … three key epistemic, scientific and artistic dimensions [can be found]. In terms of epistemic dimensions, the Afrocentrist examines ethics, politics, psychology…The scientific dimensions include history, linguistics, economics… The artistic dimension involves icons, art symbols and other types of presentations (Asante, 2009, The Discipline of Africology section).

Pan-African Movement

In the 60's and 70's the National Liberation Movements included the pan-African Movement, which was essentially born outside of Africa by African intellectuals protesting against their exploitation and against racism. Collectively, the liberation movements were recognition of the need to recover or develop local identities and a sense of distinction damaged by colonial and imperial discourse. At the same time, theorists warned of the dangers of reversing the categories of oppressed and oppressor without critiquing the process of how dominant attitudes came into being in the first place.

Du Bois (2008) in his writings outlined his theory of "double consciousness" (p. 12), which results from Africans having to exist with another self-consciousness. For Du Bois the inability to see oneself as African constituted a major obstacle to any genuine African self-consciousness. Through being tied to the European or Euro-America life-worlds, he wrote, the African subject has "no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (p. 12). Du Bois' phenomenology was linked to an ethical project of racial equality, which included the full recognition of African identity, humanity and cultural contributions to shared world problems. The ability for Africans to see themselves as African will depend on their ability to uproot the "'blackface' stereotype, and

to reconstruct themselves and their word through creative codes of African discourses and symbols" (Henry, 2006, p. 9).

Asante explained that "the purpose of Afro-centric theory is not to attack Eurocentric theory or deny other forms of inquiry" and that "Afro-centric theories are not about cultural separatism and cultural chauvinism…one can be pro-African and not anti-white" (as cited in Schreiber, 2000, p. 657). "Afrocentricity as a theory of change intends to re-locate the African person as a subject... As a pan-African idea, Afrocentricity becomes the key to proper education of children and the essence of an African cultural revival and, indeed, survival" (Asante, 1995, p. 1).

Afro-centricity as alternative logic in research

Examining alternative bases for research as Menzies (2001) suggested, does not necessarily predict neutral consequences. Indeed, challenging the status quo as the only approaches and pointing to the current inequalities as they relate to Gambian Africans, is congruent with the notion that if research "is to play a useful and progressive role in the process of decolonization, it will ultimately require a political commitment in support of Indigenous peoples and an unambiguous recognition of the colonial role played by mainstream … paradigms" (p. 33).

The African think tank CODESRIA (2011) wrote that the crisis in Africa in 2011 with its financial and social implications would again "have raised awareness about the vital and imperious need for Africans to theoretically tackle the issue of Africa's future in this new century" (para. 2). African scholars have assumed a proactive posture-questioning the status quo and querying whether Africa has a science (to discuss). For example, David Millar

(2007), a Professor at the University for Development Studies in Tamale, Ghana asked*:* "*Can we provide an alternative logic that will query and challenge the 'dominant' or 'conventional' science? What are the challenges that Africans have to offer…that will enable them (to) create credible…constructive dialogue?*" (p. 290).

Afro-centricity is not just a discussion of African issues, history, politics or consciousness. Agency, being centered, psychic integrity and cultural fidelity are four theoretical constructs necessary for research to be Afro-centric. The key to the Afro-centric idea is the orientation to data, not the data itself. The question is where do you stand when you question a text, phenomenon or person? The location of a person asking the questions and the location of people answering them is a central consideration in this research. Asante (2009) "located the terms of Afro-centricity in…linguistic, historical, sociological, and dramatic interpretations of phenomena" (Five Distinguishing Characteristics section, para.1). He claimed Africans understand their condition of social marginalisation, through dialogue about "their own centrality and thus empower themselves to confront their existential and material situations" (Asante, 2009, Five Distinguishing Characteristics section, para. 1).

Afro-centricity stands as both a corrective and a critique. By re-centering African people as agents, the European hegemony in thought and behaviour is denied, and Afro-centricity becomes a critique. Afro-centricity is a revolutionary thrust of gaining empowerment through the reorientation of African interests. Afro-centricity must contest every opportunity for debate and determine Africa's own truth (Asante, 2009).

Recent research in The Gambia and sub-Saharan Africa

A review of ten recent studies, which took place in sub-Saharan Africa (2011-2013), four of them taking place in The Gambia, highlighted that "the major disease in Africa is the systemic attempt to ignore and dismiss the intrinsic value of African culture, customs and practice" (Fritz et al., 2013, p. 86). However, Afro-centricity was not named as part of the research methodology in this work. On the other hand, an important element of Fritz et al.'s (2013) study was discovering ways to shift the emphasis of the research from product driven or goal-orientated to process-orientated, and that the value of the research product should be based on the perspective of the participants. In more 2013 research, the distinction between vertical and horizontal knowledge codes was discussed in an attempt to bring pupils' everyday 'horizontal' knowledge into the school or 'vertical' knowledge system (Cobbett, McLaughlin, & Kiragu, 2013, p. S72). This is a major point of difference between African and Western ways of knowing.

I agreed with Wood (2012) in her research paper "Every Teacher Is a Researcher", where evidence is presented to justify that using values-based action research enabled "teachers to generate indigenous epistemologies and practices that not only are effective in creating sustainable…learning environments for HIV prevention…but also for teaching and learning in general" (p. S19). It was also useful to consider a study which failed to achieve this outcome by examining the reasons for its failure. An ethnographic research project on Gambian languages in education policy (Juffermans & van Camp, 2013) had two methods for collecting data. The first was a writing competition and the second was a focus group. Both methods were rigidly controlled by the researchers despite the research being concerned with ordinary people voicing their opinions. The focus group organized by one

of the researchers was chaired by the district chief, and attended by a number of alkalou (village heads), male elders and 25 parents, mainly fathers. It was noted by the researchers that this group did not enjoy equal speaking rights. Women sat outside the compound where they could overhear the conversation but could make no contribution to the discussion. Furthermore, both the focus group and the researcher became frustrated through misunderstandings and it was "clear that the ethnographer and her ethnographees speak 'different languages'" (Juffermans & van Camp, 2013, p. 154). The researcher used a mainstream Western approach and during the 90 minute discussion became frustrated with the group and repeated her question. The group responded saying they had already answered the question and stated that the interviewer had rejected their responses. This was a case of clashing ideologies and an example of how Western methods differ from Gambian/African traditional ways of being, understanding and speaking.

Another research project undertaken in The Gambia looked at unequal literacy regimes and grassroots spelling practices in peri-urban Gambia, (Juffermans, 2011). The method was based on classic ethnographic fieldwork or 'deep hanging out' in different locations and sections of Gambian society. During the study only one individual's texts were studied. During the research process, this individual and his brother make "suggestive requests for [financial] assistance (but not as payment for any services), and an explanation of his hardship at the time" (Jeffermans, 2011, p. 649). This is quite normal in The Gambia because the presumption is Western people 'doing projects' always have money, which indicates the different positions of Western researchers.

Theories, social learning

Four examples of social learning in sub-Saharan Africa were highlighted by Cundill, Lotz-Sisitka, Mukute, Belay, Shackleton & Kulundu (2014). Wals claimed that social learning has emerged as a new arena of theoretical development and practical application which goes "beyond small groups of people in specific contexts, and becomes located within society as a whole (as cited in Cundill, 2014, p. 39). Cundill et al. wrote that social learning can be a process of change towards sustainability and that sustainability becomes a process of learning. Action research or interventionist designs, they argued, are useful in social learning research. Also significant was the nature of participatory processes which took account of local and traditional knowledge and experiences, as well as inter-generational knowledge sharing as the basis of the exploration. This strengthened the potential for local ownership, reflexivity and innovation. Evaluation was an integral part of both methodologies with both the facilitator and the participants going through a process of thinking. Action research where researchers accept they are 'change agents' in the system in which they work, is a firmly established method in Southern Africa (Cundill et al, 2014, p. 45).

Another difference of recent research in sub-Saharan Africa was the amount of time spent on the research. In most of the reports the research had been conducted over a number of years and also participants were interviewed over a period of a year.

Summary: Part one

An overview of Afro-centricity as well as Pacific and Maori phenomenon and their relevant aspects to indigenous research was the main focus of part one of this chapter. This part also highlighted recent research in The Gambia and why frameworks that will work for people

with different world-views and ways of knowing, or epistemologies, need to be developed

to bridge with Euro-centric theories and models. Looking at Pacific and Maori examples of

indigenous research frameworks justifies this. Far from just theorizing about Afro-centric

paradigms in research, it can be seen from these two examples that Maori and Pacific

philosophy embedded in research frameworks have worked. As discussed, there is not one

single Afro-centric paradigm but a number of ways to bring an Afro-centric perspective to

African research.

Literature review: Part Two

Part two of this literature review introduces other important elements to consider and puts

into practice the Afro-centric research context. These include gender, language and the

education system.

Gender

> The Gambia is a conservative society (i.e. oppressive and exploitative ideas and relations dominate) in which rights of women are continuously violated at home and institutions across the board. While a Woman Act 2010 [10]has been passed, the implementation of the Act has just started. This is because laws are not mere rules and regulations, but that they also have cost implications. There are a number of provisions in the Act that demand resources from employers, the government, and individuals. To even sensitize the people fully about this law requires huge resources and capacities. (Ceesay, 2011, p. 40)

Women in The Gambia are now trained to develop messages through songs, poems and

drama in local languages to effectively communicate information about female

circumcision, to sensitise communities to abandon the practice. Janet Sallah-Njie, the

President of the Female Lawyer's Association in The Gambia said in a statement that

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[10] Woman Act 2010's intention is to implement legal provision of the national policy for the advancement of Gambian women and girls to incorporate and enforce internationally agreed UN and AU protocols and instruments eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.

"FGM/C [Female Genital Mutilation] is a woman's right violation that degrades the women/girls bodily integrity and is harmful to their health" (Sillah, 2010, para. 5). She went on to say that while she applauded the Women's Act 2010, it excluded Article 5 of the Maputo Protocol, which called for the Elimination of All Harmful Practices against Women and Girls.

An ethnographic study (Bellagamba, 2013) discussed Gambian masculinity and social presence in older age, and the male-dominated society in The Gambia. Bellagamba suggested that "Gambian masculinity should not be taken for granted whether in the public arena or in the intimate sphere of family and gender relations….The plurality of models on which the constructions and experiences of masculinity are based, are particularly evident" (p. 365). Gambian peasant women led struggles in the 1980's protesting against patriarchal control over "land labour and agricultural income" (p. 345), which caused conflicts and gender changes in the household.

Gender equity has been an important discussion between Gambian intellectuals and civil society on "polygamy, female genital mutilation, women's access to education, women's political positions, and the role of Islam with regard to women's rights and emancipation" (Bellagamba, 2013, p. 345). This discussion has been female-centric and has not included the experiences of Gambian men. The study focuses on three elderly Gambian men during their transition from a place of strength in their masculinity to submissive dependence on their wives during their older age. Bellagamba claimed that only a robust ethnographic approach on seemingly insufficient activities can shed light on the wider perspective of contemporary African masculinities. Using radical feminist theory can uncover what is

"unseen, under-theorized, and left out in the production of knowledge" (Mohanty, 2005, p. 79).

African women

The African women's movement has made dramatic inroads into the political and policy areas. As an intellectual paradigm, it was only 20 years ago that feminism began to push "into the consciousness of Africa's mainstream scholarly community" (Mama, 2011, p.1) Feminist ethics is based on "equality and justice for women in all spheres of life'" (Mama, 2011, p. 9).

Africa's women, Africa's poor, the oppressed majority have borne the costs of development and modernization. Forje (2003) wrote that there has been an "inadequate representation or neglect of the African women and their contributions to self-determination and independence struggles" (p. 73). There is a challenge for the new intellectual order of Africa to recover empirically the lives and roles of women in the independence struggles. Women have contributed to the transformation and development process and it is crucial to restore their role and story to history. The need is urgent to:

> redefine and enlarge the scope of female gender into reconstruction and reform of the African society in the twenty-first century, to make their roles more inclusive, more comprehensive and more coherent to the ultimate goals of a developed Africa of the present and future. (Forje, 2003, p. 73)

Six years later CODESRIA (2009) wrote that, "the study of women in Africa has … experienced a great leap forward in terms of output, theoretical development and visibility" (para. 2). They attributed these changes to the "adoption of new frameworks such as life-histories, genealogies, religious records, cultural lore and fables, and a focus on women's resistance [as] challeng[ing] the silences on African women in African history"

(CODESRIA, 2009, para. 2). However, despite these efforts and advances in theory and method, the continued marginalization of African women in African research is a source of concern. Forje (2003) wrote that neglecting women in the social sciences poses a serious challenge "in situating the role of the African women in the mainstream development of the continent" (p. 74). Female and male collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches are required "to critically advance social science research and knowledge production in the years ahead" (Forje, 2003, p. 74).

The re-examining of issues from a women's perspective has altered African history more generally. The initial studies during the colonial period showed their loss of power and economic autonomy with the onset of cash crops and their exclusion from the global market place. Studying women's economic contributions meant acknowledging that their innovation was essential to community survival, including their economic activity in agricultural work as well as market vending.

> Research on African women's political activism changed previously accepted ideas of women's passivity…. Research on more recent years has found a proliferation of African women's organizations concerned with bringing peace to conflict-ridden areas, ending female genital cutting or mutilation … and training women for their involvement in national politics. Women's studies programmes have been established at most African universities (Sheldon, 2012, para. 6).

Feminist scholars advanced an argument that women share a history of gender oppression mainly through gender hierarchies. Feminism began its push into the mainstream African scholarly community only twenty years ago. It denoted the struggle to emancipate women from centuries of oppression, exploitation and marginalisation in societies. It called to end patriarchy and to expose, deconstruct and eradicate the many social, personal, political and

economic practices, assumptions and habits that sustain gender inequality and injustice everywhere (Mama, 2011).

The growing African feminist and gender literature reinforced the notion that to transform underdevelopment and the poverty of women in Africa a radical approach is required. "Hence the desire for ... alternative concepts and constructs that would project African realities" (Afonja, 2005, p. 2). African feminists and gender researchers provided strong justifications for an alternative development model, especially for women. They are in search of an intellectual base that enhances capacities for the creation of knowledge.

Poverty and economic underdevelopment cannot be discussed in Africa without referencing the feminisation of poverty and military rule. Militarism cannot be discussed without referring to the atrocities perpetrated against women in Africa's recent conflicts. Feminism speaks loudly to the fate of the silenced majority of excluded, impoverished and excluded women in Africa.

Mama (2011) wrote that despite one of Africa's earliest universities, the Islamic University of Al-Karouine in Fez, Morocco, being started by Fatima Mernessi, gender inequalities in higher education persist. African women are faced with two distinct epistemologies, one representing elite neo-liberal interests and the other expressing Afro-centric feminist thought.

'"Institutions, paradigms, and other elements of the knowledge validation procedure controlled by elite white men constitute the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation process" (Collins, 1990, The Eurocentric, Masculinist Knowledge Validation Process section, para. 1). African "societies reflect elements of a core African value system that

existed prior to [their] ... oppression ... as a result of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid, and other systems of racial domination" (Collins, 1990, The Contours of an Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology section, para. 1).

Analysts of the African experience generally agreed on the fundamental elements of an Afro-centric standpoint. Feminist scholars advanced a similar argument by asserting women share a history of gender oppression through sex/gender hierarchies. These experiences formed the basis of women's standpoints. Afro-centric feminist epistemology is rooted in the every-day experiences of African women and can provide a new perspective because African women believe they "are privy to insights into the behavior of Black people that are absent from the literature (Reviere & Jones-Darrell, 1996, p. 1). Modern democracy in Africa has come to mean representative democracy. But can this be claimed when more than one half of the population is severely under-represented? (CODESRIA 2012).

"African women's activism dates back to the pre-colonial era. Their involvement in the nationalist struggles for independence in most parts of Africa is commonly regarded as the starting point of the decolonisation agenda" (Afonja, 2005, p. 11). "Decolonization and deconstruction are relational concepts in African feminism and some African feminists have provided strong justification that the two are inseparable" (Afonja, 2005, p. 4).

Justine Durgbazah, (2011) Project Manager in the Gender and Parliamentary Affairs Division of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency in South Africa wrote;

> The past few decades in Africa have been characterized by the adoption of international and regional laws aimed at improving the status of women. However, the lack of accountability to honour commitments to gender equality, equity and empowerment of women and girls, coupled with the prevalence of

patriarchal systems, continue to prevent the translation of these policies…into
concrete actions that will positively impact the lives of African women.
(para. 7)

Language

Colonial education brought the promotion of European languages, to the detriment of

African languages. African writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o held a strong view that "the language

of the settler/coloniser was implicated in the 'colonisation of the mind' and [decided he]

would [only] write in his own language of Gikuyu or Ki-Swahili. Ngugi's stance helped

create further space for debate about 'postcolonial' literature, and the role of literature in

colonial education systems" (as cited in Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 91).

If communication among Africans is in the languages of the colonisers, it dismantles

national identity and culture. "Between two nations, the only true and effective

communication has to be effectuated in the two nations' respective languages"

(Megalommatis, 2012, Language section, para. 1). If the communication system of the

European Union was examined, the conclusion would be that communications between two

European countries had been always based exclusively on bilingual exchange. "Who can

imagine a German and an Italian minister communicating in English? Who can picture

English and Dutch ministers communicating in German?" (Megalommatis, 2012, Language

section, para. 2). He wrote that English and French were as alien to Africa as Russian and

Chinese were foreign to the European Union.

National languages are used in daily life in The Gambia, yet at an administrative level

English is used. Megalommatis believed indigenous languages should be administrative

languages and become official languages of African States. English and French should be

abolished. For this to happen there would have to be a vast restructuring of local

educational systems. The Gambian Ministry of Lower and Basic Education have begun this imperative but a systematic effort should follow to materialize policies that would bring a real African Renaissance (Megalommatis, 2012).

"Only a few African countries have … adopt[ed] policies that encourage education in African languages…. [and usually this is] confine[d] to adult literacy training or to primary and secondary school education (Nyamnjoh, n.d., p. 19). Nyamnjoh also noted that "there is hardly a single sub-Saharan African university that offers a full diploma programme with an African language as principal medium of instruction" (p.19). This is a challenge especially when the quest for Western academic qualifications earned abroad have characterised post-colonial Africa. Nyomanjoh pointed out, "The fact that Africans have placed and continue to place a very high premium on getting educated in the west or at local variants, and franchises of European and North American institutions has only compounded the problem" (p. 23).

Seeking a revitalization of Africa, Nguigi argued that "a renaissance of African languages is a necessary step in the restoration of African wholeness". He wrote that the "replacement of native names and language systems with European ones" has been a tragic encounter. Language, he wrote, "is a communal memory bank" and in losing its native languages Africa would "lose its social memory [and] its very identity" (Thiong'o, 2009, p. 165).

Manteaw (2012) maintained that action is required, beginning with increased awareness and understanding that for any sustainable development, there must be a matching desire for Africans to 'unlearn' themselves out of unsustainable lifestyles and practices, which many commentators believe have contributed to current social and ecological predicaments. He suggested a learning quest that challenges schools, teachers, politicians, communities,

businesses, and all change action networks, both formal and non-formal, to work together to respond to the African crisis (Manteaw, 2012). More space for African scholarship based on Africa as a unit of analysis in its own right might see "a critical mass of researchers and non-scholars networking and working together strategically towards achieving the valorisation of marginalised humanity and the creative diversity of being African" (Nyamnjoh, n.d., p. 28). Nyamnjoh asked, "Could the integration of local knowledges into curricula envisage not merely seeking to apply standard scholarly methods on local realities but the careful negotiation and blending of epistemologies?" (p. 37). He went on to ask if African scholars are ready to consider co-producing knowledge with people who had never been to school.

I agreed with Jufferman's and Van Camp's (2013) ethnographic research on the Gambian language-in-education policy, that policy and discourses of language need to be taken into account. Along with other academics, they argued the priority of including African perspectives in language is imperative. However, Juffermans' (2011) research suggested there is only a small concern with literacy production in local languages.

Jufferman (2011) also argued that "the diversity presented in counts of spoken languages (such as Ethnologue's 2009 statement that there are 2110 living languages in Africa) is barely reflected in literacy practices in the public space or in the education systems" (p. 643). He wrote that in much of Africa and the postcolonial world, local languages are not taught as subjects or used in instruction in schools beyond initial grades. This can be explained as colonial status quo and deliberate neo-colonial linguistic imperialism.

> The New Education Policy is highly commendable but unfortunately because of
> the authoritarian political realities such as the horrendous human rights
> violations against Gambian citizens and foreign nationals such as arrests,

dismissals, detention, disappearances and deaths the current education system has not produced students who think critically or creatively. Instead students are prepared to perform well for standardized exams. These exams or more importantly the education system do not prepare students to act locally or to compete globally (Saine & Saine, 2012, p. 315).

Education in Africa

Francis Nyamnjoh (n.d.) critically reflected on the resilience of colonial education in Africa. He wrote that "colonial education is full of "cultural contradictions" that exists between the informal education of family life with its grounding in indigenous languages, customs, and social values, and the formal school education system" (p. 136). The education system conducted in colonial languages, was managed by the state with its orientation toward values and jobs and had little relation to daily life in African communities. Nyamnjoh (n.d.) believed that "beneficiaries of colonial education are expected to aspire to think, look like and be like the white man" (p. 7).

Africa's educational policies have not promoted African ideas and institutions. Education in Africa is a topic of debate throughout political and social arenas. Critical for Africa's future is strengthening education systems and institutions for generating and applying African knowledge (Sawyerr, 2004a). Constantine Ngara (2007) wrote that African ways of knowing have been "denigrated and relegated to the dustbins of curriculum planning of Africa's education systems" (p. 8). Most educational planners have focused on Western-orientated curriculum and schooling with pedagogical and philosophical roots grounded in Western thinking.

> Widespread university education in Africa is essentially a post-colonial phenomenon. ... Only 18 out of 48 countries of sub-Saharan Africa had universities or colleges before 1960. With the approach of political independence or soon thereafter, many African countries regarded the establishment of local universities as a major part of the post-colonial national

> development project. The new universities were to help the new nations build up their capacity to manage and develop their resources, alleviate the poverty of the majority of their people, and close the gap between them and the developed world. (Sawyerr, 2004b, p. 2)

The dire political circumstances in Africa continue to take a large toll on academic institutions in many countries. "The depletion of African public institutions and the ensuing brain drain have had profoundly negative effects on regional institutions of all kinds and … [have not] been mitigated by foreign aid or … global models of 'good governance'" (Mama, 2006, p. 3).

Akilagpa Sawyerr (2004b), Director of Research at the Association of African Universities and former vice-chancellor of the University of Ghana, argued that:

> Autocratic decrees by governments, self-serving technical and policy advice by experts and agencies, and selective funding initiatives by donors cannot be part of a` long-term solution to the problems of higher education in the present circumstances of Africa. (p. 33)

Nyamnjoh (2011) wrote about "the need for Africa to revisit the dominant epistemological underpinnings of Western education, that are not always sensitive to the predicaments and expectations of ordinary Africans" (p. 139). He believed that education in Africa has "internalised a sense of inadequacy (p. 144) and devalued or annihilated African creativity, agency and value systems. African universities might have African personnel but their curricula or pedagogical structures have not been renewed to any real extent. There has been little effort at "domestication…[or an] epistemological shift" (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 147).

Lebakeng (2010) agreed that Euro-centricism had severed African polity and intellectualism, and portrayed African knowledge systems in a negative light. These were

root causes of Africa's underdevelopment. She asserted that indigenous knowledge is the key to sustainable social and economic development. It is through indigenous knowledge the current situation of alienation could be reversed (Sall & Bangirana, 2010a). Lebakeng (2010) claimed, "the growing interest in the potential contribution of indigenous knowledge to sustainable development is becoming manifest at the time when current development models have proven unsuccessful" (p. 25).

The Gambia's new education policy

The New Education Policy is geared toward developing The Gambia's education system so that the economy might meet the needs of the country more effectively. It also focused on gender equity, poverty reduction, and promoting respect for cultural diversity. In principle, the New Policy is a major departure from its pre-colonial and immediate post-colonial roots. The Education Sector Strategic Plan (2006-2015) embodies a Sector Wide Approach (SWAPs) that succinctly delineates existing educational constraints, roles for development partners, current and future challenges and potential solutions to overcome them (Gambia, Department of State for Education, 2006). To this end, the document outlined six Program areas: basic education, secondary education, tertiary education, technical and vocational education, quality assurance, and sector management. Included in the goals of the New Education Policy are:

- Promoting a broad-based education at the basic level for lifelong learning and training

- Encouraging creativity and the development of a critical and analytical mind

- Creating an awareness of the importance of peace, democracy and human rights, duties and responsibilities of the individual in fostering these qualities. (p. 10)

The 2004-2015 New Education Policy included the following policy objectives and quality

and relevance statements:

- Respect for the rights of the individual, cultural diversity, indigenous languages, and knowledge;

- Introduce the teachings of five most commonly used languages-Wolof, Pulaar, Mandinka, Jola, and Sarahule…to be taught at the basic, senior secondary, tertiary, and higher education levels as subjects;

- The preschool curriculum will aim at developing the child through play and prepare the child for the formal education system. The medium of instruction at this level will be in the child's mother tongue/area language;

- During the first three years of basic education (grades 1-3), the medium of instruction will be in the predominant Gambian language of the area in which the child lives. English will be taught as a subject from grade 1 and will be used as a medium of instruction from grade 4. Gambian languages will be taught as subjects from grade 4. (as cited in Jufferman & Van Camp, 2013, p. 144)

Results of Jufferman's and Van Camp's (2013) research, one year after my own study took

place, were that few of these objectives have been implemented in schools across The

Gambia. This means that English remained the dominant medium of instruction at all levels

of education. An outcome of their research was the fact that children beginning school were

thrown into a 'sink or swim' approach which meant only the brightest students were able to

bridge the gap between home and school. I agreed with their main conclusion that

international pedagogical theory therefore cannot be applied in an African context but

needs to be locally situated.

Critical pedagogy

Solutions must be sought to combat the socio-economic and political problems in The

Gambia. One critical way could be to infuse the critical pedagogy model in the classroom,

to encourage research and debate on current and future problems facing The Gambia and

potential solutions. Emphasising accountability and transparency at the primary level are principles which the regime has promised but failed to implement. Potentially, these principles could instill social responsibility and collective good for the nation. Civic participation and responsibility throughout the education system has the potential not only to help students but also to help citizens become aware of democratic principles and practices.

Qur'anic schools

In a study critically assessing The Gambia's New Education Policy (2004-2008) (Saine & Saine, 2012), suggested Qur'anic schools have been marginalized for many years in the education establishment. The New Education Policy in The Gambia attempted to provide training and support for teachers, as well as instruction in the social and economic sciences using both Arabic and English. This could enhance the contributions of Qur'anic schools and their graduates, to national development of The Gambia. Another vital emphasis is girls' education which is an effort to overcome "centuries-old barriers that place undue burdens and challenges on education for girls" (Saine & Saine, 2012, p. 313).

Saine and Saine also suggested there was little evidence that the mission statements and policy objectives of the introduction of local languages into formal school curriculum had been implemented, although during my fieldwork in The Gambia, between March to May, 2011, there was curriculum being developed toward this.

Vision 2020 and United Nations Millennium Development Goals

The United Nations (UN) MDGs set clear targets for The Gambia in the development context. The Gambia faced huge challenges in meeting a number of these goals. There is an

absence of an integrated framework to monitor local progress toward the MDGs which

according to the 2011 UNDP Report, is exacerbated due to lack of institutional capacity

and "serious resource constraints" (Saine & Saine, 2012, p. 316).

> "The Gambia faces serious challenges in its efforts to reliably track the MDGs. There has also been a growing realization by senior government policymakers and other stakeholders that if The Gambia is to attain the MDGs, the capacity of administrative, financial and planning structures at the local level will have to be considerably enhanced…. Effective and efficient delivery of these services is essential if the MDGs are to have a realistic chance of being attained by 2015 " (Sanyang, 2009).

With the current economic and policy approaches, it is difficult to envisage Gambia

realizing the MDGs or their own economic and education reform goals.

1) Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day (insufficient progress)

2) Achieving Universal Primary Education (on track)

3) Promoting Gender Equality and Empower Women (off track)

4) Reducing Child Mortality (not on track)

5) Improving Maternal Health (insufficient progress)

6) Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases (insufficient progress)

7) Ensuring Environmental Sustainability (on track); and

8) Developing a Global Partner for Development (on track). (UNDP, n.d.)

The last point developing a Global Partner for Development has been seriously

compromised with the announcement by President Jammeh of The Gambia's withdrawal

from the Commonwealth in October 2013 (Blair, 2013).

Only (2) (7) and (8) are on track. Progress has been made in the education sector which has increased the opportunity for Gambians to receive education from the primary to university level. A weak economic base with a poor human rights record has denied Gambian people an improved standard of living and quality education despite the rhetoric. A critical holistic education and a development research model for problem solving is crucial, yet attempts to cultivate intellect without changing an unjust society are impossible. In the end, education must produce citizenry that is socially engaged and aware of the dynamics, institutions, and social relations that shape political, economic and cultural systems of domination and subordination (Hooks, 1994).

In The Gambia there is a virtual absence of languages other than English being used in visual communication in the public space, as well as being the medium for education, business and parliament. English language is the sole medium of instruction in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Most Gambians are multilingual, making use of at least two or three languages daily. Standing out from this is that spoken media communication and most newspapers are in English. The only schools where English is not the medium of instruction in The Gambia is Qur'anic education which is in Arabic. The Gambia as an Islamic country also uses Arabic "for initial greetings and prayers, as well as for religious education" (Juffermans & Van Camp, 2013, p. 143).

Summary: Part two

Part two of this chapter highlighted gender, African women, language, education including The Gambia's New Education Policy, Vision 20/20 and the Millennium Development Goals.

With the review of literature completed and the knowledge gap identified, the thesis moves into the next step to discuss the methodology used for the research. The research methodology is an important element because it is a process of decision-making based on the researcher's view of reality. The following chapter discusses the methodology adopted in the research, and the ethics, fieldwork design, and process of analysis.

Chapter Four: Research methodology, design, ethics and analysis

Chapter Four provides a discussion of the 'organic scholar', action research and critical dialogue and its application to Afro-centricity as a means of addressing the complexity of research and policy in Africa. The chapter discusses relevant topics such as the research questions, the philosophical perspective, the research paradigm, the research design and qualitative approaches. The chapter considers the methodological steps, selection of participants, data collection methods and processes, steps in data analysis, ensuring rigour and ethical considerations.

Theoretical perspectives

Underpinned by the philosophy of Gramsci (1971) and his notion of the 'organic scholar', I participated with Gambian/African people going through their protocols, poems, story-telling, songs, their frameworks and different systems of evaluation. Gramsci believed that intellectuals need to develop not only the intellectual capital to engage with and on behalf of the masses, but that the social capital of trust is necessary to bring about community-based liberatory praxis.

Gramsci (1971) distinguished between 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals and commented on the relevance for adult educators engaged in counter-hegemonic activity. In discussing 'traditional' intellectuals, Gramsci spoke directly about those priests, teachers and other functionaries who had, to date, worked directly or indirectly to support the prevailing political system while appearing to retain independence from it. Gramsci proposed a new way of understanding the role of the intellectual, arguing that as new historical conditions and new social classes emerged, new 'organic' intellectuals could be

identified. "Organic intellectuals [are] cultural or educational workers who are experts in legitimation" (Moyo, 2008, p. 425).

Paulo Freire's (1970; 1973) writings involved people in group efforts, identifying their problems and critically assessing the historical roots of their problems to envision a healthier society by developing strategies to achieve their goals. Through participation, people can develop new beliefs in their ability to influence their personal and social spheres. Freire promoted a dialogue approach in which everyone participated as equals and co-learners to create social knowledge. The goal of group dialogue is critical thinking by posing problems in such a way as to have participants uncover root causes of their place in society, the socio-economic, cultural, political, and historical context of personal lives. But critical thinking moves beyond perception towards the actions people take to move beyond powerlessness and gain control over their lives. Freire wrote that knowledge did not come from 'experts' but from the collective knowledge that emerged from a group sharing experiences and understanding the social influences that affect our lives.

Afro-centricity is a theoretical and philosophical perspective and when applied to research can form the essential core of the idea. In research outcomes, the issue of cultural location (see Chapter Two) takes precedence over the topic or data under consideration. "The Afro-centric method suggests cultural and social immersion as opposed to scientific distance…. [and] that the researcher must have some familiarity with history, language, philosophy, and myths of the people (Asante, 1997, p. 88). Consistent with this method, the main body of the research for this paper was conducted in The Gambia.

An African worldview

What are the implications of an African worldview framework? Afro-centricity is an

African initiative taken as a strategic reinvestment in theoretical tools to assist African

transformation. According to Asante (1987), African transformative theory intended to

benefit indigenous communities, must have implicit components that consider:

- Does this research reflect the independent and interconnected nature of the universe?

- How does the research project compensate for the spiritual and material nature of reality?

- How does this research project reflect the communal nature of African people?

- How does this research project access non-material reality?

- How does the research project reflect both the above points and logic?

- How does this research project advance the interest of the African community?

- How does this research contribute to the liberation of African people?

Methodology

Research phases

To conduct quality research for the benefit of Gambian African communities, I had to look

for ways for my research methodology to be meaningful and potentially useful to others,

especially African students. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts that most current indigenous

methodologies are a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices.

The active involvement of researchers informed expectations of:

1) What constitutes research itself

2) Its output

3) Informing the community of the research study's purpose and:

4) The outcome

This created a working relationship in which Gambian peoples' priorities and values were more fully expressed. A sense of empowerment grew as local researchers facilitated, listened, learnt, discussed and shared their knowledge and experience with others. The research offered developing dialogue between researchers, practitioners and policy makers about pushing beyond established epistemological boundaries so as to deliver more social justice to Gambian communities. The dialogue covered an exploration of methods and conversations around Gambian traditional language and knowledge.

Ultimately the research will have a number of stages. This work contributed to the first of them.

Phase one: critique and creating space for dialogue:

- With GESDRI and ERNWACA to discuss the idea, study design, collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, planning and approval, participation and ownership, selection of participants;

- Open-ended interviews with proposed participants; and

- A conversation forum with participants to discuss findings and future studies

Aims of the conversation were:

- To explore the development of a Gambian-centric perspective

- To discuss ethics that are culturally defined and have a Gambian code

- To ensure a genuine incorporation of Gambian views in documents; and

- To explore research methods and styles that are culturally acceptable.

The aims of this action research study in The Gambia were that Gambian research participants would explore and critique dominant research paradigms, using understandings based on pre-colonial and indigenous societies' philosophies, ways of knowing and experiences with colonisation, imperialism and globalisation. The over-arching question was; what does it mean to be African in the 21st Century?

The approach for Phase One was informed by participatory and emancipatory action research methodologies and was based on Asante's (1987, 1988, & 1990) Afro-centric principles as a starting point. The study established this approach to create spaces for sustained quality dialogue to occur in a way that accommodated Gambian knowledge and innovative thinking. Notable here is Agatucci's (n.d.) statement that "traditionally Africans have revered good stories and storytellers, as have most past and present peoples around the world who are rooted in oral cultures and traditions" (para. 1).

Action research

This is a qualitative research study using action research methodology. I chose action research practice because it draws on a wide field of influence, including critical thinking, liberationist thought and feminism. This action research study emphasised full integration of action and reflection, and the increased collaboration between all those involved in the

inquiry, so that the knowledge developed in the inquiry process is directly relevant to the

issues being studied. Thus action research is conducted *by*, *with* and *for* people, rather than

research *on* people (Reason & Bradbury, n.d. para.1).

Action research is an orientation to inquiry rather than a methodology. Reason and

Bradbury (2001) describe action research as:

> A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical
> knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a
> participatory worldview… It seeks to bring together action and reflection,
> theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical
> solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the
> flourishing of individual persons and their communities (p. 1).

Another reason for choosing action research was that this methodology aligned with

Gambian values, by involving the researcher in an active way. Action research is known by

many names, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory

research, and contextual action research or action learning. All are variations on a theme.

To put it simply, action research is learning by doing, which can be described as a spiral of

planning, action, observing and reflecting. "Action research typically involves groups of

participants and co-researchers and co-subjects engaging in cycles of action and critical

reflection" (Reason & Bradbury, n.d., para. 4). Action research can also be viewed as a

means to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It is a holistic approach to problem

solving and allows for several different research tools to be used as the 'project' is

conducted. These various methods, common to the qualitative research paradigm, include

open-ended interviews, keeping a research journal, document collection and analysis,

participant observation, recordings, film and case studies.

The research strategy attempted to reduce the power distance between the dominant (researcher) and subordinate (participant positions). I put myself in the position of student rather than expert. Participants actively contributed to design, execution, analysis, dissemination and application of the research. The Afro-centric criterion shifted the focus to the requirement that the researcher rejected the researcher/subject separation and allowed the actual and inspirational interests of the community to inform the theory and practice. That is, the experiences of the participants became the ultimate authority in determining what was accurate.

Action research: some important characteristics

One defining characteristic of action research is that it looks to the future. Babbie (1986) argued that in contrast to mainstream social science, action research has an emphasis on changing the status quo. Carr and Kemmis (1986) identified three levels of action research;

1) Improving a practice,

2) Contributing to the understanding of that practice and

3) Making a difference to the situation where the practice takes place.

This usually takes place within community groups with a focus to transform a situation. Action research involves the empowering process of conscientisation for all those involved.

Critical dialogue

Adopting a critical dialogue approach to this research implied a transformation of the role of prime researcher as well as that of the research participants. A blend, between interpretive and critical paradigm approaches, was adopted. "Interpretive approaches were used to describe current practices while critical approaches were used to promote critical

understanding and change in practice by the participants" (Trede, Higgs, & Rothwell, 2009, para. 21).

Through a series of critical dialogues using open-ended interviews and a discussion forum, the research provided a platform for people to talk and begin a process to measure their own knowledge. The content was the people with their stories at the centre. From this dialogue emerged a framework of knowledge and stories which could become the genesis of a general model for Gambian/African research. While providing data for the researcher, the conversations also opened questions for the participants about their roles as Africans, which they had not previously considered. So the process was itself partially transformational.

Open-ended interviews and the discussion forum provided an opportunity to begin the thinking required to develop a new Gambian research epistemology. The vision was to provide a measure against which local research and development projects could be judged. Opportunities for participants to reflect on appropriate techniques and practical components enabled participants to reflect and develop their skills and consider trialling new research approaches (see Proposal, p. 209, Chapter Six).

Altogether, I interviewed 21 participants using open-ended interviews and 30 people took part in the conversation forum. The following demographics are from the open-ended interview sample: eleven women and ten men were interviewed. I interviewed participants from higher learning institutions, politicians, women activists, aid workers, researchers, university students and elders. This was a sufficient number of participants as the data collection indicated that many participants shared similar views even though in different dimensions. I did not consider the number of participants to be an issue, as the research was

not intended to gauge frequency but to engage in an inquiry into the foundations and capabilities of using epistemologies as a potential process or an analytical framework for strategic research development in The Gambia. In general, as claimed by Patton (2002), there are no specific rules to determine the sample size of the study. This qualitative inquiry focused on in-depth understanding and detailed data.

After most interviews, spaces for reflection were used to identify problems with the participants. These are the basic principles of Afro-centric paradigm research where indigenous African people have high levels of empowerment, ownership and free and meaningful participation by being part of the research process. This gave Gambian researchers the role of decision makers rather than mere advisors. On-going dialogue was a key ingredient in this action research process to explore particular aspects within the process while participants built their own capacity.

Capacity building through community ownership of a defined problem

I used a capacity development approach in working with a community group of researchers, policy makers and practitioners on a problem they had previously identified, and were working on together, to find ways to address using Gambian epistemologies as a potential process and/or an analytical framework for strategic research development in The Gambia.

The process of addressing the problem involved cycles of reflecting, planning and action.

The action planning and design was addressed by using a capacity development approach, which involved a "commitment to community" with members "defining their goals, needs and priorities" (Kenny, 2007, p. 210). The research study was internally generated, bottom-up in character and involved identifying the constraints that the participants experienced in

realising their basic human rights, and finding ways to strengthen their own ability to overcome causes of poverty and exclusion.

Capacity building through creating opportunities for Gambian development and advancement is about growing a critical mass of Gambian intellectuals and practitioners who have a consciousness about their indigenous roots and responsibilities. It is about developing research and curriculum options that are built around Gambian interests first and foremost.

Pre-field, collective participation

Before I arrived in The Gambia, I consulted with ERNWACA and GESDRI senior researchers sending pre-field interview questions (see Appendix A). Gambian researchers reviewed the interview questions and the only change made was the replacement of the word 'tribe' for 'clan.' These questions were subsequently attached to the letter of invitation to participants. The intention was to video the open-ended interviews and the conversation forum.

I already had established relationships with some ERNWACA and GESDRI researchers and after my arrival I was introduced to other research participants. An important tenet of Afro-centric research is that the inquiry cannot represent the position of a single individual but must be validated by the group involved (Banks, 1992). I have held discussions with Gambian and other African colleagues over the past 20 years of working in Africa about these issues and this research process was discussed by telephone and drafts of the research proposal were read via e-mail by African research colleagues. Primarily an Afro-centric approach was used (Mkabela, 2005), that required forming a relationship with the research

participants and their communities, and ensuring all participants' active involvement and collaboration. This acknowledges that the researcher must be closely integrated with the study to formulate theories of Gambian values and experiences. My Gambian colleagues enthusiastically declared their collective commitment to this study.

Figure 3: Photo of ERNWACA /GESDRI, no 3, Mile 7 Quarters, Bakau. Taken April 07, 2011

Living in The Gambia

I lived with a Gambian family in their family compound where I was received with traditional Gambian values of kindness and immense generosity. Living with a Gambian family was uplifting and gave me a culturally specific approach to understanding Gambian/African phenomena and the relationship between a Gambian/African world-view and my own. Most days after working with participants, I had the opportunity of relaxing with the extended family and was able to have further conversations and clarify anything regarding cultural practices. This experience was in line with Spivak (1993) and provided

"A stream of learning how to unlearn, because my positions were growing and changing so much…I have to really be on my feet learning new things all the time" (p. 24).

Usually Wolof was spoken in the compound. Although I cannot speak the language, when I was involved in the conversations and did not understand, meanings were translated to me. Communication in the compound was accomplished through voice and indirect language.

This, as well as the fieldwork process of the research, was a kind of 'rite of passage,' not dissimilar to the ritual process which was described by Turner (1967). Since the method of 'participant observation' required the researcher to become directly involved in people's daily lives, this role provided access to the world of everyday life from the standpoint of an insider. I've been privileged in The Gambia and taken in as much as a 'stranger' could be.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all interviewees. Ethical responsibility goes beyond the statement of informed consent. The researcher, with ERNWACA, ensured the participants came to no emotional, physical or professional harm because of their participation. The National Coordinator and other senior ERNWACA and GESDRI researchers guided this. Participants were aware of the research imperatives. Numbers have been used to ensure anonymity and protect the identity of those who participated in the study.

Consent

Consent in The Gambia to conduct this research was obtained by community consultation with the National Coordinator of ERNWACA and GESDRI. The research was introduced by ERNWACA and GESDRI through letters of invitation to participate in the study.

Participants told me that sometimes having to sign consent forms made them feel uncomfortable. They told me that for them an oral agreement was more binding and asked the questions: "Why does consent have to be written?" and "Does having it written prove its validity, and if so, in whose context?"

In the Gambian/African context, consent is not only understood at the 'I' and "we' level but is also understood at different levels of relationship, namely, individual, the collective interest of a group and community levels. For me this experience revealed a responsibility for researching using traditional ways of consent that are appropriate and not marginalized in the scientific research process.

Research ethics

My confirmation of PhD candidacy, and my ethics approval took longer than usual, because my methodology was not straightforward. How I was actually going to conduct the research could not be fully explained. What I was asking for, without naming, was the suspension of 'common' epistemological beliefs designed by a particular cultural system. The ethics process taught me a great deal about justification. I had to prove the significance of using an Afro-centric approach. Researchers who had to validate their research at Western universities, to modify accepted Western methodologies and aligned them with indigenous perspectives faced a significant 'ethical' challenge in this regard.

Ethics application number (10/35)

My ethical principles were based on the AUT University (2009) principles of:

- Informed and voluntary consent. As noted above (Consent) was obtained through community consultation.

- Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality minimisation of risk, including limitation of deception. Participants in this research were not named but numbered. Numbering was not in order of interviews so participants could not be identified. Any descriptive material that might have identified participants was removed. I was conscious of the need for transparency and clarity at all times during the research process. My experience and personal bias in the research was clearly stated.

- Social and cultural sensitivity, including commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi, research adequacy, avoidance of conflict of interest. The research took place in partnership with Gambian research communities. They were involved and participated during all stages of the research. (see below for Gambian ethic).

A Gambian ethic

GESDRI and ERNWACA provided written assurance that ethical approval for this research study would not be required in The Gambia (see Appendix B). However, a Gambian ethic suitable for this research was given to me on an earlier visit to the country. These included:

- An understanding that this research is part of a very complex community whole;

- The respect of heritage authority;

- The inclusion of elders;

- The understanding of interconnectedness of all things and a required long term perspective in dealing with research issues; and

- Researchers must act in an appropriate and respectful way to maintain harmony and the balance of the group

Researcher role and relationship with groups

Strong relationships were established between the researcher and all participants. Participants were open, willing and understood the broader vision and application of this work. Having the support and partnership with ERNWACA and GESDRI was an essential part of this research. Without their required time, patience, skills and a clear acknowledgement that ethical and cultural matters are important, this research would not have been possible.

Partners worked together with the development of this proposal and with the research design, selection of research participants, data analysis and dissemination.

Action research evolving

Another component of action research is its evolving nature. This means that during the process of an inquiry, the methodology and focus of the research can change. A reason for this is that the research is participant driven. Patton (2002) notes "research methods tend to be less systematic, more informal, and quite specific to the problem, people, and organization for which the research is undertaken" (p. 221).

Limitations of the research

1) The researcher is clearly positioned as an 'outsider' in going to The Gambia to conduct research

2) Another limitation was that the researcher was a woman, a westerner, a student and English speaking

3) Also because of the volatile political climate there was a lack of trust among Gambian people as any Government criticism might lead to them being arrested

This situation could have impacted on outcomes of the research in a negative way but in view of the topic and the Gambian-centric approach, mentors seemed eager to share their stories.

Methods

First meeting in The Gambia

At my first meeting with ERNWACA and GESDRI, for the first phase of the research study, Gambian protocols, the idea, study design, data collection and analysis, interpretation of data planning and approval, participation and ownership, selection of participants, open ended interviews with proposed participants, and a conversation forum with participants were discussed.

An unexpected request during this first meeting was that there was to be

- No use of camera during any open-ended interviews

- No recordings of interviews

- No consent forms

- Only note taking was allowed

- I was to be accompanied at all interviews by a Gambian researcher

- Participants or mentors could not be named

No reason for this was discussed but the current political situation in The Gambia (see Chapter Two), placed psychological restrictions on the right of free inquiry and it was obvious there was a lack of trust between those involved in the research study about speaking the truth especially in front of others. There were negative consequences for

anyone who was heard giving any criticism of the political situation. I understood that the

above requests were made for my own security and safety as well as the participants'. After

some debate, the ERNWACA and GESDRI National Coordinator decided the open-ended

conversations could be recorded with participants' permission, but emphasis should be on

note taking.

> Feb. 09/2011. Early to the office, letters to participants completed and printed. GESDRI and ERNWACA are distributing no camera, no recording, no consent forms (ironic as consent forms were not part of our plan anyway). A young Gambian researcher is to accompany me to all interviews. I met two young students from the University of The Gambia. We went through the research questions together. They discussed the second question about where people gathered to discuss community issues in older times. They talked about the bantaba being a place where everyone used to gather to discuss issues and reach consensus. Now they said only two or three people speak for the community. The students also talked about questionnaires and how they were not appropriate for African research and interpretation so they didn't count as reliable data (FIELD DIARY).

Selection of participants

Participants were selected from different organisations by ERNWACA and GESDRI

leadership. The researcher, with senior ERNWACA researchers, designed invitation letters

(see Appendix C) and these were sent to eight Public Policy Institutions, twelve Education

Institutions, other Institutions, and other prospective participants including researchers,

practitioners, students, and elders with an overview of the research.

> Feb. 10/2011, First responses. Letters going out today! I've just had a call from ERNWACA and my first interview is tomorrow. Exciting! (FIELD DIARY)

I was given the fulltime use of an office in the ERNWACA/GESDRI building. I met

Mariama and Haddy, the ERNWACA/GESDRI personal assistants, and three students from

the University of The Gambia who spent time with me during the process of the research

and were my cultural mentors. ERNWACA organized most of my open-ended interview

appointments, and the conversation forum as part of the ERNWACA Café series. Some

participants recommended other prospective participants who they knew were interested in

the issues discussed. These prospective participants were discussed with ERNWACA and

followed up by them.

> Feb.11/2011. More positive responses from participants and they sound
> enthusiastic about the goals of the research. A quiet morning in the office
> preparing for my first interview this afternoon (FIELD DIARY).

Open-ended interviews

Most interviews took place in offices of business and education except for three which

occurred in the less formal settings of people's homes. ERNWACA also organized my

transport to most interviews, only for one interview did I use a bush taxi. I was encouraged

never to walk alone. A student from the University of The Gambia in Management and

Finance and an ERNWACA young researcher, accompanied me to seven of the interviews.

I was also given my own mobile phone, which was a huge bonus for communicating with

everybody.

Participants had received the overview and original questions prior to the meetings. I found

the most valuable approach was maximising the desire of the participants to talk and be

listened to. Most said they had never had an opportunity to think and speak about being

Gambian/African or to think about their Gambian 'ways'. Interviews were undertaken at a

place and time designated by participants and continued for as long as the interview was

productive (Weiss, 1994). Some interviews went beyond two hours and some took most of

the day. I tried to follow the interview schedule but in many cases participants 'just wanted

to talk.' Despite there being one 'official' participant, usually there were three or four of the

participants' colleagues and friends in attendance. They all had copies of the original

questions with an overview of the research objectives. This information seemed to offer participants comfortable entry into the topic. With oral agreement from the participants, I digitally tape recorded all sessions except one, and took notes on the process and context in all interviews.

First interview /process in action research

The process in this action research study became significant. Paying attention to the process was key to the study being meaningful for participants as well as ensuring the integrity of the research. One of the advantages of this is that it allowed for an element of surprise, which shaped the research process. Observations and insights, not part of the original research design, arose that could not have been anticipated. During the first interview there were a lot of disruptions. During these gaps in the conversation, I realised my questions seemed inadequate or contextually inappropriate. I realised the original questions might only give a limited vision of possibilities. So the questions became the words in the thesis title and became meta-discussion points which gave the participant 'wider space' to respond. This took the power and framing away from me and I became the prompt. Subsequently these discussion points became the prompts for the conversation forum (Appendix A).

> March 12/2011. My first interview yesterday. I didn't settle well at first. It was obviously the end of the participant's day and also there were a lot of interruptions. I started with the questions, which the participant also had, but they didn't feel right. I realised they needed to be larger so as to evoke 'big picture' responses and thinking. During a major interruption I changed them to discussion points (see Appendix A) and the interview took off!! (FIELD DIARY)

> March 16/2011. Yesterday was a good day for interviews. I had two back to back, which was a lot to digest. Wonderful Gambian dialogue and stories. I was accompanied by the ERNWACA young researcher and her sister who both joined in! The new discussion points are working well. Tomorrow will catch the bus out of town for interviews. Nearly two weeks down with six weeks to

go. I might finish the interviews by the end of four more weeks, then the ERNWACA café or conversation forum (FIELD DIARY).

March 17/2011. St Patrick's Day. Young researcher and I were taken out to the main road to Serrekunda to catch the 'bus' to Bakau. I was jammed in at the back with no escape route anywhere, in the heat, with the van stopping/starting more on board! On arrival no sign of the participant but the word came through he was stuck - trouble on the road apparently (FIELD DIARY).

Collective reflection

Another characteristic of action research is that planning and reflection are collective activities. After most interviews, spaces for reflection were used to identify problems with the participants. This was usually followed by discussion and analysis of that problem with young researchers and others at ERNWACA. This reflection aspect of action research involved rethinking the values and theories that inform actions in particular, traditional, unexamined, habitual and intuitive ways of behaving.

During these reflections, Gambian indigenous knowledge was being integrated into adult literacy with the assistance of the community. These are the basic principles of both action research and the Afro-centric paradigm: research where local people have high levels of empowerment, ownership and free and meaningful participation by being part of the research process. Reflection was an ongoing activity with participants. This gave Gambian researchers the role of decision makers rather than mere advisors.

Conversation forum, collective creation of knowledge

Through actively involving participants in the research process "is to return to the people the legitimacy of the knowledge they are capable of producing through their own verification system, as fully scientific, and the right to use this knowledge…but not dictated by it-as a guide in their own action" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991 p. 15).

The night before the conversation forum was to take place on April 9, 2011, the President announced 'Operation: Clean the Nation Day'. This meant no traffic of any sort was permitted to move between 8 am and 8pm. As the conversation forum had been arranged and publicly advertised prior, there was no way it could be changed to another day. When I arrived just before 8 am I was amazed to see at least thirty people present. They had risen early to attend the ERNWACA café series before the traffic ban was imposed. The National Coordinator believed if there had been no restrictions on travel that day, several more people would have attended.

ERNWACA had publicly promoted the event and had invited as many people as possible from different social science disciplines and the humanities, representatives from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, and the Ministry of Higher Education Research, Science and Technology, the National Training Authority, the University of The Gambia, Gambia College, Madrasah or Qu'ranic Schools, NGOs, policy makers, students of tertiary institutions, the print media and a local film maker (who filmed the event). The purpose was to promote dialogue between the different disciplines through a discussion forum or 'bantaba' at the ERNWACA café. A Professor of Philosophy from Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar and chairperson of the ERNWACA Regional Board was also in attendance. The strategy was that every voice was to be heard and put into dialogical relationship with other voices. The conversation took the form of a traditional bantaba. A member of the ERNWACA scientific committee, who acted as chair for the Café series, introduced me to participants in the discussion forum. I invited the participants to move their chairs into a circle then presented the research, my background and purpose for being there. Influenced by the context of the open-ended interviews I had developed slides (see

Appendix A) to stimulate the lively discussion that followed. As the discussion developed,

I was able to sit down and listen. I found it interesting that the slides I had prepared fitted

easily and naturally into the flowing conversation. At the conclusion of the conversation

forum, the National Coordinator commented that it had been a very 'different' process for

Gambians in the conducting of research.

> April 11/2011. A big weekend with presentation of my research at the conversation forum. It worked really well. I started with the slide 'African Solutions to African Problems.' Some didn't know what it meant. The chair of the proceedings did. Professor from Dakar came and I really appreciated his presence. He talked and quite a lot of it I didn't understand. Maybe I will on the tape when it goes slow. He brought me a bag of CODESRIA latest bulletins which I absolutely appreciated. I wish I could have had a longer dialogue with him about dualism. To the office today to download all the recordings. Some participants at ERNWACA are looking at the data and wanting to write a proposal for Phase Two of this work, so I have my work cut out which is good, why I'm here (FIELD DIARY).

> April 19/2011. ERNWACA putting together the last pieces of the proposal. We have sort of finished the proposal for the next phase to be sent to UNESCO Dakar for perusal and to be sent from ERNWACA Regional office in Bamako, Mali. ERNWACA did the budget, truly participatory work. I went to a little place to get my video of the conversation forum downloaded, which worked, thanks be. The power has been off for two days and no running water (FIELD DIARY).

> FIELD DIARY, April 23/2011. From my new CODESRIA bulletins: Afro-centrism: a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of alienated intellectual discourse - Africanicity: Africans think, speak and do things for themselves - a refusal to be hegemonised by others - Africanicity is an expression of a common will - it is an historically determined rebellion against domination by others. The African Renaissance needs to be translated into actionable programmes. Sitting at ERNWACA with no power but here comes Coordinator, hopefully he will put the generator on (FIELD DIARY).

Participant observation

During the conversation forum, participants were observed in the ERNWACA/GESDRI

main office room. During the open-ended interviews, most participants were observed in

their places of work. This helped me draw contextual meaning and perspectives

unobtainable just from the interview data. Other contexts for interviews (three) were at

participants' homes, often in a comfortable sitting place in the compound. These

observations served as a secondary source of data. Most of the conversations were a shared

experience, and I entered into discussions of knowledge, learning and understanding with

participants.

Participant observation is a research strategy that "simultaneously combines respondent and

informant interviewing, direct participation and observation" (Denzin, 1970, p. 186).

Participant observation provided access to the world of everyday life from the standpoint of

an outsider. It required from the researcher a commitment to acknowledge the perspectives

of those studied, sharing their day to day experiences, building empathy with their way of

looking at and interpreting their world (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003).

Advantages and limitations of participant observation

Some advantages of participant observation are that

- It can provide information

- And can be a less complicated and time consuming

- And can offer data if respondents are unwilling to respond

- It approaches reality in its natural sense

- And can offer first-hand information and can give a wide range of information

Some of the limitations of participant observation can be;

- It is difficult to use when in large groups like the conversation forum

- It cannot give information about the past, or the future and

- It cannot study opinions or attitudes in a direct manner and

- Can be inadequate and laborious and time consuming

- It can also be exposed to the observer's bias especially when the observer is part of the situation

- And there are no control measures for this (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 219)

Unlike traditional social science approaches, this research study aligned the method of scholarly inquiry with the cultural attributes of the group under consideration, in this case, Gambians. The researcher located herself with the people grounded in the culture's world-view, and the research study evolved from that centre. The purpose of such participation is "to develop an insider's view of what is happening" (Patton, 2002, p. 268).

Data collection and analysis

Data collection was in the form of text from meetings, open-ended interviews with participants and the conversation forum. Field notes, prior journals, documents, stories, poems, art and observation were also used (Creswell, 2007). I could not analyse data immediately after all interviews were finished. I found a lot of interviews profound. I thought about the process and content of each interview slowly, and often over quite a long period of time. The opportunity for self-reflective discourse after interviews with participants helped clarify points and ideas. Having the opportunity to share the data with Gambian participants helped me to recognise and decode Gambian/African nuances. Each interview was captured via written notes and in most cases digital recordings.

The data analysis process, as Creswell (2007) and Patton (2002) wrote, involved the reduction of data into significant statements, or groups of meanings into themes. Based on these themes, I described what the participants expressed and experienced and finally presented the essence of this. Polit and Beck (2008) stressed the idea of the hermeneutic circle in which the researcher moves both between the parts and the whole text under study. This is in order to interpret the authentic meanings of the texts. The final product of the analysis is a pattern "which expresses the relationships among [relational] themes" (Polit & Beck, 2008, p. 534) and is present in all the interviews of texts.

Three methods were used to interpret the themes for precise meanings through collaboration with the participants. 1) The holistic approach; 2) the selective approach; and 3) the line-by-line approach. Using these three methods, the themes were identified from the surface meanings, with the researcher-analyst not looking beyond what the participants said. The next stage was going beyond the semantic data content, to examine the "*underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations-and ideologies" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). Then a contextualizing strategy was used to analyse participants' words in relation to the concepts that they were explaining. This contextualizing strategy clarified the data more coherently and holistically.

Radnor (2001) identified six steps to analyse data in an interpretive study:

1) Order of topics. The researcher prepares the data for analysis during the research design, pre-fieldwork. This evolves from the questions asked of the participants. So there is an arranged structure relevant to the topic despite the uncertainty of findings.

2) Building the categories. The researcher reads the interview transcripts many times for familiarisation of the data. Categories, which begin to emerge from the data, become subheadings to the previously prepared topics.

3) Reading for content. This means the researcher develops main quotes from the transcripts and begins marking the text using code names and category numbers.

4) Completing the coded sheets with code names and the category numbers transferred to the earlier categories.

5) Generating the coded transcripts by using a word processor and copies and pastes the marked quotes from each interview transcript into the constructed categories. These marked quotes often appear in several categories as they contain information relevant to more than one category.

6) Analysis for interpretation of data where the researcher reads the categorized data to find nuances of meanings. The research interprets the findings and writes a summary of statements for each category. The researcher forms a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The opportunity while in The Gambia to have self-reflective discourse with participants helped clarify points and ideas and were a sounding board to check themes. One participant wrote two papers that extended the ideas exchanged in his interview (see Appendix D). I did have an advantage of being an outsider/insider. The process and content of each theme was thought about slowly and often over a long period of time. I thought about the depth of what participants were really saying.

Qualitative analysis process

The purpose of analysing data, Polit and Beck (2008) wrote, is "to organize, provide structure to, and elicit meaning from the research data" (p. 507), and to answer the research question of the study. Also the analysis is carried out to develop categories and meaningful

themes from the narrative texts. Leininger (1985) identified a theme as "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (p. 60). Recovering themes that are embodied in the texts is called "thematic analysis" (van Manen 1990, p. 78).

It was exciting to read and reread the transcripts, identify and highlight significant sentences and phrases that could potentially answer the research question. I also began to label similar, or meaning the same, phrases to identify concepts. I clustered related concepts into groups or a set of categories. Patton (2002) claimed that, "developing some manageable classification or coding scheme is the first step of analysis" (p. 465). This organized my data for further analysis using computer software NVivo Version 10.

The use of computer software was decided to facilitate learning from the data and uncover aspects that might have remained hidden. Bazeley (2007) explained:

> The computer's capacity for recording, sorting, matching and linking can be harnessed by the researcher to assist in answering their research questions from the data, without losing access to the source data or contexts from which the data have come. (p. 2)

Bazeley also asserted that using computer software demonstrated rigour because by using the software, the researcher is meticulous and conscientious.

Using NVivo10, I created categories into separate 'parent' nodes; then I cut and pasted relevant phrases and concepts from the transcripts into each category. I continued to read and re-read these categories, continually asking what participants meant by their words with each node picking up a collection of statements. This meant I delved more deeply into

the data and this assisted me to further separate each category into sub-categories or group

sets with the nodes or themes grouped into something else (see Figure 4, p. 126).

Using the ' e-draw mind map' (computer download) the group sets of nodes were further

analysed into groups of concepts. Essential in these nodes were the representative

comments that best captured the Gambian voices. The researcher, aware of respecting

participants' contributions and given the honour of utilising what had been said, shifted the

focus from individual knower to the perspectives of groups or communities, all with a value

and vision, for longer term.

Following this, I read and re-read the categories and group sets to bring out the thematic

aspects of the phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) suggested three approaches towards this:

1) In the wholistic or sententious approach we…ask, *What sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole?*

2) In the selective or highlighting approach we…ask, *What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?*

3) In the detailed reading [or line-by-line] approach we…asked *What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?* (p. 93)

This ordered and complied the thematic statements into appropriate themes to represent

what the participants' voices said in response to the inquiry. Re-visiting and re-analysing

these themes continued until they became established. Interpreting narrative conversations

required patience and time.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of multiple research methods, data sources, theoretical perspectives and investigators. It can be a way of overcoming any weakness of one data source or method. There are basically four types of triangulation

1) Data triangulation which has three subtypes; space, time and person. Person analysis can have three levels; interactive, collective and aggregate;

2) Investigator triangulation;

3) Theory triangulation;

4) Methodological triangulation;

This action research study used a number of forms of data triangulation which included collective person analysis. For example, after interviews and the conversation forum, the use of reflexive conversations did incorporate changes as Denzin (1989) wrote "that data triangulation seldom yields a single, coherent, consistent picture of the situation being studied" (p. 239). This means the triangulation of data is indefinite and open ended

Triangulation data in this research study involved comparing and cross checking the data (Patton, 2002) by:

- Comparing observational data with interview data

- What people said in the public forum and what people said during the open-ended interviews

- Checking for consistency of what participants said about similar things

- Comparing the perspectives of people from different points of view for example, students, elders, government and other views expressed by people not involved in the study

I validated the information received from open-ended interviews by checking literature and other written evidence that corroborated interview data. The triangulation of data sources in qualitative methods does not often lead to a consistent picture. Observational data can provide different outcomes than interview data. However, overall patterns of data from the different sources can contribute to the overall credibility of findings (Patton, 2002).

Validity, objectivity, reliability and partiality or ensuring rigour

Action research addresses an issue of a specific community. This has implications for the type of knowledge generated. Instead of the researcher identifying a research question coming from a theoretical context, and then practising it in the field, action research reverses this sequence as the question comes from the participant community.

> Thus, the usual theory to practice sequence for formulating research is reversed. And 'theory' here might be the cause-and-effect explanations of participants in a given context or what had been named 'tacit knowledge' and 'local theory' rather than 'general knowledge' or 'scientific theory. (Elden & Chishom, 1993, p. 127)

This reversal had major implications for this thesis. I began the study with general African theory reviews until it became evident that the focus of the research was dependent on the participants' views.

There is no doubt that researchers bring their own perspective to their research. Lather (1986), suggested research should always be recognised as "socially constructed, historically embedded and valuation based" (p. 439). Lather went on to explain four strategies to establish 'data-trustworthiness' in research. She begins with triangulation

followed by systematised reflexivity, with the researcher explaining thoughts prior to the research and how the research itself modifies the researcher's ideas. The third strategy is face validity by showing participants' emerging data and interpretations for their examination. The fourth she suggests is catalytic validity, which asks if the research process was a catalyst bringing more knowledge about the topic, with a determination for change to the participants (Lather, 1986). This research study demonstrates Lather's four strategies.

To ensure rigour the researcher should be conscious of appropriate pacing of the research. This was challenging for my research as I had only two months in The Gambia to carry out the field-study. Morse and Richards (2002) suggested that the researcher should not rush through the project until the data is thick, rich, replicated and saturated. Ongoing reflection and dialogue with the participants enabled identification of the many issues and values which contributed to a deeper understanding of the study. The commitment was there to take both action and reflection steps.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the theoretical approaches, methodology, methods design and ethical considerations of the research. It discussed the open-ended interviews and the conversation forum as well as other practical issues. It outlined the data analysis processes and described the process of reflection that took place with Gambian participants. It also described my experience of living in the Gambia.

After an analysis of data was completed the next step is to present the findings. These are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Research analysis/ Gambian African voices/ qualitative findings

This chapter analyses the qualitative findings on 'Re-thinking African Development' based on the perspective of 51 Gambian African people, including researchers, practitioners, students, elders, African knowledge producers, politicians and theoreticians. The three major themes that emerged from the data are:

1) The way things were

2) The way things are

3) The way things could be.

This thesis asks what are the foundations of and capacities for indigenous epistemologies as (a) a potential process and/or (b) an analytical framework for strategic research development in The Gambia?

In response to these questions, this chapter introduces a framework for collective knowledge bases that addresses African problems and solutions and what it means to be African in the 21st century. Conversations with research participants considered a world-view that accurately revealed some traditional aspects of Gambian philosophies. Through dialogue with each other during the research process, participants understood knowledge as a means to strengthen the ecological balance through their own kinship systems, and that such knowledge is gained from a way of living and being in the world. These shared narratives and stories are about their understanding and experience of the world.

Notes and reflections of this research process were recorded in my thesis journal in handwritten form, as were other notes I kept of conversations and meetings. The journal was often the place in which I recorded deeper thinking, although I felt restrained in writing personal notes, so often the doubts, challenges and fears were internalised or written in a muted way:

April 18, 2011. One thing that has happened to me is that I have found it
difficult to breathe deeply from my plexus. There is a state of anxiety here and I
have picked up on the vibe. I must stay calm and make the most of every day
and focus on the research. I am experiencing challenges I did not anticipate.
How could I? Nobody spoke of the worsening of what is going on here, I'm
definitely on tricky ground. There are complexities in 'walking the talk.' People
are definitely afraid for their lives. Every night I hear a senior member in the
compound walking up and down continually checking the gate. (FIELD
DIARY) (see Chapter Two, p. 33).

One of my key goals in this research was to allow the voices of the 51 participants to be

heard in all their diversity, knowledge, subtlety and depth. This chapter contains a series of

analytical conclusions resulting from what I found using NVivo Version 10 and 'e-draw

mind map'. Figure 4 below, is a diagram of the main themes, sub-themes and other

epistemological threads that wove throughout the interviews and conversations which serve

as the structure for this chapter.
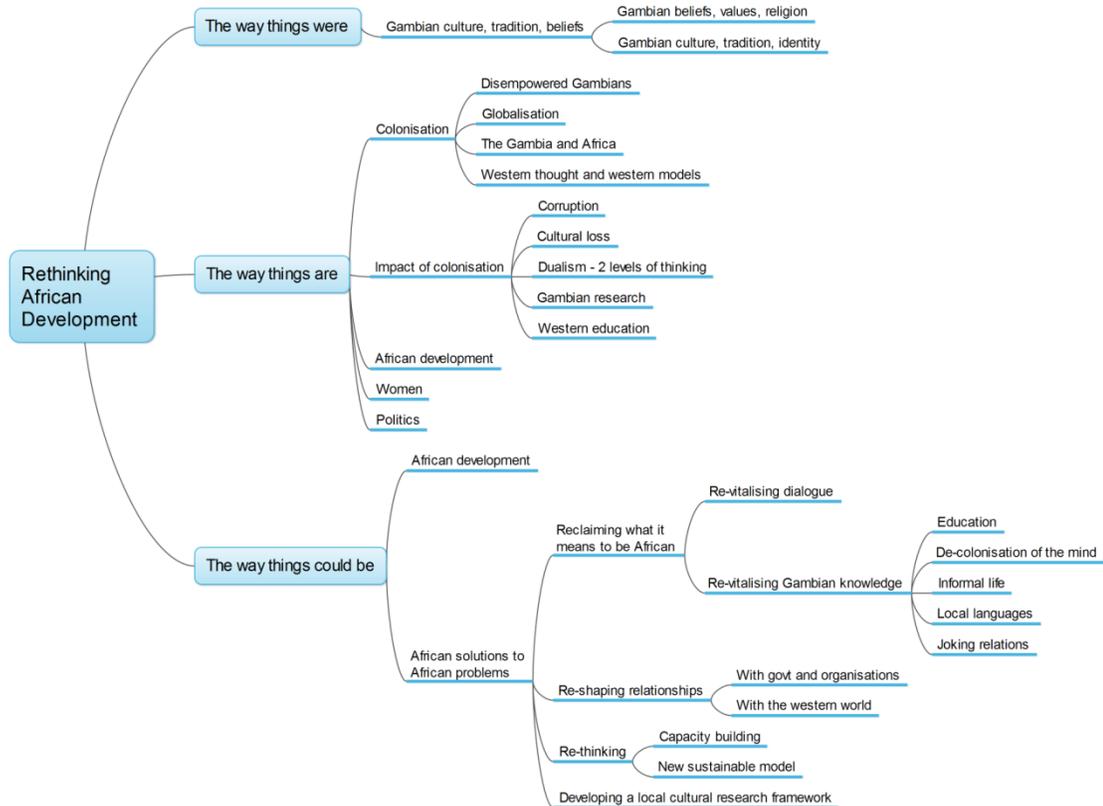
Figure 4: Main themes and sub-themes

Theme one: 'The way things were'

The 'way things were' is divided into two sub-themes;

1) Gambian beliefs, values and religion and

2) Gambian culture, tradition and identity

I found challenges in discussing these two themes separately as there were similar aspects in both. I could not entirely disconnect them, but they are separated for ease of discussion.

1) Gambian beliefs, values and religion

Most participants/mentors/experts interviewed, as well as many at the bantaba or conversation forum, believed that Gambian cultural practices, values and beliefs were fundamental to restoring, maintaining and advancing a Gambian sense of identity and efficacy. Most participants assumed that a strong Gambian identity was a positive link to knowledge, learning and understanding. One participant told a story of his childhood:

> Beauty, gratitude, kindness and generosity. We were guided by these philosophies. I was very lucky, I learned easily. The griot would sing outside the fence. I love music. The first year at school, I won all the governors' prizes for poetry and singing. Beauty, courage and generosity were the themes of most of the songs. These are Gambian virtues (P#13, M).

Participant #13 recalled that in older times "Gambian legends, folk songs and proverbs were expressions of oral literacy" (P#13,M).

At the bantaba a number of people reflected on these Gambian virtues and values:

> We used to have certain values, values like solidarity and trust. We know the values of responsibility, the values of honesty. We know the value of being African (#c/f M).

Another participant noted a key feature of Gambian tradition was "telling the truth, and helping one another" (P#3,F).

Other beliefs from the past were identified by participants who said their experience and culture had been transmitted from one generation to another:

> Generosity, kindness, whatever we did, culture was number one and we got it from our parents (P#17, F).

Being a link in one's family is not a notion specific to Africans, but what was noticeable among participants, was the priority of family, and how it shaped and formulated what was worth knowing and continued. Knowledge for some participants became a thread of what was respected and what was practised before. Participants spoke of themselves as part of a long line linking them to their African forefathers in a chain of cultural continuity:

> Yes, I practise traditional Gambian beliefs in my family. We have consultations. The father calls the family together. The first-born inherits the father - that's the circular thinking - we don't grow up and go away. We have extended families. The brothers stay together and the elder son assumes the responsibilities. He is the father figure, responsible for a lot. As early as when I was an unqualified teacher, I had to give support and provide food for the family. Certain responsibilities were transferred to me. Once you have the means, you have to give back. (P#7, M)

But other participants talked about their heritage, as in the traditional past, as a societal connective or the cultural way in which members of Gambian society related to one another. They valued such things as family ties, traditional values and knowledge, respect for elders, neighbourly support (participant #3&2); but participant #17 reminded them that:

> We must hold on to our traditions and values in the face of Western influence. Values like being genuine and telling the truth. Let us hold on to our grandmother's stories (P#17, F).

In support of holding on to traditions and values, four participants (#13, #3, #4 & Pc/f,M) including one of the elders noted that trust, humility and generosity were essential virtues. One participant recognised that their traditional society was founded on a: "community of shared beliefs and the great value of communal belonging" (P#3,F).

A spiritual context surfaced during interviews with participants. Their perspectives were based on the African Gambian worldview. A woman elder participant referred to this when she introduced her grandson to me, introducing the little boy as her father. The child had been named the same as the father.[11] There are various expressions like this surrounding the relations between the living, the dead and the yet-unborn which are part of the philosophy behind the linkage of Gambian African people to their ancestors.

Some participants told me they have a body of knowledge constructed and reconstructed from generation to generation acquired and shaped by spiritual forces, including environment, gods and ancestors. Over space and time this brings the continuity of specific cultural practices, cultural morality and cultural epistemology. These are the logical keys as to how knowledge is passed down. A participant at the conversation forum explained and took it further:

> Our spiritual values and practice originated from our environment and is part of our daily lives. We have been born into it and it is essentially an oral tradition passed down through mythology and stories (P,c/f,M)

Some participants went on to talk about religion and the immense intellectual impact of Islam on traditional African thought. Participant #7 gave some historical background:

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[11] The name Pa'baboudou given to the male child after the death of a male elder in the family and it means 'our father has returned.' There is a constant link between the ancestors, the unborn and the living.

> Islam only came to The Gambia in the 9th century. Islam means peace and Gambian, Guinea and Senegalese people are blessed because of it. It's a simple way of life and any problems have been caused through the interpretation of the Koran. We are peaceful people, we pray five times a day and after we pray we relax and enjoy ourselves. (P#7, M).

In sharp contrast, a female participant concluded that:

> Islam's emphasis clashed with the traditional African concept of God (P#6,F).

> Now our culture is segregated through religion. Visionaries, and this dialogue, help us to see how we can move differences and come back to ourselves (#cf/M).

2) Gambian culture, tradition and identity

Participants believed that traditional African knowledge continued to prove its viability and strength through sustainability, self-reliance and cost effectiveness. Also they agreed that the most vibrant sector of Gambian economies is the informal sector. The survival of the informal sector has taken place against the odds and its survival is a testimony to the strong capacity of Gambian African resilience in fields such as business, management, banking and hospitality. Some participants said the traditional and indigenous African worldview had been subsumed first by Islam and second by the traumatic dissemination of Western 'scientific tradition' through colonisation. These changes had subjugated the participatory Gambian African tradition and had created a formal / informal knowledge gap in Gambian society. Participant #7 believed:

> These conflicting systems have stifled us. We are uncertain about who we are.

> One of the major problems in The Gambia is the knowledge gap - the main populace belongs to the informal sector and is illiterate (P#7,M).

Participants considered the question of how local traditional knowledge practices could interrogate and enrich local, national and international trans-cultural debates.

Participant #2 took up a similar theme discussing Gambian traditional peace making between families and clan groups:

> This prevented, during times of war, people killing each other (P#2, F).

Participant # 9 elaborated further on this tradition:

> Joking relations was part of our culture. I'm a Fula and between ethnic groups, or sometimes in families, if for example my name is Jallow and someone else is called say, Bah, we would say our name is better. We have a joking relationship. It's funny and we laugh.
>
> The Mandinka have joking relations, for example, two guys want to fight, some-one asks them to identify themselves. Once identified they start joking and peace would be restored. This still works in some parts but it is fading out (P#9, M).

Some mentors at the conversation forum agreed that traditional methods of instilling moral and social behaviour such as:

> Story telling and proverbs were critical in Gambian society. My mother, through the extended family system taught us morals, a sense of belonging, also a sense of fear. We were told not to speak to strangers and to always be respectful. We were told about the 'ginns' they would frighten you if you misbehaved. The ginns have gone now. (P.c/f. F) [12]

Participants agreed they were struggling to find a new vision, and concrete strategies for achieving it, but that the strategic issue of traditional culture in Gambia and Africa's progress was gaining momentum. Yet they said that African policy makers and leaders, fifty years after colonial rule, have not embraced culture as a strategic policy-making ingredient.

Many of the participants discussed the survival of informal culture in The Gambia and agreed this was not grounded in the vocabulary and imagery found in education, literature

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[12] Ginns are some kind of ghost.

or governance structures. They said traditional modes of knowing and acting among their

culture and other African cultures have been divided by European modes of knowing.

As participant #11 said:

> Its survival (informal sector) is a strong testimony of traditional African
> indigenous knowledge, which persists. The community is a source of strength
> for indigenous knowledge production.
>
> Belief is the product of our traditional culture, while knowledge is believed to
> be the product of science. There is something we have lost (P#1, M).
>
> When I was growing up everyone who lived in the neighbourhood brought up
> the children. We wouldn't dare to be naughty because we would be beaten. Now
> you cannot beat other people's children. (P#11, F).

Participants discussed whether a true pedagogy of liberation might restore African dignity

as a basis for the advancement of true development. They believed that their culture and

values had not been integrated into the communication exchange of daily life, such as

newspapers, education systems, the law and so on. Some mentors also expressed their

priorities with regard to the land and how that informed them. As Participant # 9 noted:

> Our traditional culture as well as our physical geography is our foundation.
> Using our traditional culture should be part of our problem-solving and our
> knowledge-building.
>
> Through agriculture we have traditional ways, which we value. Like producing
> what we eat and eating what we produce. We used to have rice, millet and cous.
> We still eat rice but it is imported (P#9,M).

Most participants agreed that it was time for traditional African heritage to inform the

development of the continent's renaissance which they believed inspired creativity,

assertiveness, and independent thinking. However, they believed that African patterns of

thought were being lost in the trance of modern culture and those most contemporary

accounts of African cultures and experiences had been generated from the insensitive position of power and quest for convergence and homogeneity.

Most participants believed that it was essential to work hard to determine what was significant from the point of view of the people. Understanding anything about The Gambia was tied to their surroundings, which included language, customs, geography, iconic traditions and the ordinary practices of people. A participant from the conversation forum summed it up by saying:

> Traditional culture tells us who we are. Let us embrace ours. Africans must realise their own potential, their fundamental truth. (c/f,M)

Participants confirmed that African people are questioning their culture in terms of their advancement. They believed that the strategic issue of culture in Africa's progress is gaining momentum in The Gambia. They overwhelmingly agreed with participant # 13 who said:

> It is only through knowledge of African cultural and philosophical development, and African voices, that appropriate systems of justice and governance can be developed for Africa to enter a category of its own. (P#13, M).

Many participants were also mindful that there was still a danger that independent and non-Western voices would not be given the attention they deserve and those who strayed too far from the current established world-view would be ostracised. Participant #9 believed that:

> The collateral damage of colonisation is the erasure of indigenous peoples' cultural memory (P#9,M).

Most participants had many ideas on how traditional ways could improve the informal

community to become more active and politically conscious; three participants gave

examples:

> National discussions, before the current social set-up, in traditional times, was
> the bantaba where villagers gathered to discuss serious issues. Everybody
> gathered and the issues were presented-elders, alkali and young ones (P#1,M).

> Our African systems were not formalised on critical decisions.

> For instance, the bantaba in the village, often under a big tree, was for village
> gatherings to discuss issues and concerns. In those days the Alkali who was and
> still is the religious head of the village, and traditionally male, would call
> through the messenger hitting the talking drums and everyone would gather at
> the bantaba (P#3,F).

> The bantaba, where there was no chairperson or secretary. Everyone would sit
> together to discuss what needed to be done. We would find ways of solving
> problems, chatting and laughing. In the old days outcomes were positive
> because everyone had to agree so a consensus was always reached. Nobody
> could complain, as they were all responsible for whatever decision was reached
> (P#9,M).

Participant #3 lamented the loss of the traditional bantaba:

> When you pass an elder sitting at the bantaba, you acknowledge them. You put
> your cigarette out because of respect you show to your elders, 'because an elder
> sitting on the floor sees further than a child sitting up a tree' (P#3, F).

While participant #4 concluded:

> It's an issue of our identity (P#4F).

Most participants agreed that since the time of colonial encounters the Gambians continue

to struggle to define themselves in cultural and political terms. As participant #1 said:

"Who are we?"

> We know we are Gambian, African. We see Africa. In the past Nkrumah tried to use Ghana's wealth for the formation of the United States of Africa in our liberation struggles. Cheikh Anta Diop, University of Dakar, has been a big influence. He worked hard to define us. African nationalism was an imagined freedom and decolonisation was the term to define this.
>
> We have a worthy civilization, look at Egypt, Timbuktu, Ethiopia and Sudan. They were significant African kingdoms, the Jolof Kingdom, Songay etc. We are all connected to these (P#1,M).

Participants in general recognised indigenous or traditional knowledge systems as legitimate knowledge. They identified the knowledge gap between the formal and informal in their society and commented on their loss of identity. An overwhelming impression was that despite their very real talk of the erosion of their traditions and values there was also a very strong sense of solidarity, commitment, hope and goodwill across the generations.

Theme two: Current African development or 'the way things are'

This was the greatest discussion point amongst participants. In Figure 4 (p. 126), under this theme, there are five sub-themes and within these are a number of epistemological threads which will be identified.

Colonisation

Participant # 13 voiced his concern when he said:

> Gambians are confused. Materialism has set in and the traditional, strong stable Gambian is losing his balance. (P#13, M.)

The conversations focused on three main concepts of colonisation: colonisation of power, colonisation of knowledge and colonisation of being. Participants commented on the violence in African history, which justified slavery, colonial conquest, dispossession,

imprisonment, rape, shooting and killing. They believed this had been bequeathed as a mode of governance in some African countries, including their own.

Participants discussed the impact the colonial order had on the African continent and African minds since the beginning of colonial encounters. They believed that the complex situation in The Gambia currently was the result of a long history of outside interference and on-going internal processes. They mostly agreed that The Gambia's long history of colonisation had dominated Gambian life, mind-set, and politics. During this process many of the local values and institutions had been replaced.

Only one participant said colonialism had improved lives in The Gambia:

> The Gambia is forty-six years old. There is nothing young about being forty-six in Gambia, you are considered old. It is time for us to do something about our selves. We cannot undo colonialism; we have benefited and opportunities have been provided for us to expand our horizons.

> There is improvement in our lives. We have better living standards than our forefathers, for example we have hospitals and doctors (P#8, M).

However, most agreed that colonisation had destroyed traditional African concepts and values, which had originated in pre-colonial Africa. They argued that colonisation had disrupted, distorted and displaced African value systems, world-views, cultures and political systems:

> We blame the West but nobody is absolved. Colonisation was a massive derailment, socially, politically and economically. It undermined our traditional African principles. (P#8, M).

Participants agreed that in most cases the colonisers rejected cultural compromises with the colonised population. As participant #14 explained:

> Colonial ideology denied that it was useful or possible to reconstruct any part of black history in the period before European contact because of the wrong held view that history can be only written from documents. The Senegambia area is

a living testimony of how people can recount their history through generations and centuries of court griots (P#14, M).

Colonisers imposed their own rules to show superiority and maintain order. Participant #8 gave these examples:

> The British were interested in trade rather than the Gambian genius while the French turned Africans into French men and women.

> Colonial strategies like divide and rule are still firmly in place. We have our own tools available, for example the bantaba.

> The colonists divided us in two. Now it is the police and soldiers who are the official go-betweens (P#8, M).

Disempowered Gambians

Many of the participants agreed and believed colonisation disrupted indigenous initiatives by imposing indirect rule. Participants believed this was a reason that had crippled African agency towards progress. What began as colonial encounters in the fifteenth century produced both historical and intellectual realities mediated by inferior-superior relations. Participant #2 explained:

> We need to value ourselves, appreciate our selves, change our perceptions, our attached superiority, inferiority, be educationally aware, become enlightened, change the perception of the lot of the people.

> Shifting the blame from colonisation, moving on to decolonisation of the mind in a relaxed manner, and start thinking and participating for Africa to be present.

> Bring back our self-confidence and respectability by restoring our dignity, our identity (P#2, F).

Most participants generally agreed that the socio-political formation created by colonialists formed the colonial states of citizens and subjects. They believed that:

> Colonisation still lies at the centre of the modern/colonial world and that Europe and America are at the top of the hierarchy and Africa is at the bottom (Pc/f, M).

Many also believed that colonisation had obstructed the internal process of state formation and development and left legacies of corruption and political instability:

If the Western Governments really wanted to help!

The current crop of African leaders cannot have their way, imposing their will on the people. You can no longer kill your people with impunity.

Our leaders are just replacing the colonisers. They are not ruling in the interests of the people.

Why have some African Nationalists, like in The Gambia, failed to govern without resorting to violence? (P#8, M).

Colonial governments were imposed on African societies like The Gambia by armed force. Some participants blamed Africans themselves for creating new forms of oppression and exploitation of one another and most participants agreed that post-colonial states in Africa like The Gambia had done nothing to restructure inherited colonial state systems and make them accountable to the African people. Since the departure of colonial masters many African political elites, as in The Gambia, have accumulated wealth just like their colonisers, while silencing their own citizens. A participant at the bantaba offered his Gambian African perspective:

Human rights and citizenship, for whom? (Pc/f, M)

Other participants (#9 and #8) explained how this was happening:

Colonial power is still in control in The Gambia. The colonials gave us independence, but we're still dependent on colonists, especially in terms of assistance. We still use their language, systems and offices! (P#9,M).

Our leaders are just replacing colonisation, they are not ruling in the interests of the people, otherwise why are they planning kingship and their kids taking over power? Is that fair, is that just? (P#8, M)

Most participants believed that cultural imperialism remained, in terms of a continued belief in the superiority of Western ideas, values, expertise, education and policies. This

had displaced their own Gambian culture by subordinating and colonising their imaginations.

Globalisation

Most participants discussed the popular uprisings shaking the African region and the Middle East at the time of this research in 2011. They believed these were an indicator of ordinary peoples' agency to continue the struggle for democracy. The uprisings resulted in the collapse of dictatorial regimes in Egypt and Tunisia. But the military invasion of Iraq, bombardment of Libya by NATO (March 19, 2011) and the French troops sent to the Ivory Coast (April 11, 2011) raised questions for some participants, that in the name of humanitarian intervention to introduce democracy and human rights, global neo-liberal imperial interests were quick to respond; especially when countries were endowed with oil, gas or diamonds.

One participant referred to the problems in the Ivory Coast:

> Look at the Ivory Coast. People did not die for humanity's sake but because of one person holding on to power. One thousand people killed. This was power play in the French interest.

> We need visionary people, strategic thinkers. We will never develop as long as we kill each other (P#16, M).

Some participants referred to these uprisings as 'The Face-book Revolution", and heralded them as the beginning of the 'second independence,' directly fighting against globalisation and for freedom which included the restructuring of colonial crafted postcolonial states.

As participant #1 said;

> This is a crucial time in global history and African history. What currently exists is not what Africans aspired for and struggled to achieve (P#1, M)

Most participants agreed that the popular rebellions in Africa were against external control

and rogue regimes in the wake of an aggressive drive by the Western powers to consolidate

their global strength in the name of 'the new world order.' As participant #8 said:

> Our leaders are acting like Bush and want others to follow their lead. For
> example, Wade (Senegalese President in 2011) in Senegal wants us to follow
> his lead. We cannot achieve democracy like New Zealand and Australia. We
> cannot even cooperate regionally.

> The West patronises Third World countries by setting lower standards for them
> than themselves by telling us that half a loaf is better than no bread. Where is
> the full loaf? (P#8,M)

Africa and The Gambia's position within the process of globalisation entails examining the

relationship between culture and globalisation from an African perspective. Participant #6

described the situation:

> For us, globalisation in its present form implies an ever-increasing process of
> marginalisation. The AU doesn't have the capacity to take control of African
> issues. How can Africa solve its own problems when the AU doesn't step up for
> us? It's an issue. The West controls all our resources. People should not be
> hungry (P#6, F).

Most participants in the conversation forum agreed with this comment about the AU:

> Africa has not intervened in Libya. Why? Because the AU doesn't have the
> capacity to take control of African issues. Capacity building in Africa is a big
> issue (Pc/f, M).

Globalisation has had a potent influence in The Gambia and sub-Saharan Africa according

to Participant #16 who gave this example:

> Africa is part of the world, even though we play a marginal role in world
> affairs. We have little to say at global governance institutions like the World
> Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Even at the G20, Africa has
> only one representative and that is South Africa (p#16, M).

A participant at the conversation forum further explained:

> Globalisation? For instance look at Africa at the United Nations, Europe, America, Asia all have seats on the UN Council. They discuss the problems of Libya and the Ivory Coast. Both are African countries but we have no permanent seat at the UN Security Council, is that fair? The observer status granted the African Union is no compensation. We could stand for Africa with one voice under one umbrella. Imagine solidarity between our 53 states then things would change!! (laughter) (Pc/f, M)

Participant #13 raised an interesting point:

> Globalisation is not properly understood by Africa's thinkers and policy-makers. Africa's leadership needs to understand that globalisation is an irreversible process and confront carefully the awesome task of national and regional self-realisation and self-help (P#13, M).

Participant #13 also noted that there was an absence of any coherent, African framework

for change:

> The popular revolutionary movements have so far failed to articulate a new truly liberating political and economic vision that did not merely replace the original ruling class (P#13, M).

Participants agreed a new form of approach was necessary to understand traditional African

cultures. Participant #16 made a plea:

> We must work hard to determine what is significant from the point of view of our people. Firstly by understanding our surroundings, which includes language, customs, geography and traditions (P#16, M).

The Gambia and Africa

Participants discussed the fact that Gambia, like other African states, was established as an

artificial creation of colonial power. A participant at the conversation forum noted:

> When England took Gambia, the Frenchmen pleaded, give me Gambia and I'll give you the Ivory Coast. This perspective has to change, and it is not easy to change, but we need radical change (Pc/f, M)

Research participant #16 made a further comment:

> The partition of Africa was run by Europeans all fighting for Africa. The issues
> were brought about by man, both in The Gambia and Africa (P#16,M).

Discussing the partition between The Gambia and Senegal, one of the group accompanying

Participant #5 told his story:

> The border between Gambia and Senegal is in place. Senegal says we the
> Gambians are different even if we are the same people and have everything in
> common. Now Senegal and Gambia cannot live together. Once I could cycle
> across the border into Senegal to buy food. Now they arrest you (P#5,M).

Colonial boundaries have significant consequences for local people, eg. Nomad farmers,

who can no longer wander across national borders which take no cognisance of the same

people who have everything in common without being arrested (P#5,M).

Participant #13 added to this debate by asserting that Western ideas maintain the existing

global order which continues to serve the interests of global capital rather than the interests

of African people;

> Power games, we rely on the West for support. A greedy phenomenon it came
> from Mars! Economics is about self-interest to protect the juice. It made it
> easier, the consequences, unimaginable.

> Look at our present situation, the north, the old guard are depending on this
> privilege, not just controlling the resources but enjoying supremacy of mind,
> misguided by greed and power.

> We didn't have a transition in Africa; the farmer became the Minister, too
> quick, we had no time to learn and the people were kept out. We need to kill the
> fear and the notion of being African. Bring in the influences buried in my
> culture and let our receptors decode (P#13,M).

Participant # 14 contributed to this conversation with his historical reasoning:

> I was a teenager in the mid-sixties and had to have an open mind. I read widely, because people looked up to me. Africa had just been liberated. Nkrumah, Nasser in the 60's, riots, Black Panthers in America, we had to think again who we were. Who were we going to follow?
>
> Who are we going to follow? China, Japan, Singapore? Should we look and see how they're doing? Would they set us on the path? Do we know who we are, being Gambian? Being African? (P#14,M).

African identity or identities, some participants agreed, were products of complex histories but they all agreed with the fact that they still remained hostage to epistemological colonisation.

Western thought and Western models

Several participants agreed that colonisation was the basis for the dissemination of Western modes of knowing in Africa. For Gambians, they agreed that Western influences on issues such as language, ideas, globalisation, academic discourse and law still prevail.

Most participants agreed that the reality of Africa today is that it remained deeply caught within colonial power structures which prevented Africans taking control and responsibility of their social, economic and political destinies. Some participants emphasised that Africans had lost their chance to take their destiny into their own hands through years of colonial bondage. As a participant at the conversation forum asked:

> In the existing governance structures, the idea of an alternative way seems utopian. How can Africa take charge of the future and reposition the world from its own goals? (Pc/f, M).

Participant #13 believed that:

> It is only through knowledge of African cultural and philosophical development and African voices that appropriate systems of justice and governance can be developed for Africa to enter a category of its own (P#13, M).

Participant #2 went on to say:

> Africans need to go back to the bush to be reminded. The moment we fail to look within, we cast our eye outside. Knowing our identity is empowering. We are successfully de-culturising ourselves (P#2, F).

Participants felt that colonisation had impacted on most aspects of African life and had created diverse forms of psychological and intellectual conflict. A participant at the conversation forum pointed out that The Gambia and other African states have yet to serve the interests of their people. They agreed this was not an easy task because of the power of global capital as well as the 'policing' by powerful institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and the World Trade Organisation. Participants talked in depth about the way multinational corporations still controlled the economy in league with governments that ran African affairs from afar through African elites.

> It is a historical reality. Africa was amalgamated into the international system on Western terms (P#13, M).

> The West controls all our resources. How do we change it? People should not be hungry (P#7,M).

There was an overwhelming agreement amongst participants that cultural imperialism remained in terms of a continuing belief in the superiority of Western ideas, values, expertise and policies. They agreed colonisation remained as an invisible power structure that continued to sustain colonial relations of exploitation and domination. Participants also discussed the fact that mental colonisation was the most difficult to decolonise.

Impact of colonisation

Corruption

Only a few brave participants said that civil liberties and human rights were violated

frequently in The Gambia. They said that corruption in The Gambia had become

institutionalised and seemingly 'normal'. Power, corruption and poor governance went

unpunished.

> Corruption is acceptable here. We don't know anything else.

> People are living with fear and discrimination, exploitation and abuse. Enough
> is enough (P#16, M).

Participants described the prevalence of corrupt practices in The Gambia and said it posed

serious developmental problems and that it hampered developmental initiatives.

Research participant #8 and participant #16 commented:

> If people were genuine, corruption would not be a problem (P#8,M).

> We will never develop as long as we kill each other P#16, M).

This problem in The Gambia according to participant #13 was: "inept leadership with a

wanton abuse of office and corrupt practices that plague the country:"

> I was detained for a whole week, invited by the NIA. They locked me up then
> disappeared. I slept there for a week and was accused of lying and forging after
> I reported dishonesty and theft when I worked at the Electoral Commission.
> Power games, psychological warfare (P#13, M).

Participant #14 discussed the personalized use of power by the President:

> Our leadership is corrupt - it is not acceptable, but they don't know anything
> else. It's a copycat system from colonisation (P#14, M)

Corruption and greed means grab as much as you can (P#15,M).

Participant #8 spoke of his concern for his fellow Gambians as he reflected on the process,

challenges and prospects of the democracy process in The Gambia:

> There is no democracy. People are fleeing and poverty is compounded with the lack of freedom and justice. The style of management is poor with enthusiasm for loyalty rather than competence (P#8, M).

Participant #13 summed up the situation by saying and asking the question:

> Once Gambia was known as the 'smiling coast of Africa,' but not any more. Conditions in The Gambia are a mixture of history and transitions of society. Yet where is Gambia?

> Gambians like Francis Edward Small[13] struggled for our liberation so where is this Gambian determination and resilience now?

> When colonisation of the mind stares at only ten guns on the slave ship there are no limits (P#13, M).

These participants were deeply concerned about how colonial violence reproduced itself on

the psyche of African leaders and how it had become a major feature of African and

Gambian postcolonial governance.

Cultural loss

Most participants believed that the idea of development of non-Western countries like their

own, originated with Euro-centrism, which to them implied that most development took

place within the parameters of the capitalist world system. There had been little tolerance

for pre-colonial notions of development that did not resemble those of the Western world.

The Western way of life and culture had been promoted, while everything African had been

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[13] Francis Edward Small agitated for independence as early as 1915. Small internationalised the struggle for liberation when he linked it to the total liberation of the British West African colonies. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1947, the first representative Gambian elected into office

subordinated. Historical understandings that explained the condition of Africans had been

ignored. Participants at the bantaba discussed the consequences of this:

> We have been forced to become dependants. We have been reduced to copycats
> of other people (P, c/f, M).

> We are dependants - our resources are all exploited. Dependency; not only
> economic dependency but a lack of technology. When we begin to realise who
> we are, we might help ourselves (P, c/f, M).

Many participants were vocal about Western modernity and how it had banished their

traditional cultural knowledge to the margins of society; some were unhappy like

Participant #3 who said:

> Society has changed because now it's the nuclear family, especially in the city.
> Society is becoming Westernised.

> We are de-culturalising the people and losing our identity. Our values are
> going.

> Does it suit? Knowing our identity empowers us. We are separating, me from
> myself. Then we become undefined with a mixed personality (P#3,F).

Participant #1 thought that since colonial encounters, colonisation continued to shape

Gambians' everyday life:

> We have our own ways to settle differences. At the village level, the alkali will
> settle things. It's different in the city, despite our own ways of resolution, we go
> to the police (P#1, M).

> We are still told what to do. We lose our languages in the education system
> (P#1, M).

Participant #12 agreed about the loss of languages: "We're losing our languages, two or

three generations down the line, they'll be gone" (P#12, M). Overwhelming response from

participants was about the imposition of Western epistemology which shaped the formative

processes of Gambian subjectivity. Participant #13 offered his substantive rationale:

> We are being modified in a way that reduces the value. Education is devaluing our cultural ways. It's a phenomenon! Both education and democracy are new-found arrangements. These are the ways we are devalued. There are many synthetic words which have no meaning, messages that have no meaning. All this is a transition in society, irregularities and dysfunction (P#13, M).

Participant #17 suggested that the old cultural values were being taken over by the

experience of media which has resulted in the propagation of a fictitious sense of

superiority of other (not African) cultures and peoples:

> The children have nothing inside their hearts. We could take anything because our hearts were big. There was no television. Friends and neighbours were more than TV throughout the day going in and out. Now we don't sit around the fire and tell stories. When I was a child, our elders would lay the story from their past and we were eager to listen. Now it's TV soap operas. Now everyone watches the same things (P#17,F).

Participant #2 agreed and lamented:

> I could have benefited knowing my clan history - story telling and proverbs were critical in Gambian society. Most of the young people do not know proverbs or sayings. All they know now are soap operas. They know more about soap operas than Gambian life (P#2, F).

Some participants were concerned that modernisation was no different from the 'civilising

mission' the basis of which justified colonisation. Participants noted that African culture

had been relegated to the past, yet other participants belonged to the growing movement to

reclaim their proud heritage.

Participant #8 made a plea:

> Now we're in culture shock. Where is Gambia? (P#8, M).

While participant #9 summed up by saying;

> The problem is people now believe their traditions have no value and modernity is best. We have abandoned our culture.

> In olden times we didn't lie. We never lied. We always told the truth. Now, it's the opposite. Why? Because people want to reach where they can't because they want to be somebody. I practise the truth because I represent my family.

> Gambians are very hospitable, for example, during August sometimes we have no food so households take food secretly to people who need help. People used to help one another. It's not the same now. They will say, the people without food are lazy, not because of the circumstances.

> How can we change this? By going back to our culture. Telling the truth, and helping one another. If we went back to these simple things, problems would be minimised. In the old days we were satisfied. We were not greedy, because we worked for everything. Now people expect to get rich overnight. We need sensitisation, to remember our traditional culture and see then what we could achieve.

> Look at what is happening to us! (P#9, M).

Dualism

Three participants commented on how their history had deeply bifurcated their consciousness. A participant at the bantaba described it as: "dualism or dreaming in two languages;"

> We have two histories and two levels of thinking. We know ourselves yet we need help to reshape, reclaim, rework that black is beautiful (P,c/f, M).

> The solutions must come from us (P# c/f, M).

Participant #3 spoke about: 'the conflicts within' and how she was living "another reality" and for her "mental colonisation was the most difficult part of decolonisation." (P#3,F.).

Participant #6 believed education had been a major factor which had embeded Gambian

inferiority:

> Wherever we go, it's English. We believe it does the child more good to speak
> English. We are cornered between two worlds (P#6, F).

Western education

Participants believed that in Gambian learning institutions any Gambian/African agendas

get lost. These institutions failed to promote indigenous knowledge which participants said

colonisation pushed to the margins. Gambian values and aspirations remained outside of

the school, college and university curriculum;

Participant #1 spoke from his perspective:

> We don't speak our own languages at the University of The Gambia.
>
> Our universities (our own) do not produce African knowledge. We are largely
> operating as a Western institution and we operate using Western epistemology
> (P#1, M)

He believed that developing an indigenous knowledge base would be vital to:

> Deal with our realities. I don't think we have fully grasped that we are in a
> wholly different universe to the one that formed the intellectual ideas through
> which we live, act and view the world (P#1, M).

Participants agreed that Western education systems that prevailed in The Gambia put

Africans in contradiction with themselves and continued what were designed to uproot

Africans from their origins. A young student spoke of his concern:

> Development studies? I cannot practise what I learn. The curriculum doesn't
> match the reality on the ground. Learning Western ideology-that's what we
> learn. This cannot serve the needs of our society and it divides us. We want
> scholarship informed by our Gambian experiences. We have been taught to
> value things foreign (P#9, M).

Young participants discussed the fact that their schools, colleges and universities were

Western orientated and produced Westernised graduates who were then alienated from their

Gambian society and Gambian values. Participant #3 was forthright when she said that:

"once people are educated, they are transformed to a different status. Education is not

meant to detach you from your society" (P#3,F).

> Gambian knowledge is subverted in the education system. This has made us
> reject ourselves (P#8,M).

Most participants agreed that education was crucial for the socio-economic development of

society but the irony of the colonial education system had hampered African and Gambian

advancement. As participant #3 remarked:

> Education is devoid of Gambian values. People do not learn African values and
> when our children grow up they do not feel part of Africa - they're alienated.

> Traditional values are part of us - we must incorporate these in education. We
> must revisit our curriculum, deal with our realities (P#3, F).

Participant #8 believed that the:

> African genius is disappearing, all because of the system of education. Look at
> it!

> In 1988, education was watered down. They made a syllabus to introduce skills
> training in primary schools, alongside theory. They taught practical skills so we
> could survive. In the first republic of The Gambia, the Americans brought us
> this education, undermining our development with mediocre people (P#8,M).

At the conversation forum a number of participants referred to the establishment of the

University of The Gambia, which opened in 1998 and began offering courses in March

1999, following a law passed by the National Assembly of The Gambia.

The university, they told me, was the fourth tertiary educational institution in The Gambia:

> There was so much hesitation in the University of The Gambia's development. I was on the university commission but for 8 to 10 years nothing happened. Then with the second commission it took only a year for the cabinet to approve the transition of the St. Mary's (Halifax, Canada) programmes to the University of The Gambia (P# c/f, M).

Participants described how difficult it was for local relevance in teaching and research.

Research participant #12 continued:

> How to break this cycle? We've tried different ways but it is difficult to convince people about the future so we spend money on what we know rather than the unknown (P#12, M).

And participant #17 summed up when she said:

> Education that comes from the outside shifts the attitudes and children adopt the Western way of living (P#17,F).

Gambian research

Participants believed that the University of The Gambia had a vital and innovative role to play in their country's development. But the duality of the education system was a big challenge and both education and research encountered big difficulties in attempts to study and interpret current events in The Gambia and on the continent. Participant #12 endorsed this by saying:

> Research is small at the University of The Gambia, and that culture needs to be broken down. Research is not given the kind of status it deserves. If we do get some baseline data, nobody knows where to take it. So research here is very superficial with data collection procedures questionable (P#12, M).

Participant #9 went further saying:

> Policies in The Gambia are not based on research, not based on research evidence. Instead policies are adapted from the 'developed world', for example the Millennium Development Goals (P#9,M).

Participant #6 agreed and added:

> In global solutions, there is no African voice, no Gambian perspective (P#6,M).

Most participants agreed that Euro-centric impositions had become the normal discourse of research, especially in the social sciences. Researchers still found themselves: "reliant on unequal partnerships with well-funded Western scholars or dependence on donor agencies that usually funded research for their own reasons." Participant #1 continued:

> Research needs to be looked at. Gambians need to be engaged. We rely on scholars' exposure at conferences and publishing articles. Some people get to conferences but we never hear back (P#1, M).

Educational development, according to several participants, was mediated by social conditions, such as gender inequalities, health issues like HIV/AIDS crisis, military rule, the effects of long-term brain drain and the way local capacity is diverted into survivalism.

Participant#2 articulated her thoughts:

> Law reforms based on the English systems and colonial schools have alienated a lot of people. A capacity to use knowledge as a resource to address societal needs demands a new kind of knowledge production and dissemination (P#2, F).

Most participants agreed that in this context, the concepts of "academic freedom," "Institutional autonomy" and "social responsibility" assumed new importance.

Participant #10 concluded:

> We should be informed by research results to translate policy into realistic programmes (P#10,M).

African development

One of the biggest hurdles in the development effort is the knowledge deficit. As

Participant #8 said:

> The notion of African development should be relevant to the plight of the people. But who wants development? Or is it that The Gambia doesn't know where it's going? Is there a crisis in development? We have not adopted policies to transform ourselves.
>
> The development industry is big, but it is not driven by what development really is. The notion is imposed from the north, (Europe, USA) but there are two sides.
>
> The systems are not equal: International projects that come down to us, experts who come in to tell us; yet we have all the knowledge and experience (P#8, M).

The participants believed that the emphasis still tended to be on 'outside' experts developing

and designing programs. They agreed it was frustrating to see the continuation of top-down

project after project being implemented which continued to over-ride local knowledge and

expertise. Participant #18 clearly stated that:

> We cannot be independent. The World Bank is funding my project. It is worth US$159,000 and $77,000 of it is going to outside expertise. Our leaders are not prepared to pay us well. We are genuine and educated, and could do the job well.
>
> I am an administrator and I implement loans for government projects. But most projects have conditions attached, because the donors control the projects. The government accepts signed loan agreements with cumbersome rules. For example the Asian Development Bank (ADB), we tendered two years ago to sign contracts, but we had queries looking at the conditions, because we have to pay it back. The government accepted ADB and now they convert the loans into grants, but these are for nothing. For example, we had a grant component

in our project for technical assistance, for an ex-pat who was an expert in quality control. He/she was to train a counterpart, all free with no cost to us, so there would be a Gambian responsible and then he/she was to take two workshops on quality control. But in the projects it's mostly international recruitment. This project paid $US10,000 for the international expert.

The ADB think we don't have the capacity or national competitiveness in bidding.

No wonder we have what is called the 'brain drain' and people do not return because there is no job security and no future for their children. It's very difficult moving forward because we always have to pay off debts. (P#18, F).

Another example of this, was told to me by Participant # 8:

My project is worth US$25 million and S14 million goes to international consultants. It's huge!

These consultants come from the outside, which is a charade.

There is a neglect of local thinking

The knowledge produced at university should be really useful for us, the Africans. Local scholars have learned how to conceal information. It's a useful strategy, to recycle ideas to visiting consultants. The aid establishment today commands much of the intellectual resources devoted to development through its own research agenda (P#8,M).

Participants believed the consultancy culture with the collection of raw data and consultancy reports processed into development policy in Euro-American academies meant that Africans became native informants rather than authentic producers of knowledge that could drive African development.

Participant #18 suggested:

Why not let the expert be from Gambia? We have experts here, and then money does not go out. Sure, they're here and we could pitch them against the international consultants, but the ADB rules are rigid.

We have to develop new ways to negotiate but it seems the interest is small.

We need to invest in training, so we can use our own human resources rather than signing bonds because after one year, an expert goes and also locals who are trained during the projects leave Gambia (P#18,F).

Participants critically reflected on Gambians owning their own development. Participant #20 summed it up by saying:

It's high time we took development into our own hands. Look at Asia it's a good example. The Asian Tigers!

African Gambian development using our own voices and this time making our voices heard. We are usually marginalized. (P#20, F).

Participants agreed that development could not be reduced to simple life problems of hunger, water, scarcity, disease, malnutrition and poverty as these were influenced by broader questions of power, epistemology and identity. Participant # 19 said:

We need new social movements, and we must take account of the irresponsibility of our own African leaders.

We must invest more in education, and traditional knowledge.

Local learning should be made important at the University of The Gambia.

Knowledge requires a serious re-think. We need to design more autonomous spaces, not mediated by an aid agency and not designed to meet their interests. We need quality not quantity. We have an urgent task, which requires vast amounts of knowledge. (P#19,M).

Participants agreed that the development impasse was a crisis of ideas, alternatives and options in an era of a persistent struggle for liberation and self-determination. As participant #6 reflected:

We are trying to encourage open dialogue and a lot of people are trying to adapt to openness. This is challenging when there is a failure of the state to promote

the collective wellbeing of its citizens through behaviour such as repression and corruption. Development needs to be informed by the idea of research to diagnose and formulate the problems in our own Gambia/African way.
(P#6, M)

A participant summed up current development at the conversation forum or bantaba by saying:

> We have discussed important components. We have discussed honesty and facing corruption. We have examined Africa. Money cannot solve everything.
> (P,c/f F)

Politics

A small number of participants at the bantaba or conversation forum believed change despite "the continent undergoing massive upheaval to get change" and "despite the government rhetoric" that:

> Those in power do not want change or there to be any change, as they are too comfortable (Pc/f,M).

Participant #6 threw her hands in the air saying:

> The rhetoric of local government! (P#6,F)

Participant #8 recognised that:

> We have no capacity. Before we are able to handle our own affairs our leaders need to be educated. We need educated leaders who have foresight. Incompetence is the problem. The United Nations and ECOWAS have mishandled us. It is not necessary to kill. The AU and ECOWAS should prevent it. (P#8,M).

Some participants spoke of deaths, executions and disappearances that have been a central theme dominating Gambian life and politics for more than a decade and a half.

Women

There are very strong opinionated women here in The Gambia! (P#6,F).

Participants agreed that a much more radical approach for women in the region was

required. As participant #5 said:

> We need different strategies with science and policy infused with local
> knowledge. Our domestic strategies come from borrowed systems. We try to
> domesticate human rights and gender parity but they come in international
> languages. Our concept is unity, integration. These are the pronouncements but
> we are not sure if the government genuinely believes in these things (P#5, F).

Participant #5 continued:

> We need more clinics with a specific target of looking at women's issues as a
> basis for preparing programme monitoring (P#5,F).

Women participants said the Gambian government had committed to the ideals of gender

equality and the empowerment of women. This was manifested in The Gambia's

commitment to international obligations, including the Convention on the Elimination of all

forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[14] and the Protocol to the African

Charter on the Rights of Women.

However, some participants contended that The Gambia is still a conservative society and

oppressive and exploitative ideas and relations dominated, with rights of women being

continuously violated at home and in institutions across the board. Participant #2 believed

that the "gap between gender theories and policies" reflected the slow integration of these

policies and there "was widespread feminised poverty:"

---

[14] CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It consists of a preamble and 30 articles defining and constituting discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end discrimination. This led to the domestication of CEDAW in local law such as The Gambia Womens' Act 2010. (UNHR, n.d.).

We instill in girls to be slaves - they are the children of the system. The children can be slaves of the elder brothers - it's the system, they are the values of submission. The male is always the king or owner. This is strong in the rural areas (P#2,F).

Participant #18 believed the President had "tried to correct this gap and that:

Free education for girls in public schools is making a difference. However, girls still drop out of school at the senior end after Grade 12. There is no money and boys are still the priority (P#18,F).

Participant #9 who believed, "more girls were now going to school;" articulated a more

optimistic approach:

The girls? In the old days girls were not sent to school. Despite my mother and father being pre-literate, all of my eleven sisters go to Islamic school and they learn about sewing clothes and they also learn to write Arabic (P#9,M).

Most of the female participants said there was a gender hierarchy, which privileged males

over females. In The Gambia, like most human societies, the male was considered the apex.

One participant spoke strongly about this major problem:

And do you think the bantaba is equal? Because at forums now people speak for women and children, so it's not equal any more. The dominant people speak for the women and kids and women do not participate. We need to change the culture back to our traditional beliefs, back to how decisions were made in the old days (P c/f, F).

We're not expected to say anything if you're a woman or a child in a family discussion, but should I shut up? I've got a right to talk but I'm expected to nod and smile (P#6, F).

Research participants generally believed that Gambian women were currently caught in the

crossroads of traditional society and modernity. Gambian women, especially the young,

were conflicted in the true sense of the word.

Some of the female participants told me they believed that gender and patriarchy originated

from Western epistemologies. Participant #18 said:

> African women enjoyed more autonomy predating colonisation. From what I
> know, patriarchy originated from Western language (P#18,F).

Participants believed that African women and Western women related to power and

political participation in different ways. Participant # 6 noted that:

> To increase representation at the local level we have to speak to cultural
> thinking. There is a huge belief in tradition, mother, daughter, granddaughter
> (P#6,F).

Participant #2 said:

> Universal values have made us submissive - we are still at the place where
> women should be seen but not heard (P#2, F).

Participant #3 commented on recent developments and spoke about the changes taking

place:

> There is a change in some of the established Western or colonial power
> relations. For example there is transformation taking place at the Council of
> Chiefs. In the regions, each district has a paramount chief who discusses
> grassroots problems. There are now women who belong to the Council of
> Chiefs. We even have an Alkali who is a woman. This change is empowering
> women (P#3,F).

Participants agreed that change will only come "if we ask why." Participant #6 told this

story:

> In my family it's always been a tradition to break the legs of the turkey before
> cooking. The grand daughter asked her mother why do you break the legs? The
> mother replied because that is our tradition. So I asked my great grandmother
> why do we break the legs of the turkey before cooking? She replied because the
> pan was too short so it was convenient at the time. So it took four generations
> for this to stop! We need to stop and say why! (P#6, F).

Many female participants discussed the long list of violations against women in The Gambia. These included "female genital mutilation (FGM), male child preferences, unfair eating practices, witch-hunting women, especially older unmarried women and widows, child marriages and other arranged marriages." Participant #18 said that one of the most dominant realities against women was:

> Genital mutilation is a bad tradition still practised in The Gambia. A lot of feminised poverty in The Gambia and Africa is attributed to this cultural practice and belief (P#18, F).

Participant #2 told her story of changing this by using traditional ways;

> We use joking relationships to get the female circumcision message across as many villagers are hostile to the change of belief (P#2, F).

Through this practice of FGM, participants believed the Gambian women who practised were co-conspirators in their own oppression. Participant #2 spoke of her concern:

> Women do the circumcision. They say I've had it done so why not you? It's a tradition and they believe it's from the Koran. Show me where it says that? (P#2,F).

> Islam depends on translation - what men tell us. How can we change it? Only by reading and learning ourselves. Only men used to be sent to schools, but it's changing. Women are doing it, but whatever we say, there are certain things we can't do. But some of us (women) will bring it out. No-one will tell me, no Marabout - you are not supposed to talk, you can't wear pants. I will read the Koran and decide for myself. Show me the Koranic verse that says that. This is what it means. Men are no smarter - why should I have his interpretation over mine? It's changing. Sooner or later, we'll have the same standing as men (P#6 F).

Most participants agreed that a much more radical approach was required for woman in The Gambia and in the region.

As participant #18 said:

> We specifically target women and look at their issues to design specific
> programs. The problem is the government ministries and the NGOs don't
> coordinate (P#18, F).

Summary

An elder, Participant #17 summed up this section in her story, (see Appendix E), believing

the main issues facing Gambia today were:

1. The passing of the older generation and the loss of their wisdom.

2. The continued patriarchal control of society and the second-class status of women, in spite of improved education for some.

3. The changing patterns of family relationships, including continued polygamy, fragmented family communities and individualistic life styles

4. The replacement of traditional values and attitudes with materialistic and economic priorities

5. The influence of Western media and ideas on the younger generation

6. The continued power of Western aid agencies over projects they fund

7. A pervasive sense of loss of the (idealised) past and anxiety about the future.

Theme three: African development: The future vision or 'the way things could be'

In this section, Figure 4 (see p. 126) shows there are two sub-themes and fifteen

epistemological threads, some of which are small but important contributions to theme

three.

African development

Participants at the conversation forum discussed: re-thinking, reshaping relationships, and

reclaiming what it means to be African. Participants believed that the global power

structure had prevented the possibilities of meaningful development. They said

Development in Africa could not be fully realised in the absence of an African theoretical

framework.

As a conversation forum participant explained:

> This (discussion) is important, it's a new starting block. There has to be a
> radical change. We have a lot to think about and to talk about changing things.
> Re-think, we have to see, have to imagine, re-think, reclaim, re-work Africa.
> Solutions must come from us. (P,c/f,M).

Participants agreed and another bantaba participant noted that:

> ECOWAS[15] are asking for a truly African strategy, our own research and
> development model. CODESRIA [16] could be a catalyst for research toward
> viable solutions (P,c/f,M).

Another bantaba participant stressed:

> We definitely need new programmes with our own frameworks (P,c/f,M).

And asked a crucial question;

> But how do we adjust the thinking? (P,c/f, M).

Participant #6 thought this could be achieved by:

> Our own belief systems, we have to change, accept new innovations, be well
> informed, to develop Africa in our own way (P#6,F).

Most participants believed there was a development impasse because the development

community had run out of big ideas. However participants at the bantaba were encouraged

by:

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[15] Economic Community of West African States
[16] Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa

> The thinking of ECOWAS and CODESRIA is rational. Re-thinking this current wave of globalisation, rethinking Africa's position, Africa needs its own research and development strategy. A new framework could serve as a rallying point (P,c/f,M).

Participants understood the enormous challenge to change to a different way of seeing and doing things from the familiar way. The prevailing development paradigm was well established and legitimised and mainly based on the modernization theory of the West. A participant at the conversation forum said:

> In the existing governance structures, the idea of an alternative way seems utopian. How can Africa take charge of the future and reposition the world from its own goals? (P,c/f,M).

Most participants agreed that what was required was an entirely new paradigm, with a new strategy or model connecting with Africa's democratic aspirations and social needs. A strategy where Africans are the agents and the means and the end of whatever development is occurring which could co-opt tested elements of other conventional models. A participant from the bantaba commented:

> Re-thinking, re-shaping? Dominant thinking is the world-view but innovation is a two-way street. It's a very important point re-thinking. We have decided here that African problems are not African in origin. Africans must realise their own potential, their own fundamental truth. We've been taught Western ideas.
>
> The shared experience of this research is an opportunity to reflect on the process of what is possible (P,c/f,M).

Gambian participants, through their narratives, suggested they were in between stories. The old story, the account of how they fitted into it was no longer effective. Yet they said they had not learned a new story.

Participants agreed that the knowledge of every group of human beings, acquired and

accumulated through generations of observation, experience and conjecture, is a priceless

legacy for survival.

A research participant in the bantaba discussed a restraint to putting this into practice;

> I like the idea of re-thinking. Innovation is appropriate with development
> coming from us. Back to the grass roots and allow everyone to participate.
> Implement according to what we want.
>
> But we have quite a number of illiterates who need guidance, especially in our
> country. We ask them, what do you want? Not many come up with suggestions;
> they don't have development capacity. It is very difficult to get information
> from the grass roots. It's only possible when people are educated (P,c/f,M).

Most participants believed that development had to be relevant to the "plight of the people"

and that Africa had to "catch up" and a "massive new effort in development is required."

Participant #2 continued:

> We need our own knowledge capacity within Africa and we need to facilitate
> our own African knowledge. There has been a neglect of local thinking in
> development (P#2,F).

Participants generally agreed that the emerging critical thinking accepted the current

development discourse is no longer sustainable and that modernity has created serious

problems in Africa and in The Gambia. They agreed that by re-thinking the dominant

thinking that had informed African development practice required that:

> We need to do something about knowledge and learning. Knowledge of our
> own culture, understanding of what we've gone through with more investment
> in education and knowledge. We Africans have knowledge (P#19,F).

Participants agreed that the challenge of Africa's development was a knowledge challenge,

a challenge of thinking and acting with the people.

African solutions to African problems

Participant #13, thought African solutions to African problems, was nothing more than: "a catch cry," or "a new found statement to baffle our colonisers" but agreed that self-determination for Gambians had become a priority. Central to this position was the observation by most participants that an African identity needed to be established to respond to the massive problems facing Africans. A participant at the conversation forum said:

> African solutions to African problems, I'm not comfortable with this. We cannot solve African problems entirely because we are so inter-connected. They are not entirely African problems because we're so integrated. Everything has a link beyond Africa. We cannot exclusively design our own solutions to our own problems. There are no African solutions to African problems, because we are not independent (P,c/f,M).

Participant #16 and others at the bantaba agreed:

> African problems are not Africa originated. What are the ones we created for ourselves? (P,c/f,M).

> What causes the problem? If you don't start the problem, how can you solve it? (P#16,M).

Other participants disagreed:

> African problems, can be resolved by Africans, ourselves (P#c/f,M).

> What is an African problem? What about ECOWAS, how have they defined African problems? Poverty, famine, aid dependency, war and corruption? There is such a disconnect between the informal and the policy level (P#,c/f,m).

Another bantaba participant asked:

> Western people went in to solve the problem in Libya. Where is the African Union? Where are the African decisions to end the turmoil in Libya?

> Look at the Ivory Coast and Tunisia. Are Africans solving African problems? No; because there is always outside interference. Everybody else is solving African problems (P#c/f,M).

Participant #8 noted:

> No African solutions will find a peaceful solution in the Ivory Coast. It's the second largest economy after Nigeria. It's about jealousy! (P#8,M).

Participant #10 thought that: "some mental decolonisation is overdue to think more broadly about alternatives:"

> In the past we had policies that relied heavily on donor partners. We thought they had the ideas and the money plus technical know-how how to implement everything. They were in the driver's seat. We accepted everything. Over time we see our resolves not realised. It's fundamental, as policies are not localised, not domesticated, not based on our reality so they are not sustained. We should be informed by research results to translate policy into realistic programs. Then we might have some of our own answers to solve our problems (P#10, M).

Participants agreed that African solutions to African problems required the development of new theoretical authentic research frameworks that integrate and institutionalise African/Gambian cultural values. They believed dialogue was a key facilitator of knowledge exchange across the science indigenous divides, through processes which involved discussions about power, decision making and social justice.

Reclaiming what it means to be African

Participants discussed the question of a Gambian epistemology or knowledge system, using their own philosophy with their own epistemic identity. They believed that due to Africa and The Gambia's colonial legacy, they were confronted with establishing their own unique Gambian order of knowledge. They mostly agreed that to do this brought in the question of what it meant to be African:

Now we're talking about an African renaissance. Unless we hold onto our traditions and know ourselves, know who we are, we wouldn't be negotiating power struggles (P#14, M).

The participants considered this epistemological question which evolved during the research process. What does it mean to be African? Is there an African indigenous way of knowing? What meanings are attached when African philosophy is discussed? Can we speak of an indigenous epistemology? What are the implications of an indigenous African Gambian epistemology framework for research and policy?

Look. People design cars with special snow tyres when you drive in Sweden but when you drive in the desert you change the tyres, then why not us? Arabs read the opposite way, the Chinese up and down. Can Gambia lead the way for African research? (P#6, F).

Participant #1 identified another issue and asked the question:

Who are we? How can we experience ourselves in the full? Africans need to know who they are. We need to take destiny into our own hands. We need to do this in our own relaxed manner, start thinking and participating and bring Africa to the present. See we still think what we have here is inferior (P#1,M).

Most participants agreed that by rooting themselves in what is tradition they could escape the enslavement of the past and open up the future:

Local language, family history, dealing with our elders, is all part of me, taught to me by my parents. Research should look at our social aspects. Most of what is done here is American.

Languages, culture, traditions etc., bring back dialogue, what it means to be Gambian. We have to change things on our own, make things our own way, our indigenous way.

An example is that women preserve groundnuts in tall jars. However, it's not called technology, just local ways. We believe knowledge that comes from the West is better. Africans, Gambians need to believe in our own knowledge. Using what's here.

How to re-vitalise knowledge systems? By putting value on our own local systems, we need to change the mindset (P#6,F).

Participant #20 believed to change the mindset:

We need to introduce indigenous knowledge in our education systems. This would give value and help us with our own identity and children could see the value of our own knowledge (P#20, F).

Most participants believed the question of identity for them was drawn from their lives as individuals, their families and communities and their traditional knowledge. Participants agreed that their indigenous knowledge had implications for sustainable development, capacity building and intellectual development for Gambians in the 21st century.

They believed that "resolving theoretical and conceptual issues about the identity of indigenous knowledge is one of the many challenges confronting us as educators, historians, philosophers and policy makers" (P#1,M).

Re-visiting dialogue

Most participants overwhelmingly responded to the research dialogue:

This discussion is very important. It's a new starting block. It is a useful means for our culture to move forward (P#c/f,M).

Thank you very much. This is different to what we are used to. We have discussed very important components. We have discussed honesty and facing corruption. We have to continue to examine Africa through education and technologies. Money cannot solve everything. It cannot solve all African problems in the 21st century (P#c/f,M).

The questions asked have got us thinking and reflecting. Having this space is timely and has added to our own reflection. We have felt unity as a whole at a time when we are losing our power. It's been very honest and very important examining ourselves (P#c/f,M).

Participant #5 summed it up by saying:

> We need much more sensitisation in attitudes about sharing information
> through dialogue, making the public aware and this includes the media. We
> need to create opportunities for the Gambian community to come together to
> share knowledge. This is a gap. We've never had an opportunity. How do we
> break the gap? It's a challenging question (P#5,F).

Participants understood that through the art of dialogue, collectively acknowledging and

respecting each other's opinions with clarity of purpose to transform their own Gambian

identity and struggle for self-determination, was a way to bridge the knowledge gap and

change societies' perceptions.

Re-vitalising Gambian knowledge

Dialogue and critical thinking by participants to re-vitalise their knowledge system was

based on their belief that their traditional indigenous knowledge was disappearing. A

participant at the bantaba spoke of his concern:

> We need to look at my philosophy, Africans must realise their own potential,
> their own fundamental truth (P#c/f,M)

> Indigenous knowledge as part of our frameworks would bring back people's
> life, what identifies us, our culture (P#8, M).

Participants agreed that a shift from the current linear thinking of the local government

approach to a more holistic or bottom-up approach could shift the unequal power balance

between the communities and the government but how to change it?

> The Alkali (chiefs) elders, women - so many intelligent people - but we still
> believe what comes from the West is best. Africans need to believe in their own
> knowledge. How do we change the mindset? Or mentality? What can we do to
> address this problem? There's a food shortage in The Gambia and yet we sell
> peanuts and tomatoes across the border. Let's get these initiatives going, using
> what's here. Re-vitalising knowledge systems, putting value on local systems,
> we buy frozen meat from Mali. All these concepts need to change (P#6, F).

Participants believed there was a need to articulate that Africans themselves were capable of formulating their own development.

> Gambian stories and beliefs, it is time for African voices to re-launch their own development (P#6, F).

Participant #1 concluded:

> African traditional beliefs still work at the village level. We have our own tools available through the medium of the community like the bantaba, drama for development, plays etc., in other words people development. We need to move to enlightenment and refuse the old order (P#1, M).

Formal education

The Gambian Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education has begun to break the cycle of children being educated in English by working with donors strategically to drive Gambian processes. After twenty years of debate the Ministry is introducing core education texts in five local languages in the first three years of education. The curriculum was being written during this research process with the intention of it being implemented in September 2011. English will be taught as a subject instead of it being the language of instruction. This is a new policy and a huge step forward to revitalising Gambian indigenous knowledge, the beginning of a new relevant framework in schools and the reform of Gambian education systems. Research participant #11 explained:

> We took the model of the bantaba for an education forum to talk about our strategies and talk about issues of ownership. One day instead of working in the office we put up our tents to have a face to face with the public. Helping people to have a say in what was happening.
>
> We are writing seven chapters for this new curriculum to be used in selected primary schools. They are to be edited, peer reviewed then published (P#11, F).

Research participant #8 discussed the new curriculum:

>We are using Gambian riddles, stories and proverbs and some of our traditional indigenous games. One of these is similar to chess or draughts. It encourages courage and perspectives. Also joking relations, which is about traditional peace building and peace making. In the old days in the evenings, people used to sit around the bonfire at night sharing songs and stories. It's a small step towards bringing back indigenous knowledge and bringing back our people's identity and culture. There has been work done since the 1st republic[17] to teach national languages in the first three grades of primary education.

>When implemented in one hundred and twenty five schools with twenty-five schools per language, children will be working in their community-spoken language. It will be a point of convergence with the home, so the home adult can help the primers. We are developing material for beginners. We're developing scripted lessons to bring back the culture. We are also preparing teaching materials. It will bring back self-confidence (P#8, M).

Most participants were very positive about this quest by the Ministry to endogenise education on Gambian realities through the critical rethinking of curriculum. They said there had been on-going debates on the use of local languages for at least twenty years but these policies were yet to be effectively implemented. Some parents were resisting because of the belief that education in local languages would 'dilute' education standards and students would never proceed to university where instruction is in English. As participant #8 said:

>There are sceptics amongst us who think, what is the use of being educated in Mandinka? You can't get an international job. Because of the Western culture of acquisition, people think in terms of money.

>De-colonise the mentality, developing literacy is an end in itself, not a means to an end. Our languages have the capability for us to study in all areas of knowledge. Translating the core texts in five languages including mathematics brings back our respectability, restores our dignity, our identity. Not in my life time but what we hope to achieve is for people to be able to stand up in

---

[17] Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara was the first leader of The Gambia. He was Prime Minister from 1962 to 1970 and President from 1970 to 1994.

parliament using their own indigenous languages. This is what we hope to achieve.

We speak our own language at the informal level but introducing it as a formal language of education, or instruction for the first three years in sciences, social studies etc. with English as a subject is a good start. We need this to deal with Gambian knowledge (P#8,M).

Participants also commented that children of the elite, including policy makers, send their children to private schools which usually do not follow the national curriculum but the international curriculum of European or American schools. Alongside these critiques, constructive ideas about the way forward is being articulated by The Gambian Ministry of Lower and Basic Education who are striving to implement this policy in favour of endogenisation. Participant #11 was focused when she said:

We hope to synchronise the new curriculum with Koranic schools (P#11, F).

Koranic schools teach Islamic theory and religious law. The schools rely on community support to exist and have the greatest number of students as they are more accessible to the poor. The Gambian Ministry is trying to reconcile the formal and religious schools:

The Gambia is over 95% Muslim. Parents would rather send their children to Koranic schools rather than local schools. We (the Govt.) are piloting a cash transfer scheme for students attending Koranic schools. This is for economic reasons. We have also started translating the primary curriculum into Arabic and Madrassah. (P#11,F).

In The Gambia the public education system does not include religious teaching. Some Gambians believe that Koranic Schools are closer to Gambian traditions. Participant #2 spoke of their popularity:

There are hardcore people who will not send their kids to local English schools. They send them to Koranic schools where they get quality support. It's the issue

of language and the Koranic schools are more adaptive to local conditions
(P#2,F).

The children in the compound where I lived were attending primary school but were also

sent to a Koranic school for basic religious and moral instruction after their formal day

school and in weekends or holidays.

Most participants agreed with the Ministry of Lower and Basic Education's new direction

that knowledge production in The Gambia would be incomplete without the systematic

integration of all conflicting as well as complementary epistemologies. They believed that

their future education depended on this creative process of cultural restoration within their

education systems:

> I believe this initiative is a big key to change. The intention is there and that is
> an important thing (P#2, F).

Most participants recognised the importance of endogenous development in their

institutions. They pointed out that knowledge informed by their own Gambian/African

perspectives could play a vital role in the reconnection of lost beliefs and systems of

thought in The Gambia and Africa. As Participant #1 said;

> We need to change our tack. Africa is missing. Give Gambians, Africans, the
> opportunity to know who they are. Education is not a privilege it's a right. We
> still enact the slave narrative. Teaching things African will give us freedom
> (P#1, M).

The participants emphasised their own knowledge system could provide valid

epistemological grounds to critique the dominant European impositions imposed on Africa

from the sixteenth century.

Participants expressed many ideas on ways in which the university could be improved; Participant #13:

> If the University of The Gambia adhered to our fundamental values to orientate the university as a place of learning, thought and debate, with the ability to separate intellectual values from the interests of the market, this knowledge would contribute to a more inclusive university (P#13, M).

Some participants discussed the promotion and defence of the freedom of thought. Political authoritarianism, they said, had "impeded and continues to impede in some cases the exercise of this right by the academic community". Participant #1 continued and offered his rationale:

> We need to look for long-term solutions which enable us to reinstate the role of the university as a 'public good' and return to the faculties a real autonomy, with the new generation at the centre of the process (P#1, M.).

Most participants stressed the need for the inclusion of African indigenous knowledge in curriculum. They agreed that institutions of higher learning were strongly influenced not by a philosophy or development strategies guided by African interests, but by influences coming from the North, "influences that are more alienating than liberating". Participant #9 continued:

> We need to own our knowledge. Gambians need to focus and build our own capacities through looking into the Gambian context and be able to use it to respond to our own needs. We want our African traditions formalized. Our systems are devoid of Gambian values (P#9, M).

De-colonisation of the mind

At the bantaba, many participants believed that the "solution to decolonise our minds is through education, enlightened and meaningful education, but how do we adjust our thinking when we still think West is best? (P#c/f,M).

Participant #4, one of many who contributed to this conversation, said:

> We need to unlearn. We need to change the mindsets. Change our ways of thinking. It's possible to do but how do you motivate others to think differently with the hierarchy at the top? (P#4, F).

Participant #6 thought changing mindsets would be an enormous challenge:

> It's very difficult to change mindsets with religion being a big part of this culture. It is very difficult to put a clear line between religion and culture. Religion says, do it this way! (P#6,F).

Informal life

Participant #1 offered a Gambian perspective when he said that: "African traditional beliefs still work at the village level" and believed that:

> We have our own tools available through the medium of the community (P#1,M).

Local languages

Participants said that English language in The Gambia was "given status over African languages" and:

> Now we need to control our own production of meaning. Our own language is becoming lost. It is only through our own language, we understand the nuances of meaning (P#c/fM).

Yet, as participants at the bantaba discussed:

> Using African languages has been a 20 year dialogue in The Gambia (Pc/f,M).

Participant #15, said:

> In The Gambia we're hoping to use our local languages at the primary level, starting at grade one. In Senegal, they use Wolof, as their official language in the National Assembly, so they can express themselves. In Gambia Mandinka is the majority language, in Tanzania it's Swahele, in Nigeria and Niger, it is

Howsa. In Gambia most people can speak Arabic, but the colonial language (English) is the language of business and politics.

If you speak Wolof, then your culture is Wolof so using English is a confliction. We've been to university and we've adapted to Western money, so we're disconnected.

Participant #2 had a confident and optimistic approach when she added:

Theory and practice – it's an issue of language. Indigenous language is not being used anywhere. It's an issue of the mother tongue. Twenty years of policy and it never came into practice. We started it in 1976. Language is critical and there is disconnect between home and school. Kids can't relate to their parents. An example: a snake comes into the compound and the child shouts "snake" and the parents don't understand.

Adult and informal, there's no support. Also in parliament, we still speak English. Even the local government, the National Assembly, still speak English. Any policy being made, it's only in English. The messages become distorted, because in the translation, it loses meaning.

I say introduce the national languages in schools, from the early years to the higher years. Not just for a few months, then transit to a higher level. In the decision making process, people can represent themselves in their own languages - this is critical (P#2,F).

Participants believed that "not many African countries had adopted policies that encourage education in African languages". Participant #8 continued:

Some work has been done, since the First Republic to teach national languages in the first three grades of primary school but it wasn't euro-centric and no support was given (P#8,M).

Participants agreed that in general post-colonial education has continued to privilege colonial languages and has paid only lip service to education in endogenous African languages. Participant #8 spoke strongly in his belief that:

Languages would bring back confidence, self-confidence. Remember in 1060, the English language was not valued, so nobility sent their kids to France to learn French and Latin (P#8, M).

Participant #20 gave the example of:

> Asian countries. They speak their own languages. They are progressing and are a good example but here people are not educated and many people are pre-literate (P#20,F).

Mentors believed a consequence of the post-colonial education system was that graduates were ill-equipped to deal with the realities of life in The Gambia. Another inevitable consequence of this has been the brain drain as Africa and The Gambia has produced educators and researchers with little capacity to work in local communities:

> A big problem here is the brain drain. How can we bring educated Gambians back?

> Wherever we go, it's English. Western education does not serve as solutions (P#,c/f. m).

Participants at the bantaba agreed that "Western education does not serve as solutions" (Pc/f,M) and also discussed the problem of implementing these new education policies in The Gambia despite the Government's good intentions.

Joking relations

Joking relations, (for a full explanation see Gambian culture, tradition and identity on p. 130). Participant #12 believed joking relations or "peace-building should be put into policy".

African solutions to African problems

Reshaping relationships

With government and organisations

Participants at the bantaba suggested that regional organisations like ECOWAS and pan-African organisations such as CODESRIA could play an effective part in the implementation of new, relevant educational and research policies. They said that:

> West African countries are trying to integrate, we are talking about change! (Pc/f,M).

Participants #5 and #6 suggested working toward cooperating with government ministries and NGOs through "building relationships with ERNWACA, power sharing and knowledge sharing." They also said that designing regional programmes with ECOWAS in community development and research with the "objective of establishing a framework for programme consistency would be innovative as well as a way to strengthen networking between West African research centres".

Participants agreed that:

> The thinking of ECOWAS and CODESRIA is rational (P,c/f,M).

With the Western world

Participants said there was a need to "identify targets, then we can work with partners but we should drive the process".

> Donors can support us for quality improvement in schools but with donors coming together as equal partners. We must sit at the same table (P#10, M).

Re-thinking

As participant #1 remarked:

> We cannot live without the West, but it is time Africans stood up for what is theirs. This is the point about Africa that is missing. How can we blend the two?
>
> We need to shift the blame from colonisation and move on, de-colonisation of the mind!

Participants #10, #12 and #20 agreed that now was the time to change and start moving away from the Western paradigm and "take the bull by the horns" to "translate policy into realistic programs".

Capacity building

"African capacity building," participant #6 said, "is a big issue". Participants believed that in The Gambia, policies were designed but not implemented because of lack of strategies to put these policies in place:

> We need to build capacity for Gambian government with people to manage systems and skills to be able to hand this to the community, so they can own their situations, their needs, concerns. This is capacity building! (P#4, F).

One of the problems in The Gambia, one participant said, "was the problem of leadership. We need people who will think, plan and implement those plans to suit the needs of the people, not to spend huge amounts of budget on fruitless activities" (P#13,M).

Participants generally agreed that capacity building was central to The Gambia's development and building capacity in key areas of the public sector with emphasis on the interface between the public sector and private sector was vital.

Also at the bantaba a participant said Gambians needed:

> To have the capacity to support regional initiatives in the area of research and training (Pc/f,M).

Most participants agreed that human and institutional capacity building in The Gambia was crucial.

New sustainable model

At the bantaba participants discussed ECOWAS "wanting an indigenous research strategy to be developed:"

> ECOWAS are asking for a truly African strategy, our own research and development model (P,c/f,M).

Participant #6 agreed with participants' overwhelming response when she spoke:

> African-led, African ideas, a new paradigm shift.
>
> Maori and Pacific are changing - they are self-determined. We have to change policies at the top through self-determination. Look at Maori frameworks which are revitalising and transforming communities.
>
> We need to demonstrate how to think together about indigenous knowledge. Gambians could develop the next stage of this research. We could do a small case study, Maori, Pacific and African. This would be building capacity! (P#6,F).

Participant #7 believed:

> We could develop theory and practices and develop economics through social policies, social development, planning programs, health and education policies.

Participant #9 went further when he said:

> We need a new framework. We need to start from the bottom, with a concrete foundation and revitalise some of the good things that have been here, for example the bantaba (P#9,M).

Participants agreed that to carefully design a new sustainable model:

> We need workshops with special emphasis on knowledge building, listening, reflecting, using our protocols and explore ways of knowing, Gambian epistemologies, and what we know (P#15, M).

They agreed that traditional knowledge is very complex and better understood by the

people themselves:

> Many people have different viewpoints about the way we live, but we have fundamental truths, not uncreated philosophies. We have a new agenda to develop. We have to be genuine and committed, empathetic. We need a new agenda to climb to another level using our own philosophies, our own ideas to build a new society where everyone can contribute P#16,M).

Participant #4 summed this up when she said:

> What a contribution to knowledge, getting a framework to evolve out of this work! (P#4,F).

Developing a local cultural research framework

The participants assumed a proactive posture to provide an alternative logic that would

query and challenge the dominant or conventional research model:

Participant #12 commented:

> To develop our own framework we could take about ten workshops with the dedicated criteria. Having our own framework would be a major contribution, but how could we ever agree on it! We'd all have to come together to develop a framework for research. If we had a standing framework, then we could evaluate, it would be our own terms of reference. The value of this would make sure of the issues rather than second-guessing (P#12,M).

Participants agreed it would be a challenge working with the schooled and the unschooled

who would be key players in the establishment of a Gambian cultural research framework:

> We need to blend local and scientific knowledge. How do we organise the knowledge to make it functional? We need a participating methodology, creating space for everyone to talk.

> Research at the community level but how do we know the process? (P#4,F).

Participant #15 was adamant that:

> We must pursue this alternative strategy. The authenticities of social sciences as their texts/methods have no historical context. There are issues in local research, conducting research in the context of mainstream approaches (P#15,M).

Participant #20 was enthusiastic:

> The issues we've discussed we can take up. These are our issues and really nobody from the West can do it. You have got us thinking (P#20,F).

The discussion at the bantaba was animated:

> We need to design new research instruments. The problem is if we design our own instruments there will still have to be international norms in place for example ecological and validity, recent inclusion of ecological values, genius inputs, local inputs. We need to reshape when we design, but we must also think of ecological validity. Care of the environment, history, culture, include all these things (P#c/f,M).

Another participant at the bantaba stressed:

> The challenge is to provide intellectual tools for unravelling the foundation of Africa, culturally and practically. We need space for African frameworks to develop this new framework (P,c/f,M).

The participants reflected on the changing times with different priorities but they also

signalled great African readiness to address new challenges. They agreed that the focus was

on the future with a concern for the community. In addition, the emphasis on local languages and education was seen as crucial for the years ahead.

Summary

This chapter has presented a summary of evidence collected in the qualitative interviews and the conversation forum. It presented the results of the research according to the categories or themes developed from NVivo 10 and 'e-draw mind map' analysis.

Three major themes were described along with eight epistemological sub-themes and twenty-six epistemological threads that wove throughout the interviews and conversation forum. Insights from these extended initial ideas about Gambian epistemology were explained in fundamental and critical ways.

The three themes played an important role in helping to clarify both the participant semi-structured interviews and conversation group findings. The themes and categories had many parallels in the voices and many examples outlined in Chapter Three, Literature Review, were shared by participants during interviews and conversations. They were clear about both the importance of cultural experience and cultural continuity and how this priority differed with current educational expectations. They discussed the prevalence of spirituality and religion and being part of an extended family as well as their linkages with regard to history and place.

Gambian epistemology thrives in rural areas but this is not grounded in the vocabulary and imagery found in literature or Gambian legal or political systems in 2011. Summarizing the views of 51 participants seemed impossible until their agreements became apparent.

Chapter Six: Discussion of themes

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the key research findings presented in Chapter Five. The results of the study are also discussed in relation to the challenges of conducting inter-cultural research.

Research aim

The research question was answered: "what are the foundations of and capacities for indigenous epistemologies as (a) a potential process or (b) an analytical framework for strategic research development in The Gambia?

Introduction

Participants or mentors agreed that the development of a Gambian cultural research framework would be a strategy for incremental improvement of capabilities and self-esteem at all levels of society. They also agreed that a local research framework could not be immune from international norms, but without participating in self-formulated theoretical research tools, The Gambia and Africa's empirical reality would remained systematically marginalized.

Participants agreed about the importance of recognising a Gambia-centric research agenda that would touch on the politics of knowledge and geo-political interests. These facts would influence how such a local research initiative would be understood, portrayed, critiqued and supported.

In The Gambia, attaining a robust system of governance through political parties is problematic. This condition impacted on Gambian civil society as discussed by

participants. They considered research should be sensitive to the combination of power and values that operated between 'governors and the governed'. Their challenge, they believed, was to investigate civil society from the inside. Their interest in what this might look like was beyond the scope of this thesis but could be developed if Phase Two as proposed proceeds. Participants discussed how they could develop an entirely new structure based on a more appropriate Gambian African philosophy. There was no doubt in their minds that it would be impossible to step away from trying to adjust an entire colonial system, but they were adamant that two different systems do exist and it was time to develop ways to acknowledge this and synergise them successfully.

Conversations with mentors discussed Gambian beliefs, values, language, family, culture, colonisation, community orientation, and what it meant to be African in the 21st century. As they saw it, their challenge was that they could no longer afford not to fight for their own Gambian African identity in a globalised colonial system set up to assimilate them into a larger hegemonic context. Participants believed that their alternative ways of knowing, their Gambian African philosophy, which defined their personhood, could provide clues in answering the puzzle of the lack of development for the masses in both The Gambia and Africa.

Gambian participants realised they could not escape from underdevelopment until public policy became an expression of their democratic will and connected with their social needs (Nnaemeka, 2009). Participants were unanimous that a new paradigm, which co-opted the essential and tested elements of other conventional paradigms, that connected with the people's democratic aspirations and social needs, and was integrated into existing research

and policy, would assist in sharpening thinking and discussion about Gambian characteristics of what was being investigated.

Building capacity

As the title for this thesis suggests, building capacity for Gambian researchers was an objective of this research process. As was established in the research, human and institutional capacity is critical both in The Gambia and in Africa. This was noted in the Introduction Chapter of this thesis, and in the objectives of the research. Also in the Literature Review section, a 2011 UNDP report indicated that there was a lack of integrated frameworks to monitor progress toward monitoring the MDGs because of a serious lack of institutional capacity in The Gambia.

Personnel at ERNWACA/GESDRI also emphasised the importance of building capacity for researchers before and during the research process. As described in the Chapter Four section Critical dialogue, participants built their own capacity through on-going dialogue, after open-ended interviews and the bantaba which began a process to measure their own knowledge to develop a new Gambian research epistemology. Following up on these conversations, some participants attended working group meetings at ERNWACA/GESDRI to develop Phase Two of the research to support the reframing of Gambian research by developing a proposal to develop their own Gambian-centric research framework as a theory for change.

This writing of this proposal, Phase Two, included participants from GESDRI, ERNWACA, The Gambian Ministry for Higher Education and Research, Science and Technology, The University of The Gambia, (students and academic staff), UNESCO

National Commission, The Gambia, and The Gambian Ministry of Basic and Secondary

Education (see Appendix F). This collaborative proposal, (see Proposal in Chapter 6), was

submitted by the ERNWACA Regional Office, (Bamako, Mali) to UNESCO (Dakar,

Senegal) and CODESRIA (Dakar) for consideration. This outcome resonated with Pacific

and Maori researchers who have advanced their own epistemologies toward research

frameworks as noted in the Literature Review section and is also in line with CODESRIA's

Strategic Plan (2007-2011, 2012-2016) as noted in the Objectives section in Chapter 1 of

this thesis (p. 14).

In contrast to this capacity-building work, participants emphasised that both donors and the

Gambian government actually undermined capacity in The Gambia. Participants said that in

many cases, the Gambian Government had pushed away locally trained professional

people. In some cases they said this was the result of very poor economic performance, as

the Government could not pay local professional people. This was part of the reason for the

brain drain in The Gambia and Africa. Bureaucracies simply did not have the people with

capacities to think through local problems and find solutions.

In The Gambia "people who know are sidelined" (P#8,M). Political power in The Gambia

has been monopolized to the extent that the in-group could potentially be there for life. This

means there is no room for professional growth and jealousies are built up against

competent people. People who are competent might threaten the government intellectually,

professionally or technically. Some participants believed the current situation in The

Gambia was not an atmosphere for capacity enhancement.

Participants were in agreement that the "Consultancy syndrome" (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 33;

Nyamnjoh, 2012) in which donors used Western technical assistance instead of local

experts, dominated local projects. Problems were not solved and this systematic use of outside experts undermined capacity development in The Gambia and Africa. Participants went further by discussing the fact that donors were in fact lenders and it was time for more appropriate international project design using local capacity to carry out project processes. Expatriate management is an endemic problem according to participants, the result being that local professionals are undermined and the general system debilitated further. Donor processes, despite the talk of building capacity, were actually destroying Gambian capacity that did exist.

Participants said that this problem had to change, but they also agreed that in an African country like The Gambia they were not yet capable of putting together plans or actions to solve their own problems and that was the current reality. Participants believed that they must create a demand for their own professionalism. They believed domestic or national capacity was present both in the private sector, at the University of The Gambia and other Gambian Institutions. Projects needed to be shared with donors by using local ownership with the potential for good analytical work. Participants said there were domestic economists and professionals available if they were supported and given credibility by their own government. Projects needed to be redesigned using existing local capacity to solve problems.

Participants also believed that institutional support was required for training and retraining civil servants and managers which could encourage institutional growth. Currently many Gambian and other Africans were being trained in overseas universities. This, they said, had been going on for thirty or so years, but what, they asked, about our own institutions? Building a strong academic community in The Gambia was vital. Participants believed

international organisations and donors, as well as their own Government, should be trying to create an enabling environment for professionals.

An analytical framework for Gambian research development

The first open-ended interview was truly an eye-opener for me at how trite my sequence of questions was. Gambian epistemology stripped me of any self-importance as Participant One (P#1,M) spoke of the timing and sacredness of knowledge. Everything the participant spoke about made sense and I realised my inquiry was more than verbal and deeper than my own capacity. Participant #1 gave me a profound sense of place, people and purpose. Then, of course, how to explain this within the different contexts of Aoteraoa New Zealand academia was another challenge.

In Chapter Five the data was analysed, using NVivo version 10 and 'e-draw mind map' into three major themes, the way things were, the way things are and the way things could be. The data helped clarify the participants' findings with insights from each interview and discussion, extending ideas of Gambian epistemology into sub-themes and threads. Many similar examples to these insights are offered in the Literature Review, especially the Epistemology, ontology and axiology section in the Literature Review.

The participants' powerful ideas were looked at from many viewpoints and in response to the research question asking "what are the foundations of and capacities for indigenous epistemologies as a) a potential process and/or b) an analytical framework for strategic research development in The Gambia?" I highlighted the data by further grouping it into concepts or five discussion points. Looking at the data differently and across time helped

me characterise and identify some important aspects of Gambian African epistemologies which could extend capacities for the future.

Five general concepts formed a context for the results of the research study. They were: 1) the role of place, history and genealogy in knowledge, 2) the perceived duality of education systems, 3) that the practice of traditional values and beliefs is fundamental to knowledge or knowing something, 4) the idea that knowing culture restores culture, 5) the role of the community in knowledge production.

Each of these concepts is subtle but they were key concepts common to all participants' conversations. Although the themes, sub-themes and threads seemed self-evident, it was worth separating them into categories because of the clarity they offered to this work. These concepts recognised that Gambian Africans have a specific epistemology shaped by culture, beliefs and practices and that Gambian epistemology is endemic to place, specific to their genealogy, and alive within the practices of the informal Gambian community.

What this thesis attempted to clarify were some Gambian ways of knowing. Elders particularly, spoke about how they had been deeply shaped by their parents, grandparents and extended family obligations. In most interviews participants discussed how history, place and genealogy were linked to their traditional knowledge or Gambian ways of knowing.

Gambian epistemology continues to thrive in present-day Gambia, despite a major problem discussed by many participants, the unconscious adoption of Western world-views and perspectives, especially by the younger generation. This has meant that Gambians have often found themselves and their experiences relegated to the margins of Western

experience. This idea justifies further work in this area. If indeed culture restores culture, participants were definite that Gambian epistemology remained outside of the main colonial formal educational structure, and that was also a cause of damaged Gambian African identity.

Furthermore, the idea that culture restores culture came from both the process and content of the interviews. The cultural structure of epistemology extended through to the present especially in the informal life of Gambians. However, there was concern amongst the participants that this was changing with the younger generations who were becoming more distracted by modernity. Mass production, mass communication and major advances in technology generally had an overwhelming impact on relations between different generations. Participants said this was affecting the younger generation's traditional and local ties. One young participant discussed the fact that many young people in The Gambia were part of "illegal migration to Europe because they think this is the best place for them to progress, but at the end of the day they often die on the journey and the families back home suffer" (P#20,F). Participants believed that the younger generation had little patience with 'things' African and "West was best" (P#20,F).

Older participants revealed that the influence of place, family and schooling had shaped Gambian understanding and they also acknowledged the influence of deceased elders who continued to influence through their wisdom. Some participants referred to the animism of the natural world and how that too informed them. This last point was emphasised by David Millar (2007), in the Literature Review section, in his figure of the three circles depicting African worldviews.

Many participants spoke in story form such as Participant #13 who was unflinching in his descriptions of feelings being linked to intellect. It was very much a cultural exchange imbued with passion, foresight, emotion, discovery and a shared world-view. For me, the challenge became apparent as the conversations progressed as to how to make what was familiar to all the participants, understandable within an academic and Western context.

The role of the community in knowledge production

Most participants lamented the loss of past values and virtues, such as the child no longer being the child of every adult in the community. Teaching a child was once not just the responsibility of the biological parents. In traditional Gambia Africa, according to participants, every responsible adult taught any child about community ways. They were taught traditional games, puzzles, riddles, and poems. Participants discussed the fact that elders or grandparents remained with the family, teaching their acquired wisdom and philosophical ideas of the culture and community: "an elder sitting on the floor sees further than a child sitting up a tree" (P#3,M).

In the past, participants said, children would congregate to listen to storytellers where information about certain taboos, initiation rites and apprenticeships were passed down. Information was also transmitted through songs and poems as noted in Chapter Two, in the Oral tradition section. Participants said that Gambian culture and values had not been integrated into the communication exchange and the sense of alienation they were experiencing ensured that further development could not be expected. Real progress would only take place when their significant culture and value systems or Gambian African epistemologies were both integrated into higher education research systems and shared globally.

Figure 5: Thematic nodes and sub-nodes by number of sources and number of times referenced

Epistemological themes emerging from the research

As discussed above, the NVivo analysis of the data branched off into three major themes and eight sub-themes, with twenty-six epistemological threads surfacing and weaving through the conversations. Each of these provided insights into Gambian epistemology. The most discussed sub-theme was Current African Development with 42 references, followed

up by the thread of Cultural Loss with 34 references, A New Sustainable Model with 31,

African Development - The Future Vision 29 references, Education with 28 references and

Developing a local cultural research framework, 26 references (see Figure 5 above).

There is no doubt that Gambian epistemology is alive. Participants believed that the

integration of indigenous and community-based knowledge systems into existing

knowledge systems could assist in exposing informal Gambian communities to scientific

knowledge production. This could also be a catalyst in beginning to bridge the socio-

economic gap between the majority of Gambian communities and the Gambian elite. This

gap is discussed in the Introduction Chapter as well as in the Gambian culture, tradition and

identity section in Chapter Five.

However, participants asked how accommodating would higher education systems be in the

integration of indigenous Gambian African community-based knowledge systems, with the

other question being how would they access the knowledge produced and circulated within

local communities? One participant at the bantaba suggested "it is very difficult to get

information from the grass roots" (Pc/f,M). Participants asked, how could basic Gambian

epistemological principles be integrated into already alienated modes of thinking?

The socio-economic gap in The Gambia

The elite or educated Africans as described by some participants, are the politicians, but

also the NGOs, who are usually engaged in the provision of services, designed to provide

for the majority of people, such as clean water, education, healthcare and so on. This is

similar to aid which has been pumped into Gambian societies since independence. A

proportion of this aid, paid by Western governments, pays Gambian civil servants in the

form of budgetary assistance in complex loan arrangements hidden from the scrutiny of the people. These people receive small amounts from such aid packages, which have done very little to transform their day-to-day existence. Some participants believed that Gambian politicians had lost the political legitimacy of their people on account of their failure to deliver basic needs.

Another important finding was that most participants were adamant in agreeing with Nyamnjoh (2011; 2012) and Sawyerr, (2004a), as noted in the Chapter Three under Education in Africa section, that the fusion of some aspects of epistemological Gambian African heritage with other contributions of non-African heritages could be a beginning in the liberation from the contemporary philosophy of ethnocentrism. Participants reflecting on this contended that this would mean recognising communities as primary stakeholders and active participants in research.

Participants discussed their heritage and the profound changes that had occurred, first with the contact and conflict of Islam as also discussed by Lebakeng (2010) and Faal (1999) in Chapter Two and secondly, the discursive procedures of the West as reported by Faal (1999), also in Chapter Two, along with the participatory traditions of both The Gambia and Africa, as articulated by Barry (2001) in Chapter Two.

Education

A crucial finding endorsed by Nyamnjoh (2012), Mama, (2006), Ngara, (2007), Sawyerr, (2004a), Sall & Bangirana, (2010a) and Lebakeng (2010) in Chapter Three, the Literature Review, and discussed by many participants, was the duality of the current formal education system in The Gambia. Schools and other educational institutions represented a

place where information was gathered and processed but it was not considered as part of Gambian ways of knowing. Gambians understood the importance of education but participants perceived that current education practices separated students from their own realities. As P#2, F., said, " language is critical, there is a disconnect between home and school and children cannot relate to their parents, for example, when a snake enters the compound and the child shouts snake, (in English) the parents don't understand". Participant #2 and others also discussed the fact that when policies were made at the Gambian Government level they were also made in English and not in National languages so messages became distorted when translated and lost their meaning (P#2,F).

Participants discussed the fact that postcolonial education continued to privilege colonial English by paying no attention to Gambian endogenous languages. Participants believed the consequences of this resulted in graduates' ill adaptation to the African condition with little capacity to work in surrounding communities. As P#2,M said when discussing local education curriculum content, "the knowledge gained and received should not separate people from the realities of their societies" or as P#9 said " Western ideology, that's what we learn, cannot serve the needs of our society".

This outcome, participants believed, was nothing short of epistemological imperialism.

This marginalisation of Gambian African knowledge systems from most Gambian African curricula, participants believed, was no accident but a deliberate process undertaken during the colonisation of The Gambia and Africa to subjugate its people. This has had far reaching effects on the child and their schooling where children, according to participants, had been forced to operate in two parallel world-views.

Many participants discussed the great divide between home and school and the conflicts children found themselves in. As an educational reform to reverse this, a new curriculum is to be introduced into primary school education programmes as a way forward. Participants agreed that these reforms to strengthen indigenous education systems and institutions were critical for both The Gambia and Africa's future.

Language

Participants lamented, agreeing with the African writers Nguigi wa Thiong'o (2009) and Megalommatis (2012) in the Language section of the Literature Review in Chapter Three about the replacement of indigenous Gambian African language systems with European ones. They believed that language was a communal memory and if Gambia Africa completely lost its native languages, they would lose their social memory. They said this was already happening and was a reason for their loss of identity. "Western languages, Western ways are valued. Why? Because we think everything Western is superior and everything Gambian is inferior" (P#20,F). Some participants believed there was no doubt that many African youth had lost their way and at the root of their alienation was the disconnect from their historical memory of themselves.

The recognition of this difference of world-views was not new but the fact that the Ministry of Lower and Basic Education in The Gambia were developing a new primary school curriculum, teaching Gambian values and languages in the classroom, was a beginning that would immerse students in their own Gambian languages and world-view. This New Education Policy (2006-2015) is discussed in Chapter Three. When this was implemented, it was hoped it would strengthen cultural continuity and be a necessary step toward Gambian African wholeness.

Gambian research

Some participants discussed how the University of The Gambia's small allocations for research had resulted in poor facilities such as limited access to publishing, limited and questionable research databases and no research culture. Participants who discussed this issue also argued that there were identified ethical problems of authorship, authority and representation and how they grappled about ownership of data. They also believed that Gambian researchers who participated in collaborative research were marginalized because of contract arrangements that privileged Western researchers. The challenges for Gambian researchers were to confront research individualism, multiple differences, and to examine the way in which research agendas were established, funded, written and represented together with the ways Gambian African participants were engaged. Some participants questioned and reflected critically on their ethical experience and questioned the applicability of universal codes in certain situations.

Another consequence, participants said, was the lack of appreciation of the importance of research with low priority given to research both at the university and in other public institutions. Participants claimed there was also a lack of Government initiated and managed research and an emphasis on financial gain generally in areas of a particular donor's interest, which had done nothing to improve the impoverished research situation in the country. Participants believed it was timely to redefine Gambian priorities, empowerment, identity and liberation.

All mentors spoke in dual and bi-cultural ways. To be successful in modern Gambia Africa, they said they had to understand multiple systems. They said there was no doubt that it was impossible to step away from an entire colonial system, but it was time to accept that two

different systems do exist. This was the political, social and economic challenge, to fight

for a Gambian African identity by developing new Gambian structures or models.

Participants were adamant they could no longer disregard the importance of colonial

systems being synergised with Gambian knowledge. This idea had many supporters as

articulated by Gambian participants as well as institutions such as CODESRIA

(CODESRIA's 2007-2011, 2012-2016, Strategic Plan) and ECOWAS. But these

commentaries by major African think tanks and organisations had not led to action of any

coherent examination of society from within. This thesis, through the participants, builds on

these existing initiatives to remedy this situation.

Global knowledge systems and Western consultants

Gambian participants agreed with Mkandwire (2010) and Nyamnjoh (2012) on the

"consultancy syndrome" stating that they had little voice or influence in research because

they had been subjected to numerous foreign-driven concepts partnered with externally-

driven knowledge agendas. This reflected the dominance of global knowledge systems

premised by Western epistemology. Another crucial epistemological issue identified by

participants was the culture of consultancy coming from the West. Participants discussed

the many forms in which this was manifested, including emphasis on training in

quantitative data collection methods, the production of consultancy reports usually

processed into theories and policy documents in Euro-American academies. This has

resulted in Africans becoming 'native informants' rather than authentic and rigorous

producers of their own knowledge. Gambian participants also recognised they themselves

had the expertise but this was not utilised by the aid establishment or by their National

Government. This, they believed, had led to the glossing over of pertinent questions

concerning Western epistemology and a failure to distinguish local alternatives. Participants believed that communities had been excluded from local policies. During this research process, participants re-thought how their Gambian society could be conceived on its own terms and the possibilities of how it could be measured to better understand local realities.

Participants were clear that the time of blaming the past for their current condition of poverty, repression, inefficiency, famine, aid dependency and corruption was over. They identified their own leader as corrupt and despite "cosmetic words or messages that have no meaning" (P#13,M), some participants blamed him for his betrayal of their indigenous systems and his looting of Gambian resources.

They discussed the lack of local resources to undertake an indigenous inquiry or to create a critical mass of Gambian African scholars in this field. What was endogenous, mentors said, was yet to be articulated or had already been subsumed within the international mainstream. One participant suggested a south/south study to develop the next stage of the research by doing a small case study with Maori or Pacific people to build Gambian African capacity in this area.

African Development

Another key idea, participants said, could be to examine community-based projects to see if they were culturally driven and if they reflected Gambian epistemology. As articulated in Chapter Three, the Literature Review, under the heading Recent research in The Gambia and sub-Saharan Africa and by some of the participants, there are few if any community-

based or any other development research projects that work within or pay any attention to Gambian culture or a Gambian Afro-centric philosophical framework.

Participants suggested having their own cultural framework based on Gambian understandings of land, place, language and proper protocol specific to local knowledge would be transforming. Projects that upheld reflections of Gambian epistemology based on ontological foundations such as relationship, spirituality, morality, values, beliefs, meaning and sustainability should become their yardstick. In other words, they wanted culturally-driven programmes that do not compromise on Gambian identity to get any message across. The how, what and who of Gambian knowledge philosophy would strengthen Gambian people and lay a foundation for their identity and essence.

The ultimate aim of development in Africa according to Gambian African research participants was to add value to African lives, African knowledge and African society. Research participants believed contemporary Gambian African aspirations rested in African values, worldviews and the realities of their experience. They want to retain their distinct identity that comes from their unique heritage. They want to use their set of shared experience as a philosophical base for reform. Participants agreed it was crucial to revisit the theoretical discourse between democracy, institution building and development both in The Gambia and Africa. They agreed the first location of anything African started with the re-evaluation of the pedagogy and paradigms.

Self-determination / identity

To own their own development, Gambian mentors believed they had to become self-reliant. The embracing of self-reliance, they agreed, would be the real revolution of development in

The Gambia and Africa. The participants also mostly agreed that Africa's colonial history and its place in the global system had not been conducive to independence. It is also true, according to participants, that many African leaders, including their Gambian President, preferred dependence to the rigours of self-reliance. This was accentuated by the Gambian Government's policies and behaviour. To break away from this colonial mentality and the lack of independence associated with it, they believed, would be difficult and in the case of The Gambia, dangerous but necessary.

Self-reliance requires confidence. Lack of confidence in being Gambian African posed a problem. Participants mainly agreed that this had been an obstacle in The Gambia and Africa from years of deeply entrenched humiliation through slavery, colonisation and dictatorship. Both slavery and colonisation insisted Africans were less than human and their rich histories meaningless. Also many of Africa's leaders, as in The Gambia, in the past twenty or so years of independence were notable for oppression, corruption, social disorganisation, demise of development and growing poverty.

A new sustainable model
It is difficult in The Gambia's current political circumstances to attain the qualities of high seriousness, commitment and self-confidence. The confidence required will not be developed by posturing against former colonial masters (Blair, 2013) when there are no plans or strategies to back up the changes demanded. The development of a new sustainable model or a local cultural research framework in The Gambia, participants believed, would have to be a strategy for incremental improvement of capabilities and self-esteem at all levels of society.

Future African development

Contact with the Western world some 500 years ago began to erode the balance of Gambian African lives and colonisation made it clear that if Gambians were going to survive, they would be obliged to adapt to Western customs, Western law and government and Western economy. There was an insistence that African ways were inferior to Western lifestyle and culture. In 2011 it was clear from participants that Western ways have resulted in the systematic alienation between formal and informal society.

Some participants discussed the fact that since colonial conquest, the definition of Gambian African destiny and public discourse had been shaped and determined by colonial imperatives - rather than Gambian African's own concerns and interests. Participants believed it had been difficult for Gambian Africans in general to permeate the colonial sphere and there had been little benefit from any literature or new social sites where African citizens met together to freely discuss matters of common concern and to take control of their own destiny. This was despite the fact that Gambians had fought for their independence to end colonisation. According to one participant:

> We need to take destiny into our own hands. Africa is not speaking in one voice. What have we done with our independence; I call it begging in style (P#1,M).

The Gambian African ruling elite, similar to the colonial rulers, has basically closed public debate, so Gambians have little to say in democracy processes and economic development. This has deep traces of Western values which are now repackaged as global values. Intellectual formal approaches such as those found in the formal education system come from the West rather than from African values, concerns and interests. Most participants agreed that it is within this context that most Gambian African people try to resist the

confinement of their history, values and identities. Gambian participants asked how in the current Gambian political climate they could articulate their common concerns in an attempt to challenge Western hegemony.

One of the key challenges, participants said, was how to articulate African problems in an authentic African voice. African intellectual Mahmood Mamdani (1996) described bifurcated colonial states that segregated the population into citizens and subjects. This colonial arrangement has had far-reaching consequences on the overall structure of political communication. Participants said public debate (such as the bantaba in this research study), for the practical manifestation of Gambian African people was critical for the production and transformation essential to democracy. Current African research development, participants said, had been characterised and influenced by post-modern liberal thought, with the starting point usually being African stories and experiments expected to fit in to accepted neo-liberal democracy and guidelines.

Participants contested this and discussed ways on how they could re-launch themselves by developing their own frameworks for research, which, they proposed, could begin a strategy toward decolonisation. This, they said, would be a good start, given the absence of Gambian African political frameworks in for example, human rights, rule of law, or the constitution, which uncritically reiterates neo-liberal precepts.

The logic of colonisation, according to most participants, is still a reality in The Gambia and Africa. Participants revealed how the praxis of colonisation had had a devastating impact on their conscious evolution and has constrained both their imaginations and ways of knowing, and had de-centred their Gambian African identity and culture. Many participants believed that the crisis in The Gambia Africa was partly to do with the

repression of alternative modes of knowing, which was a consequence of colonisation of their minds. In the thematic nodes diagram there are sixteen references to this condition. Dual systems operated in Gambian experience. One is informed by Western epistemology and the other is their informal culture. Four participants referred to these two systems in the understanding of their Gambian African world. The first system comes from the perspective of Western modernity and the other is part of the Gambian African unfinished story. Participants understood the challenge of unthinking the current epistemology.

Participants believed that The Gambia, like other post-colonial states in Africa, continued to serve the interests of global capital rather than the interests of Gambian people. Participants realised a new vision for Africa and how to go about restructuring was a difficult question. Simply transforming the country in terms of governance, the economy or the legal system was not sufficient unless it went hand in hand with societal transformation. Participants regarded this as the only way to rectify the bifurcation of their society, or in other words, the gap in society between the elite who are organically connected and orientated to the highly industrialized societies and the rural people who are engrossed in mere survival.

Participants in their conversations gave a critical analysis of the values that drove civil society in The Gambia. They asked what existed for ordinary people who have not benefited from freedom and who are at the receiving end of postcolonial Gambia that has metamorphosed into a dictatorship state. Participants attempted to make sense of their present situation with a view to the future. They believed it would be an enormous struggle to action new policies and new language that resonated with the present generation, with local challenges being very complex.

Participants believed another world was not possible as long as Gambian Africans were not fully decolonised. An epistemic resistance with the development of Gambian research frameworks, they believed, would be a start which would present their own cultural alternative from the knowledge of the Western world.

However, the majority of participants insisted that a conscious commitment to work towards the attainment of a cultural renaissance in terms of education, language and officially redefined their own concepts of research systems with Gambian African-centred paradigms and critical theories, using a concept of balance as an underlying principle was essential. This balance would mean restoring Gambians' relationship between nature and the spiritual world and also balance indigenous Gambian and universal aspects with traditional and modern ways. The foundation for this, participants believed, would be their Gambian culture, with the values and beliefs passed down by ancestors. Participants also understood that they needed to be adept at using present technology and be educated to have skills to survive in modern Gambia. They said if they could work together toward a new cultural framework, it might be possible to achieve a future consistent with indigenous Gambian African values. Participants were clear that it was not possible to return to life as it was, but to embrace Gambian African philosophy that advocated respect for Gambian traditional values, would be empowering as well as enabling justice and equity and a way toward the revitalization of Gambian African societies.

Developing a local cultural research framework

The most significant part of this research was the framing by Gambian participants of ethical ways in which the issues discussed might be addressed. Conversations moved from debate to the ethics of current research and development projects in the natural and social

sciences. The outcome was an intensive sharing of Gambian knowledge from this research, which was included in a collaborative proposal designed to develop Gambian-centric research frameworks (see p. 209). The intention of Phase Two is that ultimately these are to be incorporated into development plans and anchored into organisational, educational and national policy operations. Gambian beliefs, values, meanings integrated into existing research and policy could provide rigorous guidelines for local research and development programs. The following collaborative proposal was written by the researcher from research findings. This was requested by particpants and personnel from ERNWACA and GESDRI. ERNWACA personnel were responsible for writing from the Financial Analysis section onwards.

PROPOSAL

PROPOSAL TO UNITED NATIONS EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC & CULTURAL ORGANISATION (UNESCO) FROM THE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA (ERNWACA) (THE GAMBIA CHAPTER), & THE GAMBIA ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE (GESDRI), participating with MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, THE GAMBIA, UNIVERSITY OF THE GAMBIA & MINISTRY OF LOWER AND BASIC EDUCATION THE GAMBIA & COUNCIL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN AFRICA

Rethinking African development through building capacity for Gambian researchers:

Phase Two: Deconstruction and Phase Three: Transformation:

Introduction:

Despite the consolidation of democratic governance and the stabilization and reform of economic systems at the country level in Africa, with sub-regional and continental level support, one of the biggest hurdles in the development effort is the knowledge deficit. This comes from the limited capacity of indigenous institutions to generate and apply local knowledge to production, management and social life. History and recent political and economic development account for this situation.

However, against a background of current re-focusing on 'African Renaissance,' which included the regeneration of African Institutes of Higher Education and Research by African Governments and donors, there is cause for hope. Crucial elements for the success of this effort included improving the calibre of researchers at these Institutions. To enhance the capacity of researchers to undertake essential research and maintain a positive culture of inquiry and innovation is vital. Just as important is support for the revitalization and strengthening of indigenous knowledge for the benefit of African society. This must be part

of the drive to reposition Africa favourably in the current global situation.

Every society needs to ensure the existence of viable indigenous knowledge systems, in its local institutions and political structures, home-grown and external, modern and traditional to synthesize and adapt for use in local communities and agencies under local conditions. The inadequacy of such systems in Africa is both a cause and effect of knowledge poverty and deepening material deprivation. Transforming Africa requires a mix of policies, strategies, institutional steps and a real paradigm shift in how the development agenda is approached.

The Gambia Economic and Social Development Research Institute (GESDRI), the Education Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA), the Gambian Chapter, intends to work with; The Gambian Ministry for Higher Education and Research, Science and Technology, The University of The Gambia, UNESCO National Commission, The Gambia, and The Gambian Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education; to take up these aspects in line with the aspirations of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and The Council for the Development of Social Science Research (CODESRIA). These Institutions we hope will support this research study aimed at strengthening capacity of Gambian researchers through contributing to the development and management of knowledge generation and its application.

Aims are that the research outcomes can be incorporated into development plans and anchored into organisational, educational and national policy operations. Gambian beliefs, values, meanings integrated into existing research and policy will provide rigorous guidelines for local research and development programmes.

This study, which intends to pursue alternative research strategies, using local knowledge,

has the potential to include regional collaboration in more vigorous graduate study programmes, faculty renewal, interest of younger researchers and improvements in the productivity of research through more efficient management and promotion. These measures and the intended action could provide a case study for other African countries and build a momentum for development being called for by the intellectual community in Africa.

Objectives of the study:

- To extend Gambian research capacity through a critical inquiry into the nature of Gambian knowledge
- To raise new issues or perspectives towards Gambian research
- To develop a Gambian centric research framework

Developing research capacity, through the above objectives, will bring new capabilities amongst Gambian researchers to effectively engage in a new paradigm developed through critical dialogue on indigenous knowledge systems using local processes to facilitate Gambian knowledge and understanding.

Rationale:

The current wave of globalisation has been compelling Africans to re-think their development and position in the world. ECOWAS are asking for the development of a truly African strategy, through scientific discourse, to establish Africa's own research and development model (*West Africa*, 2010). The Pan-African Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) has also called for a re-thinking of African Development. CODESRIA's goal is to catalyse the research community to work towards alternatives that are relevant to African society for more comparative research, the valorisation of indigenous knowledge, new insights and the promotion of prospective

research or future studies (CODESRIA, 2007).

The crisis of food insecurity, climate change and global financial insecurity means alternative and viable solutions are critical. These daunting problems could serve as a turning or rallying point. African scholars supported by politicians are discussing a plan for African Renaissance toward the recovery of Africa's place, respectability and leadership. They are discussing an ideological framework for the "place of Africa in the global governance system" (*Committee Set Up on United States of Africa, as Symposium Ends*, 2009, para. 3).

While the delivery of targeted aid played a critical role in fighting extreme poverty and disease in The Gambia and in Africa, it is not enough to guarantee an impact on poverty reduction. Short term fixes and 'more of the same' will not help. Externally funded programmes to rescue African countries continue to marginalize African alternatives. There has been no inclusion of the historical, social, economic policy contexts of African communities. Now is the time for African leaders, media and civil society to promote their own agency in every situation, analysis and critique.

Understanding of this current crisis in Africa requires an examination of old assumptions, development goals and research models through the creation of spaces and platforms for African thinking, knowledge, and inspiration. This is required for overcoming the knowledge gap between academy and community, which arises from the limited capacity of African researchers and institutions (Jaycox, 1993; Sawyerr, 2004b).

ERNWACA and GESDRI will use the objectives of this research study to contribute to the building of research capacity in The Gambia. Developing capacity of the participants while

they discuss their own Gambian epistemology, will empower researchers to develop, conduct, trial and manage this empirical research program. Participant's voices, imagery, and words will direct Gambian/African research and policy in ways that reflect African realities. New frameworks to align developed country and African interventions could achieve significant results.

The Gambi Poverty Alleviation Report (The Gambi, 2011) reported that The Gambia faced a serious challenge in its efforts to reliably track the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The report stated the capacity of administrative, financial and planning structures at the local level will have to be seriously enhanced. The report went on to suggest there is an absence of an integrated planning framework that can effectively monitor national and local progress towards achievement of the MDGs.

This research study could contribute to establishing frameworks and effective systems for improved economic and social governance. The emphasis will be on capacity development, through Gambian input into indigenous priorities, which will contribute to bridging the divide between community and academy.

Intention of the research study:

The intention of this research study is to build capacity for Gambian researchers by participating in an action research process, which will support the re-thinking, revisioning and reframing of Gambian research to represent Gambian voices, goals and objectives, in other words to locate Gambian research from a Gambian viewpoint.

This will build and strengthen sustainable indigenous capacity for social and economic policy analysis and development in The Gambia, while building efficient bridges between

research, policy and practice.

CODESRIA's goal is to catalyse the social (and economic) research community to overcome the impasse in development theory and policy that they see as having heavily penalized Africa (CODESRIA, 2007). Their call seeks the development of frameworks for African solutions to African problems and "pursue the discussion of alternative strategies for pulling out of the dead end reached by global capitalism" (Amin, 2008, p. 14). The rethinking of African development with African strategic priorities involves the creation and institutionalising of Afro-centric approaches advanced by Asante (1987, 1988, 1990, & 1995). This addresses African epistemologies, methodologies, pedagogies, practice and philosophies, none of which are mirrored in current African research.

Afro-centricity according to Mafeje (2008) "can be regarded as methodological requirement for decolonising knowledge in Africa or as an antidote to Eurocentrism through which all knowledge about Africa has been filtered" (p.106). Africans are calling for a return to indigenous languages, cultures, traditions, values, "as a means to emancipate themselves from colonial domination in all spheres of life and assert Africa's uniqueness in the world" (Cossa, 2009, p. 9). It is time to promote and recognise indigenous knowledge systems to move from entrenched linear thinking and include the knowledge of local communities with long histories, as a powerful resource for combating marginalisation and impoverishment. This would be more effective for the policy community and a move forward from having to tailor research results, programmes or activities, to narrowly defined donor needs.

GESDRI and ERNWACA hope to work with UNESCO and CODESRIA, The University of the Gambia, and Ministries of Basic & Secondary and Higher Education Research, Science and Technology, to provide space for critical dialogue between students, researchers, policy

makers and the community (including elders) through a series of ten workshops using data from Phase One of this study, to talk, buffer the way, create a model, something that measures Gambian knowledge.

From this dialogue begin to map indigenous Gambian frameworks of knowledge, legitimising ways of knowing in a Gambian learning paradigm and developing an understanding of Gambian epistemology. This will contribute to a framework for Gambian underpinnings to research and development. The strategic value of such research would include redressing of imbalances resulting from Western development paradigms. An African/Gambian research epistemology would be an alternative analysis, a new orientation towards research and provide a measure against which local research and development projects could be judged. The study will provide "a new research agenda within the African academy and an emergence of a conscientious intellectual cadre to carry it through" (Lebakeng, 2010, p. 28).

Background to the research:

The African systems of governance have been inherited from the colonial period. There has been a loss of African values to fit with systems for Africa. The suppression of African knowledge has come about with the phenomenon of racism, colonisation, imperialism and neo liberalism.

Dominant Western philosophies such as globalisation are not a new feature for Africa. They have assumed a different focus in the past:

- The slave trade that went on for over 300 years devastated and dislocated tribal life. Societal systems were put down, eroded, and governance based on consensual

decision-making was lost.

- Colonisation followed with the colonial administration cutting across African kingdoms and ethnic groups creating 'new' nations. The Gambia and Senegal are examples of this. (Important to note, colonial rule deemed the historical advance of the African had always depended on stimulus arising from contacts with outsiders) (Faal, 1999).

- Colonisation provided a legal framework for the dependence of African economies on Western economies. African economies became producers of raw materials for industries in the advanced capitalist societies and

- Neo-colonisation set trade patterns, investment arrangements and political alliances with advantages for the West.

Africa has a complex and unique legacy. Reports indicated that Western solutions have not worked for Africa. Most African countries are debt ridden and debt servicing constitutes a huge chunk of all national budgets in Africa. African states struggle with impositions by Western agencies. For over five decades Africa has pursued "development along the path traced by Western experience" (Nyamnjoh, 2010, p. 2). "Progressive social change in Africa requires structural change, both within Africa and in the international economic order" (Jones, 2005, p. 1). Based on the African call for their own approaches to African focused solutions, there is a serious need to revisit the dominant epistemological underpinnings of prevalent development research and assumptions that are foreign to most of Africa's people (Nyamnjoh, 2005). "Researchers have adopted research techniques designed to answer to the needs of Western societies and which do not always suit African cultures or societies, that are in the main rural and non-literate" (Nyamnjoh, 2010, p. 2).

Literature Review:

The literature for this research reflected African and Maori voices concern over the

domination of Western philosophies, theories, concepts, techniques and rules in social science research methodologies. It challenged the application of mainstream research approaches across cultures and suggests other ways of doing research that accommodates the diversity of culture.

Any research must take into account cultural diversity if it is to provide an effective means of addressing priorities in health, agriculture, education and welfare. This is especially important for indigenous peoples as they continue to experience significant disparities when compared with other populations.

One of the major weaknesses of contemporary social research in and about Africa is its lack of careful attention to epistemological methodological issues. Nwosu (2005) suggested that communication behaviours in Africa are often examined from the prism of Western rationality, including the application of concepts derived in the West. Without Afro-centric underpinning to guide African research, hence the reliance on theories generated from a culturally different environment (Taylor & Nwosu, 2001). This view was shared by Tuhiwai Smith (1999), when she noted that "the word itself, 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (p. 1). She argued that Western ways of knowing and researching are assumed within the traditional research paradigms and other cultural ways of knowing are marginalized. "To return to Afrocentricity as a perspective on African studies….moves the Africian experience to the middle stage (Mazrui, 2005, p. 77). Afro-centricity is a theory of change advanced by Asante (1987, 1988, 1990, & 1995) and "the essence of an African cultural revival and, indeed survival" (Asante, 1995, p. 1).

Muranga (2005) wrote that "Africa's most important challenge is the lack of understanding of the social struggles of the poor majority followed by the implementation of effective

solutions that get to the root of these struggles" (p. 8). He highlighted the lack of recognition of local knowledge with the community voice usually being interpreted by Europeans. One of the major weaknesses of mainstream research approaches has been a failure and neglect to understand historic social conditions, relations and struggles.

Africa's slide into poverty continues to occur almost in inverse proportion to the increase in explanations, theories and strategies developed to tame this situation. What we have are cosmetic strategies deployed by the global north and designed to deal on a daily basis with urgencies (Muranga, 2005).

It is clear that we are witnessing the implementation of knowledge as a critical, determining factor in economic growth and the standard of living. "Differences between Western and indigenous conceptions of the world have always provided stark contrasts. Indigenous beliefs were considered shocking, abhorrent and barbaric" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 43). Indigenous scholars such as Tuhiwai Smith have raised awareness of the importance of indigenous knowledge in sustainable development. Lebakeng (2010) writes that

> The growing interest in the potential contribution of indigenous knowledge to sustainable development is becoming manifest at the time when current development models have proven unsuccessful. Millions of marginalized African people all over the continent are still excluded from the mainstream of development initiatives, processes and end-goals. (p. 25)

Research studies based on indigenous research methodologies may be likely to produce results that would make a difference to Gambian communities.

CODESRIA's (2007) strategic plan promotes rethinking of Africa's development relevant to African predicaments and aspirations. "Rethinking requires support for scholarship that deconstructs epistemological fallacies, informed by ambitions of dominance that have

sustained the caricaturing of African social realities. Such scholarship should legitimize African encounters and forms of knowing and knowledge construction" (Nyamnjoh, 2009b, p. 59). "Africa calls for re-acknowledgement of the power and contemporary relevance of indigenous knowledge and its systematic integration into development policy formulation and education systems" (Lebakeng, 2010, p. 26).

African content has a lot to offer the world. It is crucial for the African academy to reclaim the right to independent thinking about development, and the domestic and/or global policy spaces for the exercise of thinking (CODESREIA, 2005).

Methodological approach:

Phase One: Critique: from the data, a brief analysis of what has been discussed:
Phase One of this three-phase research study has been taking place in The Gambia over the past two months (March, April 2011) by ERNWACA researchers. Through a series of critical dialogue using open-ended interviews and a conversation forum (about twenty nine people) at the ERNWACA Café, the research provided spaces for people to talk, as a beginning to re-think African/Gambian Development, the content being Gambian people and their stories.

The first phase of this action research study was not based on a single paradigm. Its purpose was to promote dialogue between about twenty participants from Higher Learning Institutions, policy makers, politicians, women activists, elders and research students. This was to create paradigmic dialogue aimed at producing something new and comprehensive which captured some of the key features of action research.

Included in data from Phase One of this research study, the voices of Gambian participants,

suggest that:

> Western ideology cannot alone serve the needs of Gambian people. There is no doubt that in the past donor partners have been heavily relied on, as it was believed they had the ideas, money and the technical know how to implement new projects and strategies etc. Gambians accepted everything that came to them. Over time it has been realised that most donor driven projects have not been based on Gambian realities and because of this have not been sustained.

> There were two histories and two levels of thinking.

Most agreed that developing an indigenous knowledge base would be vital to "deal with our realities." The point was made that Africa was marginalized because it was not speaking in one voice at the regional, state or international level.

> We have to undergo a de-colonisation of the mind, start thinking and participating for Africa to be present.

> We still think what we have here is inferior, colonial strategies are still in place for example 'divide and rule.' The issue of local languages was critical, at the informal level it was always used but in the formal sector English was the language of business and governance. The question was asked how do we use our own knowledge in education, agriculture, child-care, or health to preserve it for the next generation?

> We need to own our knowledge. Gambians need to focus and build our own capacities through looking into the Gambian context and be able to use it to respond to our own needs. We want our African traditions formalized. Our systems are devoid of Gambian values.

> Africans need to go back to the bush to be reminded who we are, the moment we fail in something we fail to look within, and instead we cast our eye outside. The problem is people believe their traditions have no value and that modernity is best so local culture is being abandoned.

> African epistemology accepts the link between the natural, physical, metaphysical, visible and invisible, real and unreal. The process of analysis is not strict or clear cut. Africans could begin by decolonising knowledge at African universities in teaching programs, orientating to African needs. Ownership of knowledge belongs to Africa.

> How can the important role of communication, link with policy makers, how can Africa appropriate this? It's a political question, a causal link, how can African knowledge, African cultural knowledge be built? In authentic terms, how can African values be introduced? It's a political and economic issue, and needs to be an

> objective for policy in development, as well as a direction for African well-being, the meaning of African life, building on African content in response to African needs.

> Africa is not poor we have one of the richest continents on earth and we cannot make use of our resources. We have to challenge the myth that we are poor, we have vast natural resources, why are people starving on this continent?

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education has begun to break this cycle by working with donors strategically to drive Gambian processes. Most exciting of all is after twenty years of debate, the Ministry is introducing core education texts in five local languages in the first three years of primary education. This is being implemented in September 2011. English will be taught as a subject. This is a huge step forward to revitalising indigenous knowledge, the beginning of a new relevant framework in schools, and the reform of African education systems.

> We need studies for change, African owned in our own context to blend with what is already in place. How would we use this, what would it look like as an analytical tool, what a contribution to Gambian knowledge to get a framework to evolve from our own work. Having our own framework would be a major contribution, and a focal point for research, something we could use to evaluate our work. Such a framework would be a major change.

It has been established through Phase One of this project, there is a critical need for African/Gambian theory, values and thought to be encouraged and used. This would not only begin to bridge the divide between the community and the academy but also strengthen the foundations for African led inquiries, and introduce new ways of working and supporting programmes conceived, developed and led by Africans. Such action enables people to become chief actors in their own development, leading to liberation, empowerment, emancipation, democracy, and sustainability of programmes (Friere, 1973).

Phase Two: create space for dialogue/ deconstruction and Phase Three: all discourse / transformative strategy:

Research capacity will be developed through the context of developing a Gambian-centric paradigm which will strengthen people's own capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to organise themselves to act on these as a basis for development and research. This research programme is locally driven with the outputs determined by The Gambian community's needs. This alternative study seeks to harness human capital, organisational resources and social capital within the local research community and leverage them to solve problems and maintain the well-being of their community (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001).

This is a revolutionary shift in thinking, a change from one way of thinking to another. Afro-centricity as a theory of change intends to re-locate the African person as a subject. Gambian researchers will re-assert their own central role within the context of Gambian/African History, from the perspective of Gambian people, centred, orientated, located and grounded. The immediate challenge for the participants will be to tackle the question of local values and development and to produce the intellectual tools for unravelling it. The proposed workshops will be designed to provide dialogue through the participation of researchers, policy makers and practitioners who will contribute their knowledge, experiences, viewpoints and perspectives relevant to the issue of indigenous self-determined research.

Aims of the ten participatory workshops led by a group of African experts and researchers selected for the task, (through CODESRIA as a part of their Alternative Methodology Workshop Series), will involve a series of workshops and seminars in which well-

considered papers grounded on national, regional or local reality, will be presented to encourage and stimulate participants to reflect on and critique existing theories (deconstruction). This presupposes a rejection of dominant theory and an awareness and knowledge of indigenous modes of thought and doing.

From this dialogue themes will emerge as a basis for rigorous and creative theoretical reconstruction to establish a Gambian monitoring framework of local indicators. This could provide a case study for other African institutions as an example of critical research informed by Africans/Gambians.

The workshops will target policy makers, politicians, women activists, research students as well as lecturers teaching methodology courses and could become part and parcel of the curriculum at University of The Gambia. Other linkages and alliances between CODESRIA, other African University spaces, ERNWACA, GESDRI, Gambian policy makers, ECOWAS, and other African research networks, could be strategised and strengthened.

The workshops, based on the philosophy of Afro-centricity as a theory of change, 'an African recovery of thought,' will provide an opportunity for its participants to refine and agree on Gambian frameworks of knowledge to harmonise approaches to research by seeking outcomes:

- To develop multiple strategies that account for language, culture and knowledge
- To develop critique that is accurate and insightful
- To move beyond reactive politics and are positive and proactive
- To be alert to the politics of distraction
- To grow organic and traditional intellectual impetus

- To heal the divide between community and the academy

- To theorize struggle and transformation in Gambian terms

- To focus on transformation that develops vertical and horizontal outreaches

- To use innovative thinking and practice

And considering Decolonising Tools such as:

1) How is power negotiated? How does power work (i.e. in the family)

2) How do you change power imbalance in relationship?

3) Transforming what is already in place?

And to discuss:

1) How do we identify or define essential traits?

2) How do we practice what we know?

3) How do we know what it looks like when we critique it?

Through a process of action research, dialogue will draw on participant's culture to inform their positions. These positions will be influenced by language, environment, attitudes, relationships, negotiation, tolerance for diverse perspectives, participants own context, integrity, be solution orientated and will require concept translators.

Participants will understand that culture has currency in research and will be considering how to work with cultural concepts within a dominant paradigm. Theorising will use Afro-centricity and Gambian indigenous references, as a base and also draw on other knowledge.

This initiative will introduce the establishment of a Gambian monitoring framework of indicators. The workshops will provide an opportunity for participants to harmonise approaches to research, agree on a cultural framework with indigenous Gambian elements to co-exist with Western ones, and trial these approaches.

(The above aims for discussion and considerations are based on ideas from Maori scholars, Graham Hingangaroa Smith and Linda Tuhiwai Smith at The Art of Dialogue Workshop, Communicating Change at the Sharing Power Conference, Whakatane, Aotearoa New Zealand, 13 January 2011)

Summary:

Africa has 'just entered a new century…of deconstruction and reconstruction," and has to be prepared for the "'reality of tomorrow'" (Thiam, 2010, p. 30). Thiam goes on to write studying African's own contribution to the formalisation of Africa's heritage and the formulation of Africa's own relevant strategies would be a huge jump forward and enable a 'pull out' of under-development and "will end once and for all the isolation and weakness" (p. 32) of the African continent.

This research study is an attempt to create space for an alternative world through alternative scholarship and research in tune with African values, revelatory of social theory and practice in Gambian/African contexts and relevant to the development needs of the continent which regard the lived experience of Gambians/Africans.

The research-training workshops designed and led by CODESRIA will build capacity through focusing on new innovative and critical approaches by meaningful deconstruction and reconstruction of research theories. This promotes cutting edge research as well as mentoring participants in the development and trialing of a research culture that is being called for (CODESRIA, 2007).

The workshops will target University of The Gambia lecturers, who have taken part in Phase One, and the outcomes could become part of the curriculum at the university as well

as integrated into existing research and policy. Other linkages and alliances for example ERNWACA, participating Ministries, other research institutions and African University spaces will be strategised and strengthened as well. This is an opportunity for transforming social (and economic) policy through rethinking and widening Africa's/Gambia's vision for social development and developing the instruments for achieving these. This research study is intended as a coherent national level Gambian effort in building institutional capacity for policy learning.

This research study fits well into UNESCO's programme on "Social Transformation in Africa" and is also in line with their "Ethics of Knowledge Production." The research study has the potential to build capacity for the Gambian participants, and contribute to the promotion of innovation, research and development by strengthening and networking Research Centres, Universities, and other higher education institutions and disseminating research findings in such a way to ensure region and continent wide applicability.

To establish a new Afro-centric/Gambian framework for research and development could build efficient bridges between the community and academy (the knowledge gap), research policy and practice, nationally, regionally and internationally. CODESRIA has a focus on building a sustainable platform for strategic discussions about development and research paradigms. This research study reinforces CODESRIA's quest for "alternatives that… consolidate and extend the social sciences as a body of knowledge that is relevant for understanding and transforming livelihood, for the better" (CODESRIA, 2007, p. 1). CODESERIA publications have been a catalyst for "deconstruction of existing theories and rigorous and creative methodological and theoretical reconstruction that helps the continent understand and project itself into the 21st century" (Nyamnjoh, 2009, p. 62).

Financial analysis:

Stage 1 of the research process will be ERNWACA submitting this collaborative proposal to UNESCO (Dakar) for funding of a series of workshops over a ten day period with the intention of building capacity for local researchers in The Gambia, through deconstruction of dominant paradigms and transformation in developing an alternative framework using processes that support local Gambian self determined research methodology.

Stage 2: With CODESRIA (Dakar), ERNWACA researchers and research assistants plan the workshop programme agenda including criteria, purpose, ground rules, application procedures and relationship building. The planning of a structured programme of presentations to stimulate critical dialogue / discussions will be decided.

Stage 3: Deconstruction: (week one) Open exchange of views involving the participants in a workshop led by CODESRIA and ERNWACA senior researchers, will explore their experiences regarding the nature of knowledge, the interactions between different epistemic communities, the role of power and domination, the limitations of Western science and the potentials of non-Western ways of knowing.

The workshops are meant to serve as a critical space that would offer experience sharing in the basic epistemological and empirical prerequisites for rigorous scientific imagination.

 Stage 4: Transformation: (week two) Reflection, planning, and group work. To imagine the ways, to bridge epistemologies between local knowledge and Western science, because of the strong domination of the latter and its limitation to rational local knowledge. How do we know what we know? What does Afro-centric theory look like? How to map Gambian indigenous frameworks of knowledge? Discuss questions and protocols of an ethical code,

as well as control of methodology and research agenda by Gambian peoples and researchers.

Expected outcomes:

The dialogue will serve as an opportunity for;

- The development of Gambian /Afro-centric research paradigm
- The development of an indigenous Gambian knowledge base
- Researchers' capacity developed through innovative thinking and practice
- An increased awareness of issues
- Community/academy divide diminished
- Increased research capacity
- The proceedings of each workshop published to bring conclusions to a wider audience and to invite critical response
- Support for African solutions to African problems

Programme design:

The proposed ten-day programme will focus on the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes towards the achievement of a Gambian research framework in the management of research, and in the application of new research methods in the Social Sciences. The programme will intentionally move away from specialised training courses to a creative and balanced approach. Programme content will discuss deconstruction of mainstream approaches:

1) Current qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

2) Current theoretical and practical aspects of research methodologies (because knowledge and understanding of both aspects are considered to be essential).

3) Policy and practice in current research management/project design etc.

Table 1: The design aspects of the programme

The Workshops	Workshop duration	Mode of attendance	Workshop Content
Workshop	Ten days	Full-time	Research training for Social Scientists

Admission requirements:

The normal **minimum** admission requirements for the programme will be as follows:

1)   For the Workshop

     a)   A recognised Advanced University Diploma (or equivalent)

     b)   Appropriate work experience of at least two years in an organisation

     c)   A keen interest in this emancipatory research

Table 2: Planned activities of the ten day programme

Planned Activity (Workshops)
Week one
Deconstruction of mainstream   research methods
Dialogue for The Group project, knowledge building, reflection
Basic analyses of the discussion data and Group project Report themes
Week two
Transformative strategies
Transformative strategies
Management of outcomes

The target groups:

Participants for the Workshops will be drawn from institutions, which play significant roles

in economic and social development of the Gambia;

1) Primary and secondary school managers and teaching staff (in both urban and rural areas)

2) Key administrators, faculty staff & senior students from all tertiary education

institutions

3) Representatives of key government and non-government agencies/departments

4) Who have demonstrated interest/commitments to research activities that are rooted in addressing the economic and social needs of the country

5) Who wish to learn how to build multi-disciplinary and multi-partner research teams

6) Who are committed to a new and comprehensive approach to knowledge generation, application and monitoring of research results

7) And who have taken part in Phase One

Also existing and potential line-managers in organisations involved in research (such as Departments of State, the Tertiary Education institutions, NGOs, appropriate Research Centres/Units, and Training Units in Industrial/Commercial organisations). The local manager will aim to recruit participants, some of whom will have taken part in Phase One.

An individual interview, (with the ERNWACA), Workshop coordinator) will seek to establish the potential of the candidate with regard to the demands of the workshops.

Programme delivery:

In determining the mode of delivery for the programme a number of factors have been taken into account to ensure that the strategies adopted for the delivery will achieve effectively the stated aim and learning outcomes. Thus, the key factors are deemed to be:

1) The access of the targeted groups to the programme

2) The nature of the subject matter (that is, Gambian research paradigm development, training and research management)

3) The availability of qualified staff for the programme

4) The quality of the programme

5) The cost-effectiveness of the programme

Programme management:

A Programme Manager from ERNWACA will assume overall responsibility for the planning, resourcing, operation, evaluation and administration of the programme and will manage the Workshop programme.

Teaching staff:

For each CODESRIA workshop there will be:

a) An appropriately qualified Resource Person who will deliver the programme through lead lectures and seminars, project work and group activities

b) Tutorial support from an appropriately qualified Facilitator

Secretarial facilities:

A part-time secretary for the whole programme will carry out secretarial work and record the content of the workshops.

Programme content:

Workshop participants will enter this programme from a variety of backgrounds in terms of their subject specialisations. However, this variety of backgrounds will be put to good use through the participants working on a group project to **discuss and record** Gambian epistemology (for the design a Gambian research paradigm), in addition to lectures, seminars and group tutorials. The group research project will be a major component of the programme content for the development of transformative strategies.

Content for workshops:

(a) Problem analysis (deconstruction). Issues of local research in context of mainstream approaches:

(i)   Role of dominant 'theory' in research and development.

Research design:

(i) Qualitative and quantitative approaches

(ii) Data Collection methods

(iii) Data processing (by computer)

(iv) Organisation of group work

(v) Data analysis methods

(vi) Validity, reliability and ethical issues

(b) Fundamental themes (in connection with data collected from the group project):

(i) Themes emerging from the data

(ii) Analysis of themes

(iii) Correlation analysis

(c) Report writing or development of a Gambian research framework to be developed from the content of the Workshops i.e. Transformative research strategies:

(i) Aims and priorities for this research

(ii) Research and policy-making

(iii) Research Plans and Programmes

(iv) Funding of Research

(v) Implementing Gambian centric research

(vi) Advocacy for, and dissemination of, research products through research networks

For each Workshop

(a) There will be an appropriate combination of modes of learning and teaching, including project-based learning, teacher-directed learning, and group work; and each workshop will start with the pre-determined theoretical content (to be decided by CODESRIA).

(b) Group work for the Workshops will focus on social/economic/educational problems; statements and questions suggested by the participants in Phase One, and from workshop dialogue which will lead toward Gambian epistemology and the development of a Gambian centric research framework.

Programme quality:

The quality of the programme will be assessed on the basis of the evidence obtained from the achievement of the participants against the stated learning outcomes. For each workshop, the Programme team (that is, the Programme Manager, the Resource Person and the Facilitator) will meet frequently to monitor the operation of the programme, and hence (for quality assurance purposes) discuss such matters as the difficulties experienced by the participants, resource allocations and course content. The Programme team will also develop a self-completion questionnaire for the summative evaluation of each workshop. The questionnaire will cover, amongst other things, such matters as:

(a) The effectiveness and outcomes of the workshop

(b) The tutorial support and feedback

The questionnaire will incorporate a self-assessment item, which asks each participant to reflect retrospectively on their learning experiences, and, in particular, on the learning that has accrued from attending the workshop.

Financial analysis:

The cost of the proposed Research Capacity Building programme is estimated to be as shown below.

1. The cost for Workshops for ten day's duration, for 20 participants plus national and international resource persons/ facilitator/secretary:

Table 3: Costs for Workshops

1.1 Workshop Package		**US$**
(a) Food	25 x 10 days x 25 US$ per day	6,250
(b) Hall	10 days x 200 US$ per day	2,000
1.2 Resource Persons (national & external)	(a) Package Tour (from UK)	3,000
	(b) from another African country	3,000
	(c) Consultancy fee for For 2 weeks (10 days) x2	4,000
1.3 Local Facilitator	1 x 10 days x 100 US$ per day	1,000
1.4 Transport allowance	20 x 10 days x 10 US$ per day	2,000
1.5 Secretarial and Technician Services	3 X 10 days x 10 US$	300
1.6 Stationery and Handouts		400
	Sub-total	21, 950
1.7 Administration cost		2,195
1.8 Contingencies		1,000
1.9 Programme Management		1,500
	Total	**26,645**

(Note: (a) the cost of equipment and of the SPSS computer package will be additional and could amount to some 15,000 US\$. However, it may be cheaper, in the short-term,

   (i) Negotiate the use of the SPSS package with WAEC or DoSE or GTTI

Dissemination:

The publication of each workshop dialogue (through CODESRIA and ERNWACA websites) will encourage researchers to disseminate outcomes of their research to the African Policy Community. It will also expose the policy community to the development of alternative indigenous research paradigms.

The arguments for the development of indigenous research methodologies, which include cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of research methodology, will be reflected on in the workshops with the aim of being built into research explicitly as part of an indigenous Gambian research design. Colvin & Seck (2004) wrote that a

new type of research, policy research was emerging in Africa, which evolved with new partnerships between researchers and stakeholders, sought homegrown solutions that took account of local institutions and political economy, and was discussed in public. The challenge was to move beyond the observation and undertake an analysis of how this synergy might be captured in practice.

The experiences and views presented above show that bridging traditional knowledge and modern science is a difficult process and a major challenge. Better understanding of the inter-cultural relations in the past and present, the decolonisation of relationships, as well as acceptance of indigenous knowledge systems are a few of the necessary first steps in developing Gambian centred evidence for policy formation, implementation and evaluation.

Summary

This chapter discussed and converged the findings from the qualitative research approaches and highlighted key findings of the research. The key findings were divided into five general concepts: role of place, history and genealogy in knowledge; the perceived duality of education systems; that traditional values and beliefs are fundamental to knowledge or knowing something; the idea that knowing culture restored culture; and the role of the community in knowledge production. The five concepts enabled me to obtain an effective and clear way of approaching ideas relevant to Gambian epistemology. These concepts arose from the three major themes, eight sub-themes and twenty-six epistemological threads.

Also discussed are the five sub-themes and threads discussed in the conversations by the highest number of participants. These were: education including language; cultural loss; a new sustainable model; developing a local cultural research framework and African development. This chapter begins the recognition that Gambian African people have a specific epistemology shaped by their cultural values, beliefs and practices.

The critical thinking of Gambian research participants is their contribution to Africa's search for a new model for research development in the context of globalisation. It is an area that requires more research, national and international dialogue. It illustrated the deficiency of models which isolate informal Gambian societies' action and voices from the formal Gambian sector.

The last chapter concludes the research and provides some policy recommendations and further research projects.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of the research process which begins with reflections on my research experience - both the motivation for and the activity of the work. Then I discuss the methodology adopted to conduct the research and the contribution of this research to international knowledge and scholarship. The chapter goes on to present the application of findings that emerged from the data, which are evident in a research proposal written in The Gambia during the research process (see Chapter Six). Also based on the research findings, this chapter highlights the limitations of the research, the potential for future research and some policy recommendations applicable to both The Gambia and other African nations.

The research experience

I left Canada in 2006 after an extensive international working life which included The Gambia, West Africa, as well as working with Maori scholars who were based at the University of British Columbia (UBC). When I returned to Aotearoa New Zealand, I worked on contract at Nga Pae o te Maramatanga[18], at the University of Auckland. This experience taught me about the concerted efforts of Maori in the application of Maori research methodologies. This included cultural protocols, values and behaviours to reassert Maori ownership and decision-making. The development and implementation of this Maori research paradigm has become known as kaupapa Maori[19] research. Kaupapa Maori research is based on a uniquely Maori way of looking at the world, with an appreciation of the fact that contemporary Maori knowledge derives from their ancestral past.

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[18] Nga Pae o te Maramatanga, the National Institute of Research Excellence for Maori Development and Advancement, University of Auckland
[19] Kaupapa Maori. Maori philosophy and practice

This association and transformation in Maori research has been inspirational, as I understood that this was a missing link in Africa. The challenge was to design a research study as a catalyst or a motivation for Gambian researchers and educators to think differently about their needs, aspirations and preferences. The challenge was to provide intellectual tools for the freeing up of thinking and imagination and the unravelling of Gambia's culture through a collective enterprise, while building capacity for Gambian researchers through introducing the topic, raising the relevant questions and prompts, then setting up the machinery for further discussion and research.

As noted in the Literature (Chapter Three), currently Afro-centric underpinnings are rarely used to guide African research, and African voices are seldom heard. One of the major challenges facing most African countries, such as The Gambia, is to develop new approaches to research and knowledge generation in order to address the priorities of poverty reduction and economic growth.

Within Aotearoa New Zealand, Maori problems did not yield to orthodox methods driven by deficient models of thinking, to bring change. Maori research showed what a significant impact Kaupapa Maori research application has had by turning the 'gaze' around. Maori development began to have meaning for the communities who were enacting the development because it had relevance to shifting the socio-economic conditions of their lives.

The impact of my twenty years of work experience and research in Africa has been profound and on returning to Aotearoa, I could not turn away. Instead, this thesis has been a way to fulfil the responsibility such work entails. My research process has not been easy

but in a way I had no choice in the matter. Such a focused and in-depth research project has been a huge challenge, both personally and professionally.

In The Gambia there was a culture of silence about the political situation and about events taking place (see Chapter Two). I had been in the country many times and for reasonably long periods, but this time the situation was extremely tense. On returning home to Aotearoa New Zealand after taking part in the research study, I had a huge dilemma about whether or not to report on both the political-situation including the human rights issue in my thesis. Despite the unspoken understanding of keeping silent with my colleagues at ERNWACA in The Gambia, my supervisor in New Zealand told me there was no way I could remain silent about this situation in a PhD study. I became very anxious, knowing that to disclose the situation brought danger to the family who had given me a home and the participants who had spoken out.

I began the study with my literature review, urged by the acceleration of poverty and desperation I knew existed in The Gambia through my own active engagement with these issues over two decades. I was also encouraged by African scholars such as Claude Ake, Paul Tiyambe Zelza, Ali Mazrui, Achille Mbembe, Mamood Mandani, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and others (see Literature Review section in Chapter Three), who were all stressing the need for a new paradigm for the African state based on African theory, re-connecting with the positive values of African indigenous systems. In line with this were my conversations over the years with African colleagues and friends about new strategies for development research to reflect culturally appropriate methodologies, practices and values, and then translated into actionable programs.

Methodology: Action research

I shifted from my initial inquiry questions to problems defined by the first participant, which reflected a key aspect of action research - returning power to the community - rather than having control of the research and/or a political agenda. I was surprised, as I have already explained in the Action research section in Chapter Four, that my role was as a student working with participants or mentors.

However, I had the unique opportunity to reflect on commonalities and differences between the participants. I found this an epistemological challenge and a struggle, because of the logistics or contradiction of writing a Western academic thesis which required certain criteria. Because research conducted within The Gambian community has historically been exploitative and misrepresentative, I did not approach participants as a researcher in need of hard data, but rather as a student and as a friend making an inquiry. Approaching the twenty mentors and the thirty-one participants at the bantaba was for me very sensitive. I was in a position of trust. Participants were not named, (as described in the Ethical considerations section of Chapter Four), because of the politically sensitive time in the Gambia, but were given the opportunity for open discussions with the understanding their voices and ideas would be accurately portrayed. Yet, in analysing participants' stories in the Findings Chapter, there has been definitely a loss of their essential griot. In other words there was an epistemological cultural intervention through using Western instruments to break down conversations into little pieces because of academic expectations. I had difficulty editing participants' rich stories which were full of metaphors conveying deep ideas. The challenge during the analytical process was how to make what was clear to all participants

understandable within the New Zealand Aotearoa academic context without altering or distorting the meaning of their Gambian African knowledge and their world-views.

These philosophical, sociological and political inferences only extended the argument for the appropriation of relevant research methodologies that would take into account African knowledge systems as well as be directed toward addressing the needs of local African communities and building bridges between modern science and indigenous knowledge traditions.

Afro-centricity

I have been conscious throughout the writing of this thesis at my insistence of an Afro-centric approach to this research study, and despite this suggesting "cultural and social immersion as opposed to scientific distance" (Asante, 1997, p. 88), there was no way I as a New Zealander, no matter how well intentioned and experienced in Africa, could either make indigenous knowledge for Gambian Africans, or speak for Gambian Africans. In the same way Afro-centrism, first coined by African American, Mo Kete Asante (1987, 1988 & 1990), cannot be imported from the United States of America. I realised I was walking on hollowed[20] ground and that in using the term I could incur the wrath of African essentialists or African intellectuals. I used Afro-centricity as a term of reference in an attempt to challenge domination of Western methods and methodologies. Archie Mafeje (2008) summed it up when he wrote:

> Afrocentrism can be regarded as methodological requirement for decolonising knowledge in Africa or as an antidote to Eurocentrism through which all knowledge about Africa has been filtered. Although this has been justified by

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[20] I use the term 'hollowed' to depict the sense of having nothing underneath me

> appealing to dubious 'universal standards', the fact of the matter is that Africa is the only region which has suffered such total paradigmatic domination (p. 106).

Interpreted this way, it is hoped my implication of Afro-centrism will be accepted as a call for Afro-centric approaches and my relentless commitment to alternative development research models both in The Gambia and Africa.

During the research process I was definitely grounded in the Gambian worldview of knowing and pedagogy, with the research process evolving from the Gambian Chapter of ERNWACA and GESDRI. The success of this research was dependent on my strong partnership and robust relationship with ERNWACA and GESDRI. Gambian researchers established the research process, which meant high levels of empowerment, ownership and free meaningful and active participation by being in charge of the research process. Despite coming from different backgrounds, as far as it was possible I believed the research was a truly collaborative process. Participants were research colleagues who discussed critical perspectives on the issues under scrutiny with the researcher and the research partners being equal partners.

However, I knew, despite my rigour of an Afro-centric approach, I was definitely setting up a contrived situation where participants' information would not be finally analysed by them. Both the bantaba and the semi-structured interviews were usually rigorous and animated. Most participants brought friends and colleagues. Shared conversations or debates generally are the natural way for knowledge to be exchanged among Gambian African people.

Overall, using Afro-centric theory and methods benefited my intercultural scholarship in many ways. For example, it forced me to re-examine taken for granted assumptions of my

own perspectives such as methods and procedures, advanced my understanding of Gambian African communication and culture, and increased my interpretive ability, even though, as noted earlier in the chapter, I could not use participants' complete stories in my thesis. Another benefit was building the cultural agency of both researcher and participants. Also being with Gambian Africans as part of lively animated discussions, I was encouraged, and had the freedom to participate actively.

For me, it is important to discuss the paradox such work as this represents. All participants were fully informed that I was following a Western PhD process. Asking questions, giving prompts, capturing voices, the expectations of data, using Gambian people's experience and stories were aspects of this research study. Despite the Western rigour of a PhD I believe the research findings have recognised the Gambian voices. Participants or mentors re-affirmed that the centrality of Gambian cultural experience could be a place to begin their own approach to research. I believed mentors participated to such a high level because of my long association in The Gambia and that the research itself was viewed as a way forward, or a next step to bring clarity to political and identity issues as well as the wide concern amongst Gambian participants of the Gambian culture of colonisation and repression.

Research has a social context and does not occur in isolation and it is not beyond the culture or human motives of the researcher. Both these aspects can influence behaviour and judgements of research. I took seriously the relationship between knowledge and cultural power and continued during the research process to redefine the research within the Gambian African culture. During this process, Gambian researchers re-examined their own Gambian-centric approaches to research by contributing to knowledge information with the

objective of providing new perspectives and insights toward data. Many of the participants came to ERNWACA to provide input into the proposal for the next phase of the research, which aimed to provide rigorous guidelines against which Gambian research and development programmes could be assessed.

This discourse, putting Gambian ideals and values at the centre of the inquiry, revealed the significance of indigenous Gambian epistemologies and the notion of integrating Gambian based knowledge systems with modern knowledge systems to develop a distinct form of Gambian research.

Scholarly contribution and implication

This research made a significant contribution to the academic literature as well as provided a source of detailed material of considerable practical use to both individuals and organisations that choose to avail themselves of it.

The research provided an insight into the thinking of Gambian African people and their current situation in 2011. This has importance and relevance to contributions of theory-building, empirical knowledge and has practical implications for Gambian communities, public policy, teaching and learning as well as project design.

The research also has relevance to the fields of learning through community engagement and is central to advancing knowledge in the field or cross-cultural comparisons. The thesis clearly articulated why this matters to scholarship in the field. There is potential for further research, discussion, interaction, future publications and dissemination.

This thesis featured critical Gambian/African discussion and reflections on life, the economy, politics and developmental challenges. The objective being to recognise indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate knowledge and develop new frameworks for Gambian research and development with the ultimate idea of bridging these into Gambian governance frameworks.

The dialogue was designed to communicate change by discussing Gambian African ways of knowing to transform power. The importance of dialogue between different knowledge traditions is increasingly acknowledged as part of a global movement. Critical transformative dialogue is a strategy that seeks understanding, shared knowledge construction and transformation. These research findings suggested a major cause of under-development in The Gambia and Africa is because there is no African voice, no Gambian African perspective in the search for global solutions.

Despite the altruistic intentions of donor and international lending organisations advised by academic and consultancy experts concerning aid, concessions, trade, investment, defence and security, their involvement has taken Africa further into dependency. Academic and consultancy experts usually overlooked grassroots or indigenous activities because they do not fit with prevailing Western views about research and development. In fact, Western thought has largely excluded indigenous people. The research participants discussed Gambian ways of knowing and how the voices of marginalised communities could enhance understanding through the bridging of local knowledge systems and Western systems.

Gambian participants in this research study have indicated their desire to play a major role in the development of an alternative research model, which could be used as a model for other African countries. Participants believed that decolonisation and deconstruction were

related concepts. The interpretation in this thesis is that deconstruction provided the tools for action to decolonise the structural base for knowledge production.

Significance of research findings

The significance of this research lies in the participants' bold voices speaking about future-orientated politics and writing a proposal to develop a strategy to enable Gambian people to move forward beyond the colonial mind-set. This message has a deep meaning not only for The Gambia but the African continent as a whole. The research outputs confirmed a destination for Africa beyond the neo-liberal models constantly used in governance and research. The research mentors responded to complex questions and prompts in a variety of ways. Their conversations spoke to historical realities, Gambian ingenuity, and inventiveness and struggle to recreate their divided world.

The participants interrogated the crisis of cultural and economic dependence concerning Euro-centrism and discussed the grammar of decolonisation, including the question of what it meant to be African in the 21st century. Some participants provided deep reflections on the realities of the current (2011) oppressive Gambian state and their postcolonial realities. Participants also declared that both The Gambia and Africa had not been able to be free from epistemological colonisation and that schools, colleges and the university produced Western graduates who are alienated from Gambian society and Gambian values.

This research captured the reality of The Gambian world in 2011 as told by Gambian people. Participants discussed the role of power and its epistemology on institutions as well as the dominance of forms of knowing and knowledge on The Gambia and Africa.

Participants' new reading of Gambian African history and politics is exciting as they contested their struggle for 'freedom' and strive to reconstruct their identities. They agreed that a post-colonial Gambian African world has not yet been fully realised.

Limitations of the research

The most obvious limitations of this research study were:

- The lack of trust among Gambian people. as any government criticism might be reported

- Being under censorship

- The researcher being a Westerner, and all research was conducted in English

- Most of the participants lived in the greater Banjul area

- A lack of relevant literature about The Gambia and especially nothing Gambia-centric

- The silence of women at the bantaba

- The day of The ERNWACA café coinciding with 'Operation Clean Up The Gambia' which meant no road transport between 8 am-8 p.m. (announced the previous evening)

Application of findings

The findings from this thesis contributed to the achievement of outcomes called for by the African think tank and research institution CODESRIA. It also contributed to the objectives of ERNWACA, The Gambian Chapter and GESDRI through building capacity for Gambian researchers.

The thesis examined the transformative praxis and Gambian African commitment to find more effective and morally acceptable ways to reposition the world from Africa's own goals of self-realization. Engaging in the empowering framework of Afro-centricity and action research methodology was an opportunity for all participants to conceptualise and express the Gambian African emancipatory spirit. It is a distinct and unique form of theorising, reinforcing and re-establishing Gambian worldviews. This was essential to provide legitimate and valid Gambian voices in the thesis discussing Gambian aspirations and views of transforming their current research development impasse. The thesis has argued that Afro-centric theory and praxis is a responsive framework for Gambian African capacity building and research development policy, as it encompassed modes of consciousness-raising, deconstruction and emancipation.

Building capacity for Gambian researchers was attained through providing a platform for continuing Gambian African debate about the ethics of social science research protocols and ethical systems. Long disregarded in the privileging of Western ideas 51 Gambian participants considered Gambian epistemological, pedagogical and methodological issues.

Gambian indigenous knowledge systems include technical insights into social and spiritual phenomena which Gambian people used to validate what is important in their lives. Being Gambian connected them to their particular space and is crucial to their identity. In the past, Gambian African communities' knowledge and consensus was shared for the bettering of life.

Many of the research participants said that Gambian African knowledge systems were being eroded due to the demise of traditional systems and homogenisation of culture. The participants agreed about the urgent need to research and document this knowledge. The

collaborative proposal was to be used to develop Gambia's own guiding principles. They believed that the modernisation theory had failed to liberate The Gambia socially and economically. The result of the capitalist open market systems had also been unable to liberate the largely agrarian Gambian society. This had resulted in a deep structural malaise and divide between the formal and informal Gambian societies.

There is a wealth of Gambian indigenous knowledge, as this thesis indicated, and this is central to sustain the identity, pride and faith of Gambian people.

Future or further research

Globalisation or the global development of capital through The Gambia's colonial and neo-colonial periods has been devastating over centuries. It has brought deepening poverty; inequality, exploitation and deprivation to the majority of African populations, including The Gambia, and statistics are not improving. What is to be done? Can Gambians find responses informed by their own historical development? Is it possible for The Gambia to de-link its research or statistical evidence dependency on Western powers?

Participants in this research study reflected on the progress, challenges, and prospects of the democracy process in Africa and The Gambia. What they emphasised in the research conversations was that the worst form of colonisation had been epistemological which had colonised their national major institutions, imaginations and their minds. This is prevalent in Gambian institutions as well as in the discourses that govern the world. The University of The Gambia, as well as other African universities, have not produced knowledge for Gambian African empowerment because they largely function as Western institutions with their episteme developed by the West.

What is disturbing is despite African intellectuals producing journal articles and books that speak directly about democracy and development, their work has not assumed any dominance in local and global knowledge. As a consequence, the history of African political ideas has remained a neglected field of study. Most scholarship in Africa has responded to a reality and epistemology created by outsiders. Research participants insisted that it was time for Gambian as well as African academics to engage in knowledge that addressed current African problems created by 'colonial modernity.'

This research study took up the challenge to provide some intellectual tools to begin to unravel Gambians' foundation, culturally and practically. This was a collective enterprise, providing a useful and convenient platform to introduce the topic, raising the relevant prompts and setting up the machinery for further discussion and further research.

The participants emphasised that Gambian African culture is alive and well in the discourse of the informal community. This discourse revealed the significance of indigenous Gambian epistemologies for research. There are two limitations to this that arose from the research mentors. They were 1) how could knowledge produced and circulated within communities be accessed to make them subjects of teaching and learning and 2) how could educational research assist in this process of integration to heal the divide between the community and the academy?

The potential for further research programmes is:

- Student development and learning through service learning and community engagement

- Program evaluation and assessment

- Community partnerships and reciprocity

- Faculty roles and professional development

- Theoretical or conceptual frameworks to advance research

- Learning outcomes for students

Closing

I close this thesis with an excerpt from my thesis journal:

> May 02/2011. Packed tight for home. Departure day is here. I can't quite believe it. This morning I completed my work as far as I can go – I have spoken to most of my participants. My hosts have been to visit me and I leave with an open heart.
>
> Five men, including the Iman from Serrekunda, read the *Koran* in my honour – very beautiful sitting under the avocado tree listening to the soft chanting. Then they ate the 'sheep' (goat in my world) that was bought yesterday (poor little skinny thing) at the market. The compound children kissed my hands and asked me when I was coming back.
>
> Farewell to The Gambia – tinged with tears, I drove through the sandy streets with my dear friends. I have learned so much living with such a wonderful family and being able to conduct this work through the interest and loyalty of research colleagues and friends (FIELD DIARY).

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Appendix A: Key Questions to be Explored/Addressed and PowerPoint Slides
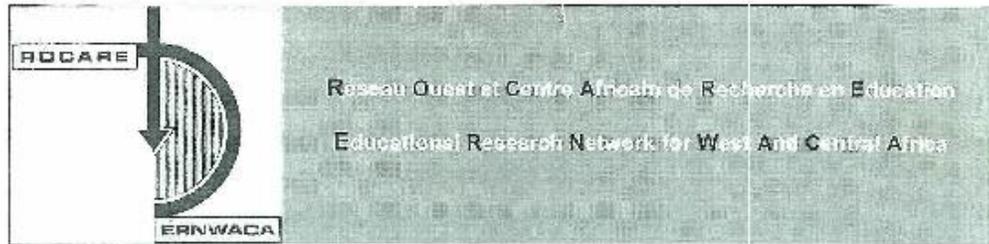
ROCARE

Réseau Ouest et Centre Africain de Recherche en Education

Educational Research Network for West And Central Africa

ERNWACA

THE GAMBIA CHAPTER
NO 3, MILE 7 QUARTERS, P O BOX 4457 BAKAU, TEL: 4497814, MOBILE: 9902867
EMAIL: maxnjie@yahoo.co.uk

Key Questions to be Explored/addressed

The objectives of the study are:
- To extend Gambian research capacity through a critical inquiry into the nature of Gambian knowledge
- To raise new issues or new perspectives toward Gambian research
- To develop a Gambian centric research framework

Indicative questions for open-ended interviews will be:

- Where did community/national discussions usually take place in traditional times in The Gambia?

- How is this, the same, or different compared with today?

- What were the outcomes of community discussions in the old days and today?

- Have you ever been interviewed by 'outside' researchers for 'outside' funded projects? (for example UNDP, CIDA). If so, how did these interviews go?

- Have you been interviewed by Gambians about The Gambia? Or things Gambian?

- If so, how did these interviews go?

- Do you know the history of your clan? How old were you when you learnt this? How did you learn this? What people or tribe told you? Are their different learning processes for girls/boys (by status for example)?

- What are the behaviours you see as essential to Gambian culture/ tradition/ beliefs? Do you practice these beliefs? (explain). Are these different for male/female/status etc? How do you identify essential Gambian traits or old ways?

- Are colonial/western power relations in place in the Gambia? What are some of the ways these power relations are shown? What do power relations re-produce?

African solutions to African Problems takes intention

- Rethink
- Reshape relationships
- Reclaim what it means to be African
- Re-explore who we are

Questions

- What is intuitive indigenous knowledge ?
- What are our stories?
- How can our stories be heard?
- How do we move forward to action ?
- How do we revitalise knowledge systems ?
- How is a framework for an indigenous economy developed ?

- Intelligent action requires large quantities of knowledge and bold thinking
- More authentic frameworks integrating principles left behind by ancestors
- Western thought has excluded indigenous peoples
- A shifting of the paradigm and new sustainable models

- Decisions made using a local cultural framework
- Self-determination is about regaining rights
- Challenging corruption and
- Challenging unethical practices

- The art of dialogue is a key to facilitate knowledge exchange

---

- What difference would shared local knowledge make to our political framework?
- Not development at any cost but decisions made using a cultural framework for future generations?

1

- Dialogue designed for change and to communicate change.

- Conceptional change is an emotional and intellectual process with participants building their own capacity through processing ideas to create change opportunities

- How do we motivate others to think and act differently?

Thank You

Appendix B: GESDRI/ERNWACA: Approval

From: Makaireh Alleu Njie <maxnjie@yahoo.co.uk>
To: jennifer tucker <jennytucker@xtra.co.nz>
Sent: Mon, 23 November, 2009 9:38:24 PM
Subject: To Whom it may concern

I write to confirm that I will as Director GESDRI and National Coordinator ERNWACA will undertake to provide supervision on the work Jennifer will be doing while in the Gambia.

GESDRI has extended an invitation to work with our researchers, politicians and development practitioners to evaluate and rethink African Development through series of planned workshops to provide space for critical dialogue in other to create a local Gambian research framework to integrate into existing research and policy dialogue.

We hope that this initiative will help enhance the wish of African intellectuals to create its own perspectives to African problems and development issues.

There are no ethics required for undertaking her research in The Gambia, but GESDRI could be guided by the AUT university ethics processes. We will as earlier indicate that we will provide accommodation and internal transportation in The Gambia.

M.A.Njie
National Director
GESDRI
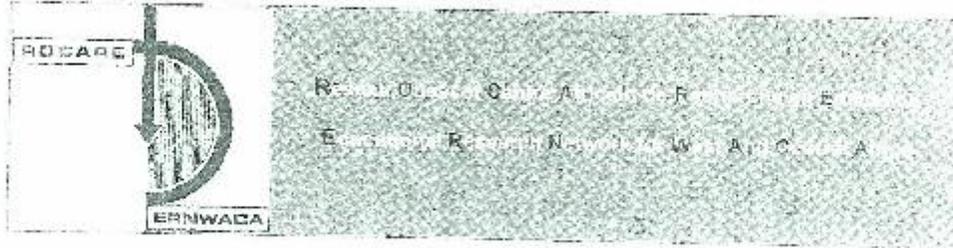
THE GAMBIA CHAPTER
NO 3, MILE 7 QUARTERS, P O BOX 4457 BAKAU, TEL: 4497514, MOBILE: 9902867
E-MAIL: maxnjie@yahoo.co.uk

Ref: ERNWACA

To: Jennifer Marie Tucker.

Ref: Jennifer Tucker GESDRI/ERNWACA member.

I write to confirm that the ERNWACA Board of Trustee's has agreed and approved my proposal for you to be invited to Banjul, The Gambia in January 2010.
Based on your 17 years work experience and collaboration with GESDRI/ERNWACA, the Board wishes us to implement one or two research projects together, in which we will design project, to enhance capacity of young Gambian researchers in particular, female researchers. As you are aware, there is a serious lack of capacity in research in the region.

ERNWACA will undertake to fund your accommodation, internal travel, breakfast, lunch and dinner whiles in The Gambia. You may need limited funds for incidental expenses and air travel to The Gambia.

Makaireh A Njie
National Co-ordinator
GESDRI/ERNWACA

CC: Mr Lamin Ceesay
Chairperson
GESDRI/ERNWACA
Board of Trustee's.

Appendix C: Circulation List

CIRCULATION LIST

Public Policy Making Institutions

The Director, National Planning Commission

The Director, Policy Analysis Unit, Office of the President

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education Research, Science and Technology

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health

The Hon. Speaker, National Assembly

The Director, UNESCO National Commission

Education and other Institutions

The Vice Chancellor, University of The Gambia

The Dean, school of Management and Public Administration

The school of Art and Sciences University of The Gambia

The school of Education University of The Gambia

Department of community Development

Poverty Alleviation Office (Marina Parade)

Children Fund

UNDP

UNICEF

Action Aid The Gambia

Private Institutions (2)

Ms. Adelaide Sosseh

Mr. Jarjusey   -   Women Bureau

Mr. Badara Joof   -   World Bank Office

Teachers Union

Appendix D: Participant's Papers

AFRICA'S SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND THE WAY FORWARD

In discussing the social, economic and political problems of Africa, one should bear in mind that the current situation in Africa has some connection with the historical experience of slave trade and colonialism. The trans Atlantic slave trade has resulted to the complete breakdown of the social and economic fabric of the African continent which will take Africa a lifetime to recover from damage it causes. Colonialism provided a legal frame work for independence of African economy on the economy of western countries. The African economy became producers of raw materials for industries in advance capitalist societies which result to a negative consequences in African economics because of its exploitation nature.

In recent time, one common situation without any doubt is that Africa is full of problems. In almost all states in Africa, there is object poverty, tragic mismanagement of available secure stare us in the face : Misery, war, despair. In a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant agenda, often forgotten and neglected. Thus, this problems are group under social, economic and political Problems.

The main social economic problem confronting the African continent is as follows; international debt, illiteracy, ethnic strife, corruption and displaced person, HIV and AIDS pandemic, unemployment, access to land weak education in all system, gender discrimination and poor health care system. The allocation and servicing of so called foreign aid by African states has greatly contribute to the underdevelopment of Africa. In most cases when loans are given out to African states IMF/WB, there are conditional ties attached to them often have detrimental effect on African economy. A typical example is the imposition of SAP's African states and the unfold suffering it cause to Africa. Another negative aspect of the allocation of foreign aid is the high interest rate attached to it which takes a long time for the states to finished repaying the debts.

Another economic problem confronted Africa is the unfair terms between West and Africa. The prices of raw material and products from Africa to the world market are determined by the West and at the same time the West determined their own products that are sent to Africa. This reflects egalitarian institutional, social and economic ordering of the global system, in which few powerful nation and their multinational corporations control fast amount of world resources.

Youths unemployment and under employment is increasingly recognised as a potential trigger for social instability in Africa. Africa faces demographic challenges as its

population of young people ages 18 – 35 increases and access to secure jobs continues to be problematic.

Beyond economic cost, high rates of rate of youth unemployment and underemployment have social ramifications. Some youth with few job prospect and little hope of future advancement may see little alternative or joining armed conflict and exposed to illegal activity. Many of them fall prey to armed and rebels groups. Health care system face darting challenges in Africa and most Africa depend on public health services that are dribbled by inadequate budgets, under investment in physical infrastructure and insufficient number of trained health care providers. Most African countries also lack development and well-functioning private market for health care, thus adding to the burden born by already hard pressed public system. These institution weaknesses make it difficult for counties to respond effectively to pandemic infectious disease such as to the non-communicable diseases that increasingly affect patient in Africa.

Since 1990, the African education sector continuous to face serious challenges of how and inequitable access to education, irrelevant curriculum and poor learning outcome, inadequate political commitment and financing, weak education system capacity, and weak link with the world of work. While progress has been made in bringing children to school, the result in terms of quantity and quality have been far from the targets, particularly in the sub-Saharan Africa.

Gander discrimination is still a development problem in Africa despite numerous international efforts stamp it out. To this effect, so many resolution and recommendation were passed – international summits and conferences in an attempt to eradicating all form of discrimination against women in Africa. Although giant stride are taken by some state to ad chess gander issues but for majority of the states it still remain a nightmare. Corruption in Africa is perceived to be both widespread and costly by diverting asset away from their intended rise. The cost of corruption comprises not just of the sum of money lost but also of retender development and increased inequalities are for less easy to quantify. If is estimated that corruption costs African economies in the region of 1.5bn dollar a year. This figure which includes both direct and indirect costs of corruption, i.e. resources withheld or deterred due to the existence of corruption, is thought to represent 25% of Africa GDP. It also estimated that 30 bn dollar in aid for Africa ended up in foreign bank account.

This issue of refugee and displaced person continues to be a great concern for so many Africa states. In the recent past, the continent has witness a sore civic war especially in West Africa. Despite the fact that many conflicts were been resolved there continues to be wars and post-election violence in other parts of Africa and humanitarian issues continues to be major problem in Africa.

One of the major political problems in Africa today is political instability in many African states. Political instability has been an enduring feature of the post-colonial landscape in Africa .lust of power coupled with the desire to make money by leaders account for why political instability is rampant in African. Many of these so called leaders are very selfish and greedy to the extent that they always want to take over power at all cost and by whatever means. Gullibility of the citizens also encourages political instability.

Poor economy also encourages political instability. Many of the African countries are so poor to the extent that their citizens would want a change of power anytime they are fed up with a particular gaunt.

The consequence of political instability in Africa lasher grana. It has resulted to underdevelopment of African countries, occasioned by high level poverty, low economic, social and technological development, constable policy, feature of the citizens as pariah among the comity of nations, unemployment, corruption among others.

In a quest to resolve the socioeconomic and political problems of Africa. African countries must embrace and included the knowledge concept in their vision for development. African countries must embrace knowledge management in the search for home grown solution to get out of the poverty-hunger-disease strait. They must invest in information and communication technologies. They must improve on the socio-economic-political-technological incentives to attract their talents back. Nobody is going to do it for them. They must take the lead. This, however, is no easy matter. It means honestly. accepting and implementing on a sustainable basis, new paradigms associated with embracing knowledge management. To some leaders, politicians and the hike, especially those married to the command type of management, this may not be easy to accept. There are not too many choices though. Africa must seriously and honestly embrace, interactive and integrate knowledge and knowledge management in the conduct of her business to be able to get out these doldrums. Indeed, reading that a country's knowledge resource is its greatest asset might help to reduce wars and her socio-economic and political problems.

Student at the University of Gambia.
Studying Biology and Chemistry.
1st year Student.
19 yrs.

African Solution to African Problems.

I am very humble at this juncture, to write on this very important topic, at whose development in Sustenance Corridor will exasperately have a leading role in sharpening the development shuddles of this Part of the world (AFRICA). It is against this unwavering anticipation that compels me to put the ink on the paper and to participate in an intellectual front to moulding a better and progressing Africa.

It is true and very well a reality to conclude that Africa is stuck to realising higher living standard (Developmentally). The development and living standard on this picture, is nothing but our ability to contribute to the Scientifics in this Twenty-first Century millennium. The Africa solution to Africa problems, stand to be a symmetric round, for Africa to truly re-orientate their voices, minds, hearts, engages, Commitments, policy frameworks, Culture, ethic, Physcology, Laws, Diplomatic runs, business, and peace in a united fashion to suit the matches and needs of what the dice African should be. Africa of peace, economic growth, Science and Technology, Cultural exemplary, tolerance, handwork, industernlize, reed sufficient, and most importantly Unity.

African solution to Africa problem should be the stepping stone to end neo-colonialism apart but economic recovery to realising the living standard (highest) we all want. It should be a surfacing path to end wars, the political turmoils, poverty, Hunger, corruption, and Anarchy within our model. African solution should be the champion to Africa's development. Its possible because its a reality that all must acthere.!!

Let us be action oriented and be proud of Africa. The scoreboard is yet to mark a success hit. All the resolutions, Commitments, Numerous conferences, workshops, Seminars etc we are still a feverish Continent, people living in fear, and discrimination, exploitation and Abuse. Enough is enough. It is time we realise something of Africa begin ready and be in place and much for Africa. Its time! we want to explore our potentials to shaping our own destiny. We need to explore our diversity in natural resources, people, race, culture, sex, beliefs, and words to realising what Africa should be, "Change we need".

Orientation through strategization of physiological embranms in education is also very soliciting on this adgenda African solution to African problems. It is fleshly possible for Africa to built the Scientific productivity gap. How through policy frameworks of action and Commitment—de-cation. Abef hitler says "Loyalty, spirit of Sacrifice, discipline are virtue that a great nation absolutely needs, and their cultivation and development in school are more important than some of the things that fill out our curriculum today." Our schools and Universities should be mentioning subjects of the above highlights, they should be hold categorical for any meaningful development to thrive. It should be harked at account in minds, that no actor real influence can really be the master-plan to Africa development. We should start the e-thicat our engagage in development order in association the outside world of Africa yetthe in an intellectual fashion and platfforming. Africa should start to justify its engage to posterity and prosperity. This is through culturalization of development. Africa advancement and emancipation for colonial tracts. Lets value what we have; and work. Education-virtue should be Africanly nurtured to contain our continous progress and transformation. And let mastering—like this virtue day Creating wars, political unrest and economic backwardn put for onesom frest. We should be dearbi by honoured, and respected." We should not be descriminated, abuse, exploit, Sanction, bonded with so-call aids. We need development through investment and empowerment!!

Youths of today let the sleep go ants time to realising the Africa mappings. Lets seek to explore our potentials at any time, anywhere and at any given cost. If worths at Sacrifice for the development; Call an end violence in any form and stand at rethink peace and economic nurturing. Culture tells what you are lets embrace ours and make our worth truonly

Appendix E: A Woman's Story

#17   I'm proud to be a Gambian, both a mother and a father. My grandparents were Gambian. We came from up river. Our tradition is Wolof. We are proud of everything Wolof, generosity, kindness, what ever we do our culture is number one. For example look after your parents, girls and boys, look after everything. The women keep culture going, we do everything and men don't care. Once we get married we have one husband. Women are not allowed to play round. We would be too scared. God would punish us. I pray five times a day and I've been to Mecca, being a Wolof and a Muslim.

As for husbands, men don't care, men are different, we respect ourselves, some men marry four wives and have girlfriends, but the world is changing. I got married, thought he was the only man but I was disappointed.

I was positive, worked hard, went to school, started a sewing business. He kicks us out. I took care of my six sons independently, which is unusual because most women in The Gambia are not independent. Although there have been gender changes, we have 50/50 equality so women are doing better.

It didn't used to be that way. Our values are changing. Despite the good you do there are always negative people. People are afraid. There is a lack of trust. Goodness and kindness whatever you see you learn a lesson from that lesson.

We learnt culture from our parents, under their control, for example they looked for a husband and wife for you. Now we dare not choose a wife or husband, they choose. If they have a good mother then that usually qualifies them to be a good parent, from a good home with manners and qualities. My mother was such a kind woman and my father was always with us. He had four wives and we all lived together with no quarrelling. My father's brothers and their wives we all lived together.

The elder brother would be in charge. He had no second wife. The current generation is not like before. For example we would eat in the parlour from a big bowl maybe ten or twenty of us all eating together. Not now, we eat alone with our families, like the West and often eating processed food. There is a loss of traditional values and this is bothering us. Once we had five to ten families living together, playing, laughing, we are not close any more. We had a close family community; my father brought so many children up, belonging to his brothers. Power and energy. I have the heart, I'm used to it.

Now it's money over value; this generation is not the same. Copying the West, not copying their culture. We had many blessings. We were afraid of doing bad, anything against religion or the dropping of culture. The grandchildren never fool me. It's the outside education that shifts the attitudes, adopting Western ways of living. A return to culture would help modern life. The children have nothing inside their hearts. We can take anything our hearts are big. The T.V. wasn't there. Friends and neighbours are more than T.V., throughout the day going in and out. Now we don't sit around the fire and tell stories. The elders would lay the story from their past. We were eager to listen. We had no T.V., now it's "India: A Love Story."

Everybody was the same. To get my own way I had to have patience and cook well. Always there were four of us. Now they cannot cook and some are not there to cook, they go to restaurants. There has been a shift. My mother used to tell me, food from the table and eat! We don't eat together, now everybody comes at different times. In the West there is no time. Little time for yourself, our culture is best. How many people would fix your roof?

Appendix F: Phase Two partners

THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FUTURELEC BUILDING, BERTIL HARDING HIGHWAY, KOTU, THE GAMBIA

Ref: AFG/219/272 P1 (37)   16ᵗ March 2011

National Coordinator
ERNWACA
The Gambia Chapter
No 3, Mile 7 Quarters
P O Box 4457
Bakau

RE: Re-thinking African Development through Capacity Building for Gambian Researchers

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST) would like to accept the offer of collaboration with ERNWACA/GESDRI on the innovative research being conducted for the capacity building project.

Jainaba Jagne and Kumba Jammeh have been nominated to represent MoHERST and will avail themselves at a mutually beneficial time to assist with the research.

Please contact Jainaba Jagne on 9500059 to make arrangements for a date and time to conduct the face-to-face interviews.

Whilst awaiting your response, please be assured of our support.

Jainaba Jagne
For: Permanent Secretary

cc: Files

Tel: (+220) 446 5753   Fax: (+220) 446 5408   Email: info@moherst.gov.gm

http://moherst.gov.gm

**THE GAMBIA
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
UNESCO**

Ref: UD 134/266/01 Part II (134)

Date: 10 March 2011

14/15 Marina Parade,
P.O. Box 1133 Banjul
The Gambia

Makaira A. Njie
National Coordinator
GESDRI/ERNWACA
3 Mile 7 Quarters
P.O Box 4457

Re: Re Thinking African Development through Capacity Building for Gambian Researchers

I write to acknowledge receipt of your missive germane to the above subject matter.

The National Commission for UNESCO is glad to associate itself with the proposed study. Consequently, you will be assigned with two senior management staff to work with during the process of the requested interview. Their names read:

1. Ms. Maimuna Sidibeh and
2. Mr. Cherno Omar Barry

It would be appreciated if a specific date is identified as soon as possible considering the busy schedule of our activities in March and April.

Maimuna Sidibeh ──── 3980597
FOR: Secretary General

Appendix G: Ethics Approval

MEMORANDUM

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

To: Marilyn Waring
From: **Charles Grinter** Ethics Coordinator
Date: 31 August 2010
Subject: Ethics Application Number 10/135 Rethinking African development through building capacity for Gambian researchers. Phase one: critique and clearing space for dialogue.

Tena koe Marilyn

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 14 June 2010 and that I have approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 13 September 2010.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 31 August 2013.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 31 August 2013;

- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 31 August 2013 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact me, by email at ethics@aut.ac.nz or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEC and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

On behalf of Madeline Banda, Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Jennifer Marie Graham Tucker jennytucker@shra.co.nz

Appendix H: Consent Form

Consent Form

Reference use for oral consent

AUT UNIVERSITY

Project title: Rethinking African Development through building capacity for Gambian researchers.

Project Supervisor: Prof. Marilyn Waring

Researcher: Jennifer Marie Graham Tucker

O   I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy.

O   I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

O   I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.

O   I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

O   I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

O   If I withdraw, I understand that while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, the relevant information about myself including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will not be used.

O   I agree to take part in this research.

O   I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one) YesO NoO

Participant's signature:
....

Participant's name:
....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

....
....
....
....

Date:

\

Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet
AUT UNIVERSITY

J. Date Information Sheet Produced:

27/05/10

Project Title

Rethinking African Development through building capacity for Gambian researchers. Phase one: critique and creating space for dialogue.

K. An Invitation

My name is Jennifer Tucker and I am developing this research study as part of a PhD at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Aotearoa, New Zealand. My research is in response to the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) to Rethink African Development through the development of indigenous knowledge to provide new insights for local research. Working with The Gambia Social and Economic Research Institute (GESDRI), aims are to develop capacity building activities for Gambian researchers through developing Gambian-centric research frameworks, to direct Gambian research and policy in ways that reflect Gambian realities.

L. What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to extend research capacity in The Gambia through a critical inquiry into the nature of Gambian knowledge. To create a community of Gambian researchers interested in exploring, developing and creating their own paradigms and theoretical frameworks. A Gambian centric framework will locate research from a Gambian viewpoint to create Gambia's own intellectual perspective, which has become muted in current research. I hope this study will identify a missing link in Gambian research and lead to the completion of my doctoral study at AUT. I also plan to use the data for conference proceedings and other refereed publications.

M. How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were probably referred to this study by GESDRI, because of your interest in the limits of universal codes in research and your known commitment to Afro-centric scholarship, development models and processes.

N. What will happen in this research?

If you agree to participate in this research project I will invite you to participate in an open-ended interview and a conversation forum with other participants. The interview should not exceed 120 minutes and will be video-recorded, as will the conversation forum. The interviews, venues and time for the conversation forum will be arranged by GESDRI at your convenience.

O. What are the discomforts and risks?

There will be no expected discomforts or risks in this research study. However you may experience some psychological or emotional discomfort remembering past history and experiences.

P. How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

The open-ended interviews and conversation forum will be conducted by the researcher and the participants. At any time during either activity you may choose not to talk about subjects you find distressing. You may also withdraw from the study at time and your data will be destroyed.

Q. What are the benefits?

By taking part you will be contributing to information that could provide new insights and perspectives towards data that could provide rigorous guidelines which Gambian research and outside development programmes can be assessed. You will also be assisting me in completing my PhD thesis.

R. What compensation is available for injury or negligence?

In the unlikely event of a physical injury as a result of your participation in this study, rehabilitation and compensation for injury by accident may be available from the Accident Compensation Corporation, providing the incident details satisfy the requirements of the law and the Corporation's regulations.

S. How will my privacy be protected?

As this first phase of the research study will be video recorded your participation will be public. All data and video consent will be stored at the Institute of Public Policy, AUT, Aotearoa, New Zealand. Video film copies of consent, open-ended interviews and conversation forum will be stored at GESDRI. All original data will be destroyed after six years.

T. What are the costs of participating in this research?

I appreciate you will be giving your own time to contribute to this research. The only financial costs involved could be transportation to the conversation forum This will be facilitated by GESDRI.

U. What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Your participation is voluntary. Please take one week to consider your possible involvement as a research participant. If you are willing to participate in this research, or have questions about it please e-mail me at jennytucker@xtra.co.nz or contact GESDRI.I will have a mobile phone number while in The Gambia which will be made available through GESDRI.

V. How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate in this research study please phone GESDRI ph. no 3, Mile 7 Quarters, P O Box 4457 Bakau, Tel: 4497814, Mobile 9902867 before dd/mm/yyy.

Your consent to take part in this research will be oral and video recorded.

W.Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The conversation forum will be filmed, summarized and published electronically by GESDRI in order to share findings with a wider audience and invite critical response.

If you wish,I will send you an electronic version of the summary of my research findings to an e-mail address you provide.

X. What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Prof. Marilyn Waring, marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz ph. 64 9 921 9999 ex. 7660

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 8044.

Y. Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Jenny Tucker, jennytucken@xtra.co.nz mobile telephone 64 21 176 8480

Provide the name and all relevant contact details. Note that for personal safety reasons, AUTEC does not allow researchers to provide home addresses or phone numbers.

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Prof. Marilyn Waring, marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz telephone, 64 9 921 9999 Ex. 6926

Prof. Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz telephone, 64 9 9219999 Ex. 6203.

Provide the name and all relevant contact details. Note that for personal safety reasons, AUTEC does not allow researchers to provide home addresses or phone numbers.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted.* AUTEC Reference number *type the reference number.*

Appendix J: Participant Observation Protocols

Participant Observation Protocol

Participant Observation is one part of a cluster of other non-experimental, inductive, field-based research strategies to be used in this research study. In Participant Observation the researcher is, to a greater or lesser extent, immersed in the day-to-day activities of the people being studied. It is envisaged that Participant Observation will take place throughout the project - from project design through implementation and evaluation. As a result gaining informed consent for Participant Observation is likely to take place at various stages throughout the research process.

The constant nature regarding Participant Observation will be constantly reviewed in the research study process in discussion with the participants. It is not appropriate to set consent protocol with closed parameters at this stage.

Preparing the Protocol

The researcher will discuss with the participants the research and some of the research discussion points, the strategy of participant observation and what is the appropriate way of gaining informed consent from the group for participant observation to take place.

- Methodology: the researcher will fully explain the settings for Participant Observation, the potential interactions, how data will be gathered, the kinds of issues that might be discussed more formally and detail as much as possible the anticipated process.

- Participants: will be described and reflection on potential ethical issues that may arise in the context of the research will be discussed. The researcher will explain her research plan; make people familiar with herself and the nature of the research project.

- Privacy and confidentiality: The researcher will provide information about the data once recorded. Explicit consent will be sought from participants on an individual basis and be video recorded. Participants will be made aware on an individual basis that they might be quoted.

- Informed Consent: The researcher will require verbal consent from participants. The researcher will elaborate the appropriateness of this process to the participants. The researcher will discuss ethical dilemmas that might arise or limitations to ideal procedures in given contexts.