



***THE PREMIER UNIVERSITY OF AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP***

**THE ROLE PLAYED BY FOREIGN AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN THE  
PROMOTION OF AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP IN THE FACULTY OF  
HUMANITIES, DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**BY**

**MONICA NJANJOKUMA OTU**

**STUDENT NUMBER: 206514804**

**SUPERVISOR: DR VIVIAN BESSEM OJONG**

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## **DEDICATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on a study examining the concept of African scholarship through the contributions of foreign African academics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) on the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg campuses. Being branded “The Premier University of African Scholarship” the study principally set out to investigate the role played by these academics as possible conduits in the expansion of African scholarship within the knowledge production circuit. The concept of African scholarship, though not a novel term, remains an elusive category that still needs to be defined within the global knowledge economy. A cursory look at written literature around African scholarship reveals a general tendency that presents „the debate“ much more as a theoretical engagement and less at empirical engagements that could help advance the practicalities of this concept within the different intellectual debates. Among the different pockets of intellectuals concerned with the vision of African scholarship, the African diaspora outside the continent has always played a leading role in the need to address the African knowledge paradigms within the global intellectual production of knowledge.

This study is of significance because it engages with an emerging African diaspora within the South African space and attempts to highlight how their experiences as migrants help in broadening the understanding of the African experience as a knowledge site. Using in-depth interviews within a qualitative research framework in combination with the technique of observation, the findings of this study reveal that as an emerging diaspora, foreign African academics at UKZN, are actively taking advantage of the university’s slogan to meaningfully (re)insert „Africanness“ in the kind of knowledge that is produced in the institution. Their contributions are measured in terms of postgraduate supervision, new research agendas, pedagogic and curricular development and networks of collaborations with other universities in Africa. Using an anthropological approach the study equally examines the implications of the attempt to position African scholarship within the global knowledge production map. The study further highlights the role that social identities such as gender, language, nationality, and race can play as epistemic spaces in the advancement of African scholarship. By engaging with these markers, the

debate advances beyond the current ad hoc manner of presenting African scholarship simplistically within political rhetoric to a more nuanced incorporation of other markers which should occupy epistemic spaces within the discourse of African scholarship.

**Keywords: UKZN, African scholarship, knowledge production, transnational space.**

## **List of Abbreviations**

- ACC** – African Centre for Childhood
- AIDS** – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- AFRILEX** – Association for Lexicography
- ALASA** – African Language Association of Southern Africa
- AMN** – Articulatory Migrant Network
- AU** – African Union
- CASAS** – Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society
- CCA** – Centre for Creative Arts
- CODESRIA** – Council for the Development of Social Science Research
- DoE** – Department of Education
- DRC** – Democratic Republic of Congo
- DVC** – Deputy Vice Chancellor
- FHDSS** – Faculty of Humanities Development and Social Sciences
- HBU** – Historically Black Universities
- HIV** – Human Immune Virus
- HOS** – Head of School
- HWU** – Historically White Universities
- IKS** – Indigenous Knowledge Systems
- MISR** – Makerere Institute of Social Research
- NEPAD** – New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development
- NU** – Natal University
- OECD** - Organisation for Economic C-operation and Development
- OSSREA** – Organisation of Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
- SADC** – Southern African Development Community
- SAPs** – Structural Adjustment Programmes
- SAPSE** - South African Post Secondary Education
- S-S** – South-South
- UB** – University of Buea
- UDW** – University of Durban Westville

**UNECA** – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

**UK** – United Kingdom

**UKZN** – University of KwaZulu-Natal

**UWC** – University of Western Cape

**VC** – Vice Chancellor



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Preamble

This study set out to investigate the role played by foreign African academics in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (henceforth FDSS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (henceforth UKZN) in the promotion of African scholarship. The branding of UKZN as “The Premier University of African Scholarship” came into existence at a time when South Africa, being an emerging democracy was trying to (re)formulate policies that would advance the country’s democracy. To be more general, the new democratic dispensations strategised for national agendas which stood to challenge and overcome the legacies of the past. These legacies which had been working in pervasion to democratic principles undercut the participation of many people of the black race in the socio-economic and political life of the country in the days of apartheid. With „transformation“ being the keyword set to (re)define the new South African state, various departments in their different capacities were left to chart out programmes and strategies through which the issue of transformation could be meaningfully articulated. The issue of transformation as a matter of fact is an ongoing process which has continued to necessitate a redrawing of new social and political agendas that are created to provide explanatory models that are relevant and that could better manage the prevailing circumstances under which this whole process of transformation is being negotiated and renegotiated.

Institutions of higher education have been targeted as instrumental departments that can provide important frameworks upon which national debates and discourses on transformation can meaningfully be articulated. The involvement of post-secondary institutions in the national process of transformation and change ranges from the “fundamental reorganization of the distribution and character of higher education

institutions, the comprehensive redesign of higher education curricula governed by a national qualifications authority, and the profound reconstitution of the academic workplace” ( Pillay, Sehoole and Weber: 157 – available online). Responding to the call of transformation UKZN opted for a brand that envisions highlighting the ascendancy to the reins of power of a people who were historically marginalised with specific attention to the generation and expansion of African-focused knowledge.

While there exist other sites of knowledge production, universities are better equipped as primary generators and engineers of knowledge dissemination for systemic intervention (Makgoba and Seepe 2004: 14). The transformation of higher education institutions of learning is among the most focal debates that currently inform discourses on nation building in post-apartheid South Africa. The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) is among South Africa’s institutions of higher learning with a vision of claiming authoritative scholarship for (South) Africa. Viewed as the “Premier University of African Scholarship”, UKZN is striving towards making the institution

*A truly South African University that is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past (see [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za))*

Underpinned by the concept of “African scholarship” UKZN envisions celebrating that which was denied by the past – the African space in the production of knowledge. In the course of promoting Africa as a scholarly space, UKZN is still faced with the challenge of defining what African scholarship really is. This challenge emerges out of the concern that the term “Africa” itself is riddled with contradictions and dilemmas, providing no definitive understanding of what really constitutes the term. This is because as Amina Mama (2005) points out, defining who an African is cuts across a spectrum of factors which include class, ethnicity, gender, religion, and I would like to add nationality. Due to this diversity, it becomes critical for one not to casually limit oneself to the etymological confines of the concept „African scholarship“ but rather engage in seeking meaning in the context in which it is applied. Viewing African scholarship as „work in progress“ the present study attempts to contribute to defining this concept by

interrogating the ideological positions that underpin foreign African academics at UKZN in response to this concept.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

Since the independence of African states and the creation of universities in the continent in the 1960s, there have been ongoing attempts towards the development of a scholarship that would promote Africa as a physical, ideological and epistemological space in the global contours of knowledge production. The humanities and social science faculties in Africa have been instrumental in calling for research that defends the identity and the socioeconomic interests of the African continent. The Council for the Development of Social Science Research (CODESRIA) in Africa for example was created in Dakar, Senegal in 1973 as part of collective efforts to bring African identity to the fore of knowledge production and dissemination. Among other objectives CODESRIA seeks to “encourage and support the development of African comparative research with a continental perspective and a sensitivity to the specificity of the development process in Africa” (see [www.codesria.org](http://www.codesria.org)). This position however has hardly been reflected in most African universities as the pedagogic and curricular structures continue to be modelled along northern epistemology.

Notwithstanding, such sensitivity has become crucial in the transformation process of South African universities. With the demise of apartheid debates around the Africanisation of scholarship have become pertinent as South African scholars are increasingly seeking ways that would disengage South African institutions of higher learning from the colonial ways and values through which knowledge had previously been transmitted. As part of this transformation, the present study sought to explore how the structures which are in place at UKZN could support the promotion of African scholarship; and also sought to look at how foreign Africans are engaging with these structures in promoting this agenda beyond the confines of this institution. I (see Otu 2011) have previously noted that the advocacy for an African-led knowledge pursued by South African universities, particularly UKZN, appears to have aroused “enchanted

feelings” among a number of foreign African academics who have expressed their willingness to have this agenda integrated in their home universities if they could have their way. The call for a curriculum that militates for the production of indigenous knowledge coupled with the availability of technological and infrastructural resources serves as tremendous motivations for the increasing presence of foreign African academics in South African universities. Some foreign African academics taking advantage of the technological and economic relevance of the South African economy within the globe have developed interests in working in Africa and for Africa. In my previous study conducted on a similar group of people (Otu 2011), interviews with these academics revealed that some African academics are willing to forfeit the luxury of higher pay packages offered in European and American institutions to take up appointments in a South African university as part of their efforts to bring about meaningful transformation in Africa.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

Contemporary South African institutions of higher learning have undergone meaningful transformations not only in terms of structures, but have also witnessed transformation in knowledge, identity and curriculum (Makgoba 1997) – with a mission to have African identity prioritised in the production of knowledge. Attempts to legitimise African knowledge(s) have been a burning issue for both historical and contemporary academics. It is most often the African elite in the diaspora that has been targeted to engineer knowledge that valorises „things African“ (Zezeza 2008, Zezeza, 2004). This study is significant in that it seeks to contextualise the promotion of African scholarship within an African geographical space. It is important as it will provide empirical evidence and a nuanced understanding of the efforts made by foreign African academics in advancing this scholarship. The study will explore how foreign Africans at UKZN would engage their skills in motivating for a globally-led scholarship for the African continent.

Furthermore, studies that have interrogated the legitimacy of Afrocentric scholarship in the global knowledge economy have focused mostly on showing the asymmetrical



relationship between the South and the North in the knowledge economy (Zezeza, 1998, 2004, 2005, Zezeza and Olukoshi 2004). Scholarship on imperialism has focused mostly on the deconstruction of northern theoretical and epistemological hegemonic dominance in the scientific production of knowledge. So far there have not been many ethnographic studies that capture the strength of African academics in their efforts to promote African scholarship within a specific context. Due to the complexities that are embedded in explaining the concept of African scholarship, a contextually and empirically grounded approach to our understanding of this concept is of significant importance. A contextual approach better qualifies for explaining social phenomena with multifaceted layers of interpretations and understandings.

In his various studies on the role of the African intellectual diaspora in the discourse of knowledge identity, Zezeza has once attempted to contextualise Afrocentric debates within three categories of people. According to Zezeza, Afrocentric philosophical underpinnings emerge from a Pan-Africanist, Northernist or Globalist knowledge paradigm (Zezeza 2008: 6). However this attempted classification has been done in a less problematised manner, as it fails to provide nuances such as gender, class, race, ethnicity and nationality which are crucial in producing a holistic outlook to our definition and understanding of African scholarship. Up until now there has been this general tendency of sidetracking these social identity markers by successive generations of African scholars who have taken interest in the study of Africa as a knowledge system.

This study is significant because it takes into account the problematic of fluidity in the concept of African scholarship by highlighting the role of the various social markers in the process of (re)negotiating African scholarship at UKZN. Context is a critical tool for building up knowledge that could address the problems that people of a specific society face. The ability to develop intellectually and solve problems requires that knowledge of the subject under study must be accessible and linked to current understanding. African identity is dynamic and its multi-vocal interpretations calls for contextual foregrounding to give it a more analytical and nuanced angle. Using the University of KwaZulu-Natal as the locus, this study set out to investigate the positionality of foreign African academics

in response to the ongoing efforts towards establishing UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship. The thesis demonstrates how some of these foreign scholars are striving to galvanise their transnational experiences in the renegotiation of African scholarship within and beyond UKZN. The study further focuses on the different perspectives held by this group of scholars in their articulation of this concept as they interact with the structures and mechanisms that could propel the vision beyond the confines of UKZN.

This study is also significant in that it touches on an emerging African diaspora within the African continent itself. When diaspora groups of African origin are generally mentioned in scholarly or public discourses it is usually those Africans who are living out of the continent who are referred to. This usual tendency is owed to the fact that much of the African intellectual migration over the different historical contexts has been mostly done to northern economies. Even though there has been a significant growth in South-to-South migration of skilled people from among the less developed world (see Ratha and Shaw 2007), not enough scholarly attention has been given to this emerging phenomenon. Intra-continental migration within the African continent is not a new phenomenon. It has existed as long as the continent has existed. Since the demise of apartheid, South Africa has witnessed unprecedented paradigmatic shifts in her history of African immigration into the country. It has shifted from what typically reflected labour migration predominantly from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), into a more pan-African migration flow which is inclusive of diverse classes of people from the rest of the sub-Saharan African region. At the moment South Africa, besides Namibia and Botswana, is being counted among the most preferred destinations not only in Africa but in the world as a whole, for African skilled labour migrancy (Gwebu 2006).

UKZN is a multi-cultural intellectual space with significant numbers of foreign African academics and students from all over the continent forming an integral part of the institution's membership. UKZN is reckoned to be the largest university in South Africa and can be counted as one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-culturised knowledge spaces within the country. This cultural pluralism is something that the university could

take advantage of if it is in fact committed to championing the agenda of African scholarship as indicated by its maxim motto – to become the premier university of African scholarship. The pan-African composition of both the academic and student body is a critical avenue through which the issue of multiculturalism and the social, economic and political diversities in and about Africa could be given an epistemic angle. Being the premier university of African scholarship, it therefore stands to reason that UKZN must take an exemplary lead to advocate and advance African philosophical thoughts within the global knowledge matrix of scientific truism. This study is important as it attempts to illuminate the contributory role that a transnational space could play in the promotion of African scholarship within and outside UKZN. The different experiences of foreign African transnationals at UKZN offer rich and contextualised knowledge space(s) upon which the concept of African scholarship can be articulated in diversity.

#### **1.4 Motivation for the study**

My interest in this research emerged out of previous research I conducted around foreign African migrants at UKZN (Otu 2011). As part of their professional lives, the study highlighted the willingness of some foreign African academics to commit to a form of scholarship that reflects African reality in its interaction with the global knowledge economy. Even though this turned out to be a crucial issue to a number of participants in the research, it was not fully grounded as the research did not only focus on this aspect. The present study was designed to extend this topic further through an in-depth investigation of the various mechanisms through which some foreign African academics navigate in their attempt to promote African scholarship for global competitiveness. The previous study identified that many foreign African academics have, besides South Africa and their home countries, been to other places in Africa and other parts of the world. With regard to this, the present study set out to investigate how these foreigners are engaging their transnational networks in the promotion of African scholarship within the institutions and across other parts of the African continent.

My position as a foreign African student and an aspirant African scholar in this transnational space tremendously influenced my choice of this subject area. Most research unless otherwise „dictated“ by a particular agenda, is influenced by one’s positionality within a particular community. Being a student at UKZN since 2006 has always put me on a journey of constant cogitations about my identity as an aspirant scholar. My immersion into this scholarly space is an issue that has attempted to advance a redefinition of my identity as a foreign African student studying within an institution that purports to strategically define our „Africanness“ within the knowledge paradigm. It has always struck my curiosity to seek to understand what the university is doing in its vision to become the premier university of African scholarship. In my personal opinion I believe this maxim motto is illustrative of taking a paradigm shift from the way knowledge in and about Africa has been produced and disseminated overtime. As an aspirant scholar who is concerned with African affairs, the vision of UKZN is a benevolent opportunity that has always appealed and reawakened my sense of belongingness within the knowledge paradigm of African identity. My positionality as a foreign African student and aspirant scholar of Afrocentric based knowledge generation is key to the unpacking and repackaging of the concept of African scholarship as it is being engaged with at UKZN. This positionality is also critical in explaining how this form of scholarship is being (re)negotiated through transnational lenses and its eventual expansion to other geographical sites of knowledge within the African continent.

In light of the above discussion, the study seeks to provide an answer to the question – to what extent do foreign Africans at UKZN draw on their transnational opportunities in the promotion of African scholarship? My hypothesis is that foreign African migrants can utilise the South African transnational academic space for the promotion of African scholarship across the continent. The validity of this hypothesis runs through chapters four to eight, which present an examination and synthesis of data.

## **1.5 Research problem and key questions addressed in the research**

The emergence of South Africa as a new democracy following the formal collapse of apartheid in the 1990s, led to the (re)insertion of the South African nation into the global world economy (Crush and McDonald 2002). With its new democratic status and relative economic relevance on the continent, South Africa has become one of the most preferred destinations for skilled individuals especially from the rest of Africa (Gwebu 2006). The world of academia in South Africa is perceived as being resoundingly the most resourceful on the continent (Kraak 2000, Mthembu 2004, Seehole and Chika 2006). The integrity of South Africa's universities is measured in terms of the availability of infrastructural, technological and financial resources that help in promoting excellence and safeguarding quality in these institutions. This position enormously contributes as part of the reason why South African institutions of higher learning are experiencing an unprecedented influx of professional academics from all over Africa. The study interrogates the following:

- What are the various positions from which foreign African academics at UKZN define the term "African scholarship"?
- How would the pedagogic and curricular structures at UKZN help foreign African academics in the promotion of African scholarship for global competitiveness, and how do these academics draw on these structures to contribute to the epistemic culture of African scholarship?
- How would this group of academics integrate their various disciplinary orientations – as anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, historians, language and linguistic specialists and literary experts in the (re)conceptualisation of African scholarship?
- How do their varying geographical, gendered and linguistic backgrounds help in defining African scholarship?
- What kind of professional networks are these foreigners engaged in and how do they draw on their past experiences to contribute to the general restructuring that is taking place at UKZN?

- What kind of positions do these foreigners occupy within and outside the institution and how empowering are these positions towards policy implementation?

## **1.6 Objectives of the study**

As part of the transformation process, South African institutions of higher learning are becoming instrumental in engineering scholarship that attempts to promote African epistemology in the global knowledge economy (Makgoba 1997, Manda 2000, Mthembu 2004,). This objective is emphasised through the channels of teaching, learning and research. The category of African scholarship has been a burning issue among historical as well as contemporary African scholars and leaders. This study attempts to showcase the role played by African transnational academics in the promotion of African scholarship both within UKZN and across Africa. The study will examine the following:

- To provide an understanding of the different philosophical positions that underpin the definition of African scholarship by foreign African academics
- To examine how the pedagogic and curricular structures could help in advancing African scholarship for global competitiveness
- To examine the kind of research activities that this group of people are involved in their efforts to promote an African epistemological culture in the global knowledge economy
- To interrogate how these foreigners would integrate their varying disciplinary orientations for the promotion of African scholarship.
- To investigate how their geographical, linguistic and gendered backgrounds impact on their definition of African scholarship
- To understand how they draw on their transnational experiences to contribute meaningfully in the (re)conceptualisation of scholarship in Africa
- To investigate the kind of networks that these academics are engaged in and how they utilise these networks for the advancement of African scholarship

- To provide an understanding of how the kind of positions they occupy can help influence policy both within the institution and outside the institution.

## **1.8 Plan and structure of the thesis**

This thesis consists of nine chapters:

Chapter One is an introductory chapter. This chapter has provided the background to the study which highlights the issue of African scholarship as a transformational hallmark in subverting the imbalances that existed in the past. Using the case of UKZN the background shows the attempts made by an African university towards the promotion of the African identity in the area of knowledge production. It equally provides the rationale for the study and presents research questions, objectives and the significance of study.

Chapter Two discusses the methodology and the different frameworks that were employed in doing this research. Using the interpretivist and critical frameworks, this chapter highlights how reality is constructed through research participants and the researcher as a co-producer of knowledge. These frameworks are critical of how the concept of African scholarship has been conjugated overtime and emphasise the need to reread African scholarship so as to embrace other epistemological spaces such as gender and race which have not been privileged in the whole discourse of African scholarship.

Chapter Three reviews some relevant literature on the ongoing efforts to extricate Africa from the dominant western epistemological and philosophical paradigms through which knowledge production in Africa has been transmitted overtime. This chapter presents an assessment of the ongoing efforts made towards the establishment of a knowledge identity that should be mapped out as African scholarship. The knowledge identity in Africa both historically and contemporarily has been an area where the African intelligentsia has constantly strived to promote an epistemic knowledge system that is rooted in African cultures and traditions. Reflecting on Mkandawire's (1995) exposition

on the three generations of African scholars, this chapter attempts to give an appraisal of the significance of a generational approach to evaluate what has been addressed so far concerning African scholarship across the different generations of scholars. Using the South African example, the chapter also discusses how concepts such as *ubuntu* and *African Renaissance* have made room for the advancement of African philosophies within the politics of knowledge identity.

Chapter Four the first empirical chapter emanating from the data, discusses the role that the University of KwaZulu-Natal is playing as the premier university of African scholarship. Through the views expressed by various participants in this study, the chapter attempts to define African scholarship within popular and specific paradigms. These understandings are navigated through the mission, goals and core values of the university.

Chapter Five discusses the (re)negotiation of African scholarship across transnational borders within the African continent. It highlights the perceptions of both foreign students and established academics of African origin towards a transnationalised endeavour to expand the vision of UKZN to the rest of Africa. Basing their views on their role as migrants, these groups of scholars believe their transnational experiences could play and in fact should be playing a role in the promotion of African scholarship with a continental interest at heart.

Chapter Six presents a discourse of African scholarship at the interface of globalisation. It poses the challenges that Africa is facing in the global knowledge economy. It provides an understanding of Africa “uncentredness” in the global knowledge economy; and shows the efforts made by African scholars to have African knowledge identity inserted among other global knowledge systems. The chapter further problematises the implications of Africa going global. This has produced three schools of thoughts (the idealists, moderates and the extremists) with varying and controversial views around the implications of African-led globalisation espoused among the defining goals of UKZN.



Chapter Seven discusses the role of networks and the importance of networking for the expansion of African scholarship at UKZN. It outlines the kind of networks that both foreign African academics and students are involved in and how they are utilising these networks in the promotion of the vision of African scholarship within and beyond the boundaries of UKZN. The types of networks discussed in this chapter are subsumed under individual, student and inter-institutional networks. For each of these networks the chapter has shown the extent to which these networks are activated, and the kind of knowledge activities they are engaged with, in line with the vision of the institution. This chapter also highlights that the transnational space is an important area through which such networks can be created leading to the further entrenchment of the concept of African scholarship across the African continent.

Chapter Eight outlines the various contestations in respect to the articulation of African scholarship. Overtime scholarship in and about Africa has been (re)produced through western theoretical and conceptual paradigms. Much of the literature that has been written about African scholarship has focused on the need to have it dismantled from this hegemonic stronghold of the West. These anti-imperial discourses have ignored the complexities of Africanness such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, language and nationality that form important epistemic areas through which this multi-layered concept can be given more nuanced and critical analytical angles. This chapter reveals that despite the fundamental role that these identity markers play in the understanding of our world of today, it is surprising that some scholars in an institution such as UKZN are still not considering that these could become part of mainstream African scholarship.

The ninth and final chapter presents a summary of the findings; the significant contributions of the study. It also makes recommendations for policy intervention and gives suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Research is a scientific and systematic search for pertinent knowledge on a specific area of interest. As an art of scientific investigation, research sets out to confront that which is yet unknown or partially understood to bring about a fuller understanding of the often taken-for-granted knowledge of a particular social phenomenon. All humans possess a level of inquisitiveness that constantly forces us to probe into issues in order to attain fuller and satisfying answers to that which still appears to be unknown to us. For one to arrive at meaningful conclusions about a specific topic, one needs the right instruments that would help to bring out the texture of what one sets out to probe into. Research methodology and the kind of methods utilised is what would help us to understand fully whatever the unknown is. Research is an academic activity which is circumscribed by systematic rules established towards the validation of a specific subject area as reflective of scientism. In other words, research as an academic activity should be used in a technical sense. Slesinger and Stephenson in the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (1930) define research as “the manipulation of things, concepts or symbols for the purpose of generalising to extend, correct or verify knowledge, whether that aids in construction of theory or in the practice of an art.” Cognisant of this definition, research is therefore seen as an original contribution to the advancement of the existing stock of knowledge. UKZN is a research resource site where a lot has been theorised and a lot is still being theorised from different and multi-stranded perspectives. UKZN as a research space can be studied from a multiplicity of angles including; academic, social, economic, political, local and global perspectives. This present research aimed at investigating how the flagged up concept of African scholarship is being engaged by foreign African academics at UKZN and South Africa.

## **2.2 Research design**

The methodology adopted for this research has been patterned on a qualitative approach. Methodology simply put refers to the practical ways through which knowledge about a social phenomenon is investigated and analysed. Methodologies are concerned with the specific ways, the methods we can use to try and create meaning and understand our world better (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit 2004). Methodology links us to particular ontology and epistemologies that are prescriptive of rules that guide the production of valid knowledge of a social reality (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). In other words the way reality is perceived or constructed (that is ontologically speaking) and dissected (that is epistemologically speaking) is enhanced by the methods we use at arriving at certain conclusions about certain phenomena. Different methodologies are anchored on different belief orientations and are underpinned by the philosophical positioning and assumptions that inform the researcher's collection, collation and analysis of data.

This study which entailed a qualitative research paradigm, sought to gain depth and understanding into the ideologies and philosophies that foreground the engagement of foreign African academics in their attempts to pursue an African-led scholarship within UKZN for global competitiveness. Through this qualitative paradigm, the research has explored how foreign African academics are utilising their different disciplinary orientations to reflect on an agenda which seeks to position Africa on the map of knowledge production. The opinions held by the research participants is of great value because a qualitative research always sets out to understand social actions through the researcher's worldview (Babbie 2007). This approach became fundamental for this research, as it gave me the opportunity to grapple with the perceptions, ideologies, philosophies and attitudes of these foreign African academics towards their conceptualisation of African scholarship. Through in-depth engagements (in the form of unstructured interviews and ad hoc conversations) with my research participants, I was able to establish „multiple positionality“ with a myriad of intersecting, divergent and sometimes contradictory understandings towards their appreciation of this whole debate

on African scholarship.

As part of qualitative methodology, this research adopted a holistic outlook in trying to understand the extent to which foreign African academics respond to the agenda of African scholarship and the kind of scholarly activities they are engaged in, in pursuance of this agenda. A holistic orientation has the capacity to force the researcher to see beyond an immediate “cultural scene” (Fetterman 1998:19). The holistic approach is a demanding method that takes a great deal of time in the field to gather the kinds of data that together would create a complete picture of any social phenomenon one sets out to investigate (Fetterman 1998:19). The holistic approach had given me ample opportunities to navigate through the multilayered and interrelated web of experiences, philosophies and ideologies that these foreign African academics represent in consonance with their conceptualisation of African scholarship.

A qualitative paradigm gives an opportunity for a research question to be examined from various angles. These observations when harnessed could produce potential analytical perceptions that could be capable of zooming out the intricacies and contributing to a deeper and a more nuanced understanding of issues that would not have been gained otherwise. What is highlighted here is in defense of the critique laid against qualitative research of not being capable of adequately producing rational and unbiased knowledge in contrast to quantitative research. This critique is done against the backdrop that a simple representative sample cannot actually ascertain conclusivity in relation to the opinions and values that every member of a particular group may uphold about a certain social phenomenon. Quantitative research uses numerical data to answer research questions hence using statistical procedures to obtain data. Being glued to numbers and statistics, a quantitative approach may run the danger of inadequacy to have the resulting outcomes of a research well gauged and adequately conjugated within emerging frameworks. This contestation is well argued by Edwards and Ribbens when they note that:

*Quantitative research almost inevitably appears „unconvincing“ because dominant understandings of concepts of „validity“, „reliability and „representativeness“*

*are passed within a numerical rather than a process framework* (Edwards and Ribbens 1984: 4).

A qualitative approach relies on depth, as it seeks to describe and understand rather than explain human behaviour (Babbie 2007). Again, because this was a qualitative study, I intended to engage with a smaller representative sample in order to elicit richer data and to gain depth of participants' responses to different issues related to the topic; rather than running the study through the entire community of foreign African academics in the faculty. Since this research aimed at understanding the different ways through which the concept of African scholarship is engaged within the faculty and the university, a quantitative approach would not have been suitable for a research of this nature. The qualitative methodological paradigm employed in this sense enabled me to tap into the multidimensional dynamic, opposing and intersecting perceptions of the various forms and meaning of articulating African scholarship at UKZN.

### **2.3 Selection of research sample and project area**

Sampling is usually a technique employed in research to minimise the cost of some fundamental resources such as time and money. A sample is a small subset of a particular population that has been chosen to be studied. Sampling as a technique is considered to be a representative group of individuals selected from an entire population upon which observations can be made and conclusions drawn. Interviews were exclusively conducted with participants within the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (FHDSS) on the campuses of Howard College and Pietermaritzburg, in the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study was principally designed to investigate the role that foreign African academics in the FHDSS play in line with the institution's vision of African scholarship. Even though foreign African academics constitute the core sample of this research, I decided to also interview a few local South African academics particularly those who are in the position of management at the university. The local South African sample constitutes heads from schools within the faculty, the deanery and the chancellery. The reason behind the inclusion of the „local“ sample within this study is to

check the mechanisms that have been put in place with respect to the valorisation of the vision of African scholarship. This was taken into consideration because their role as managers is critical in providing information about whatever debates and policies that are being deliberated in the university in relation to the advancement of this vision within and beyond UKZN.

This sample was drawn from a total number of twenty-five participants. Interviews were conducted with twelve foreign established academics of African origin, eight upcoming academics including foreign African doctoral and post-doctoral students and five local South Africans who are in positions of management. There a number of reasons that motivated for these choices of research participants. Firstly, the fluid nature of the concept of African scholarship even here at UKZN, necessitates that the issue be compartmentalised so as to give a thorough and nuanced understanding on the angle from which it is addressed. In this case the basic intention of this research was to have this concept interrogated through a transnational lens. The concept of transnationalism is key to our appreciation of the present-day African identity; of which knowledge production is becoming a critical site through which the making of African identity is being negotiated for global competitiveness. In a rapidly unprecedented transnationalised world of today, it is important to consider how much the concept of transnationalism has affected the discourse of African scholarship within an academic space such as UKZN. Engaging with the concept of transnationalism in this context has shown the extent to which the experiences of foreign African academics have contributed in the (re)conceptualisation and expansion of African scholarship beyond the frontiers of UKZN and South Africa.

Secondly the choice of postgraduate students at doctoral and post-doctoral levels was motivated by the fact that as upcoming scholars they possess the intellectual and critical capacity and at these levels they are in a position where they can make and take conscious decisions that underpin their ideological and philosophical orientations. This choice was therefore motivated to examine possible inter-generational interpretations of the concept of African scholarship. Some recent literature stresses the importance of a generational approach towards a more nuanced understanding of African scholarship in

the later part of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries (see Mkandawire 1995, Mwangola 2008). Over and above the research sought to get the perspectives of both the foreign students and established academics of African origin concerning the application of African scholarship within the context of UKZN. As established and upcoming scholars in the transnational space of UKZN and South Africa, the experiences of these foreigners cannot be viewed as homogenous. Although the study has highlighted an overlap of their experiences in some instances, the transnational space of UKZN has different impacts on upcoming foreign African scholars and established scholars; and it has consequently affected the way they relate with the concept of African scholarship in the institution.

Lastly, as aforementioned, the choice of local South African in management position is significant in that it was evoked to synergise popular opinions (that is the opinions of the core research participants) with the opinions of those who are in positions that can influence policies. The significance of this was to create some understanding on how much of these opinions are espoused in the agendas that are meant for the dispensation of the concept of African scholarship in the institution.

In selecting my research participants, I employed the use of the snowball and purposive non-probability sampling methods. The snowball is a referral method in which it is expected that an informant(s) would link you to another/others she knows would fit in your research sample. A snowball method is most useful in studies of small, bounded and difficult-to-find populations (Bernard 1995, Babbie 2007). The purposive method allows for a selection of sample based on your own judgement (Babbie 2007). The snowball method was useful for this study because I envisaged that there could be a possibility of these academics being connected through social networks. Having been a student at UKZN for over three years, my identity as a foreign student has connected me not only to fellow foreign students but also to a number of already qualified academics from across the continent. Besides this, my previous study (though focusing on something else) was conducted around a similar group of people. The purposive non-probability method was employed especially for the local South African sample which was obvious to locate;

given that it specifically targeted local South Africans in headship positions.

The study also made use of a combination of methods in order to elicit rich qualitative data. Unstructured in-depth interviews, conversation and participant observation were the main research methods used to tap out meaningful data. In-depth interviews are part of unstructured informal interview which do not involve any specific types or order of questions. In-depth interviews can progress much as a conversation does, following the turns of the participant's or researcher's interests (Fetterman 1998: 38). Combining the techniques of in-depth interviews with conversations allowed me to gain insights into the different angles from which foreign African academics emerge in their motivation for African scholarship.

The study also relied on observation to authenticate or buttress the different positions held by the research participants in what may appear to be their united efforts towards the promotion of African scholarship. The observation method was attained through the following forums: workshops, public lectures, and postgraduate seminars organised within the faculty. During the course of this study I attended the following public lectures:

- “Africa – New global inspiration for design, branding and culture: Repositioning the University of KwaZulu-Natal as the premier university of African scholarship” presented by Thebe Ikalafeng on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 at the Westville campus of UKZN
- Let's call the talk: “Rediscovering the Humanities in South Africa” presented by Peter Vale on 27 July 2011 at the Howard College campus of UKZN
- Higher education curriculum directions: Lessons from global comparisons presented by Professor Michael Samuel on 27 June 2011 at the Edgewood campus of UKZN
- “Potted plants in greenhouses”: A critical reflection on the resilience of colonial education in Africa presented by Professor Nyamnjoh Francis at the Howard College campus.



These public lectures were relevant to this topic as they were underpinned by the very debates that have to do with the issues of repackaging African scholarship for curricula, educational, scientific, economic and socio-cultural relevance for South Africa and the entire continent of Africa. In addition to these public lectures I attended a number of ongoing meetings and workshops around the issue of reconfiguration of the university. In most of these meetings, the academic staff had to be reminded that UKZN is not just another of South Africa's, Africa's or the world's institution of higher learning but a university that needs to make a difference in the global world. Central in this reconfiguration process is the issue of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. This reconfiguration is a period in which academics have been called to collectively align with the vision of the institution through inter-discipline and trans-discipline collaboration. In one of the meetings chaired by one of the deans of the newly reconfigured schools of FHDSS, the dean underscored the importance of this reconfiguration as a historic moment when the tides of scholarship at UKZN need to be aggressive on the issue of producing knowledge through African epistemologies. These meetings and workshops were useful to this study as I learnt about the weaknesses, strength and the way forward for the promotion of African scholarship in the institution.

Moreover the postgraduate seminar attendance in the departments of Gender, Anthropology and Linguistics gave me an exposure to the kind of curriculum and knowledge epistemology that is being pursued in the institution. This attendance gave me the opportunity to assess how far the concept of African scholarship is being valorised within the faculty. My observations across the different research sites brought me to a general conclusion that, while some individuals are mobilising towards the advancement of an African epistemic culture within the university, a lot still needs to be done to have this culture centralised in the pedagogic and curricular structures of the university. It is only when this is actually pursued that UKZN can earn the mandate of being the "Premier University of African Scholarship".

## **2.4 Methods of data organisation and analysis**

The voice recorded data were transcribed verbatim. Verbatim transcriptions of interview data have become a common strategy for data management. Verbatim transcriptions are considered in research as an integral part of analysing and interpreting verbal data (Halcomb and Davidson 2006). The reason why a verbatim transcription was important in this study was for me to fully capture the kind of words and diction that the various participants used as they delved into describing and giving their understanding of the issues that were interrogated. These verbatim transcriptions gave me a natural trend that assisted me in analysing and interpreting the various findings within specific conceptual frameworks. After transcribing the data, I then began sorting out similarities and differences in interview combinations.

The analysis and interpretation of data has been done in line with the research questions and supported by existing literature. This existing literature has helped in facilitating the advancement of arguments – showing the strengths and weaknesses of what has been theorised about African scholarship in conjunction with the views of my research participants and also my role as a researcher and a co-creator of meaning.

## **2.5 Ethical issues**

The proposal to this study was approved by the Higher Degrees Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2010. The title of the project has not been altered in any form. The consent of the participants was sought at every level of this study which included; interviews, ad hoc conversations, workshops and seminar attendance. A digital voice recorder was used where applicable, of course with the consent of the person or individuals involved. This voice recorder was used with all but one interviewee who is a senior lecturer and a foreign national in the institution. The participants were assured of confidentiality and were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any level.

The interviews and whatever data on the voice recorder were transcribed and locked on my personal computer using a password. Pseudonyms were used to encode the

transcribed information and any obvious characteristics were disguised to ensure anonymity. However, with the consent of participants, recognisable positions have been used in some places in the analysis. The use of designated offices in the analysis of the study became inevitable as the researcher had indicated having interviewed people in top management positions.

## **2.6 My role as a researcher and the challenges encountered in the course of the study**

Conducting scientific research could be a daunting task especially for up and coming researchers. It is even more daunting when the researcher has to run their research on research subjects who are more advanced in scientific scholarship than them. The soundness of the subject matter to the intended audience, questions of clarity, style, structure, precision and accuracy are some of the fundamental factors that one takes into account as one sets out to do research. My consciousness that I was going to interview people who have been long established in a research culture, put me at a critical position of negotiating my role as a novice researcher and also in claiming authoritative voice in my role as co-producer of knowledge.

My passion for this subject area helped me to overcome all forms of anxiety as I developed the courage and resilience to make a debut and move forward with the agenda of the project. After my proposal was approved in October 2010 by the Faculty Higher Degree Committee, it took me a month trying to meet people and acquainting them with my research interest. In the course of what I should call pilot study I got various reactions which evoked different feelings. There were those who showed their enthusiasm and were excited to participate in the research, there were also those who had mixed feelings and gave me precautionary advice about the sensitive nature of the topic and yet there were also those who were indifferent about the topic. Their indifference largely emanated from their belief that the idea of African scholarship if it exists anywhere at all is only in an ivory tower and that UKZN would not make a difference in trying to address the issue. These various standpoints only helped in accentuating my curiosity to investigate and understand what the real picture concerning the conceptualisation of African scholarship

at UKZN is all about.

In trying to interrogate and understand the various ideological and pragmatic positions from which the aspect of African scholarship is underpinned within this study, the study has employed the interpretivist and critical theoretical paradigms.

An interpretivist approach suggests that knowledge is not only constructed by observable phenomena, but by participants' descriptions of their intentions, values and beliefs. This approach also involves the ways in which the researcher analyses texts to bring out social meanings in discourses. An interpretivist framework is therefore a combination of the participants' presentation of reality from their own views and the researcher's role as a co-producer of meaning guided by the types of knowledge frameworks that inform the discourses of that particular society (Henning et al 2004).

Through an interpretivist lens, this study has sought to gain a deep level understanding of the kind of scholarly activities that those interviewed for this study are seen to be engaged in, in the promotion of the vision of African scholarship in the institution. Considering that African scholarship is still in the making, the present study has attempted to look at the different ways through which the concept is defined and the contributions that these scholars are making in this unfinished and unanswered debate surrounding the concept of African scholarship. Building on their diverse disciplinary and ideological backgrounds this study has been able to tailor the intersecting, conflicting and divergent areas through which the concept has come to be understood and the extent to which it has been espoused and valorised by scholars at UKZN.

Being a foreign African academic myself, my position in the research became crucial. This position granted me a greater understanding of the emerging reality as I was able to reflect on my personal philosophy in interpreting the findings. This process is known as self-reflexivity. Reay (1996: 59-60) describes reflexivity as a continual consideration of the ways in which the researcher's social identity and values affect the data gathered and a picture of the social world produced. Based on my identity as a foreign African

migrant, I have reflected on how the transnational space of South Africa has (re)constructed the minds of migrants of African origin who have taken interest in advancing this debate on African scholarship. My identity as a foreign African scholar fits in to analyses the study from an insider perspective. My ideological standpoint, in respect to this study contributes in establishing reality as viewed by the participants and through my role as a co-producer of meaning.

Viewing all knowledge as subjective, anthropologists have increasingly problematised that the so called „objective“ knowledge is guided by individual subjectivity to their construction of reality (Moore 1996, Mafeje 1997, Prah 1997). Humes and Bryce (2003: 180) alluding to the works of post-structuralists thinkers such as Derrida, argue that “the search of for clarity and simplicity of meaning is seen as illusory because there will always be other perspectives from which to interpret the material under review. To seek a definitive account is, thus, a misguided undertaking.” This kind of positioning is line with Foucauldian theorising that one form of truth cannot be substituted for another. An interpretivist paradigm that draws on both the participant“s and the researcher“s worldview, introduces a scene in which ideological functions of scientific inquiry are seen as a discursive formation (Foucault 1972). A combination of reality as constructed by my research participants and my role as co-creator of meaning gave a trend to the philosophical and epistemological foundations upon which the findings of this research have been predicated.

A critical theoretical framework examines the processes of gaining, maintaining and circulating existing power relations. It breaks down institutional structures that reproduce oppressive ideologies and it is essential in inquiring about power relations that produce discourses (Henning 2004). In trying to utilise the critical theoretical paradigm, my appraisal of emerging issues became crucial. Positioning this research within a critical framework is considered significant in this research because my subjectivity as a researcher forms an integral process of establishing meaning in the production of scientific knowledge. Research is inherently structured by the subjectivity of the researcher. It is the researcher who shapes the research through his or her curiosities

representing his or her worldview. Critical framework goes beyond providing deep understanding of what is being researched by also addressing a leeway to social issues. Through this critical paradigm I have attempted to provide some ways through which the ongoing debates of African scholarship within UKZN in particular, and Africa as a whole, could be advanced in the competitive world that we live in.

Moore (1996: 5) examining the relationship between knowledge and power in Africa observes that “knowledge and power remain very much bound up with the questions of individual subjectivity and collective identity, as it does for the rest of the world.” Articulating this research within a critical framework, the researcher has identified a need for a rereading of African philosophising and theorising that should go beyond anti-colonial or anti-imperial discourses. In this regard, the researcher proposes that the African academia should be open to take advantage of new knowledge possibilities that could better explain African scholarship in the contemporary world. Foucault’s use of the notion of „governmentality“ highlights a typology that indicates a particular way of thinking through which certain social problems are addressed by particular authorities and driven through particular mechanisms (Foucault 1991). In response to the concept of governmentality, Moore (1996: 12) notes “governmentality is concerned with specific discourses and practices and with particular rationalities which sustain them in the context of a given set of material and historical conditions.” She (Moore 1996: 12) continues by saying that “such rationalities will always be local, developed in specific contexts by which politicians, academics, the media and ordinary people.” This stance can be seen to be at work in the discourse of African scholarship, which until now is still imbricated on a „reactionary framework“ against colonial and imperial domination. A rereading of African scholarship as highlighted in this research cannot simply be pitted against a colonial discourse. It involves taking into consideration certain paradigms such the various identity categories such gender, race, language as important epistemological categories. This is problematised later in the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP AND THE ROLE OF SOUTH AFRICA TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A KNOWLEDGE IDENTITY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will be discussing the trends of African scholarship at the dawn of independence and the inception of universities in Africa in the 1960s. Built against the backdrop of historical and contemporary analysis, the chapter sets out to discuss the various stages through which the concept of African scholarship has metamorphosed to establish the progress made so far in the valorisation of this idea. Using the South African example, the chapter will also be focusing on the different processes through which the concept of African scholarship is being (re)negotiated in a „post-world“ era. These processes include the transformation of higher education and the role of skilled African immigration into South Africa especially in the world of academia.

African scholarship has been an enduring phenomenon in the politics of knowledge production. Since independence and the creation of universities in Africa in the 1960s, there have been ongoing attempts towards the development of a scholarship that has always attempted to promote Africa as a physical, ideological and epistemological space among the global contours of the knowledge economy (Ekong and Cloete 1997). Generally speaking, the discourse of African scholarship, from historical to the present times, has always addressed the fundamental issue that challenges the umbilical attachment of African scholarship to western scholarship. African scholarship has been a transitory phenomenon making a passage through the different socio-political pointers that have marked the world since the time of the independence of the various African states. From the post-colonial period to this period of globalisation and neoliberal engagements, African scholarship while generally pitted against a colonial background and western hegemony, has passed through different transitions which have had different impacts on the evolution of this concept.

Since the demise of apartheid, South Africa has been a vibrant space where the politics of knowledge and identity have continually animated current debates and scholarship on transformation and reconstruction in the post-apartheid era. A cursory look at the literature on the transformation process of South African higher education institutions anchors my understanding on a two-item agenda – namely the developmentalist and the autonomist position (Ekong and Cloete 1997, Mkandawire 2005). Anchoring on a developmentalist position, South African institutions of higher learning have been associated with an instrumentalist approach that “insists on problem-solving skills applied research, relevance, local or African content and community service” in response to the country’s Reconstruction and Development Programme (Ekong and Cloete 1997: 10). The autonomist approach is geared towards critical thinking in the development of a research and curricular culture that is meant to (re)position the African identity for global knowledge competitiveness. The South African example evoked in this chapter acts as a testimonial to the current efforts that can be made by African states in the articulation of African scholarship in the contemporary world.

### **3.2 African intellectuals and African scholarship at the dawn of independence**

The period following the independence of African states witnessed a transition to African sovereignty and the emergence of new forms of nationalism that guided the developmental agenda of the African continent. At independence, the African intelligentsia became the cream of society and their roles as intellectuals were highly appreciated and respected in their respective countries. These intellectuals played an instrumental role in shaping the “passions, ideologies and visions” (Mkandawire 2005: 1) of the continent. Measuring as key players in the development process of Africa, these intellectuals were active and became critically involved in the reconstruction of the Africa’s past, interpreting the present socio-political landscape and charting out visions and projects for the future (Mkandawire 2005, Mazrui 2005, Ki-Zerbo 2005). The first generation of post-colonial African intellectuals had enjoyed congenial relationship with



the state. It was a period of euphoria marked with intellectual respectability and recognisability and the contributory role of the African intelligentsia in nation-building was highly appreciated and rewarded (Mkandawire 1997, 2005, Mazrui 2005). There was remarkable collaboration between the intelligentsia and the state and as Mkandawire points out “development was essentially a statist and elitist project – not in the sense that it deliberately sought inequality and protection of elite interests but rather that it presupposed the pre-eminence of the elites in both its elaboration and implementation” (Mkandawire 2005: 17). The partnership between the state and the elites in nation-building was bolstered by the buoyant economic atmosphere and internal political stability that African states enjoyed at the dawn of independence. The material comfort of the African elites were well catered for and there was a general disdain for mass movements and political insurgences driven by sectoral tendency that stood in defense of ethnic or religious identities. Such tendencies were considered divisive and therefore a threat to national unity – an issue which had been strongly fought for.

The umbilical relationship between the state and the elites in national development hatched an atmosphere of growth and African nationalism at this point could make considerable inroads in the ideologies and visions that were meant to articulate state problems and provide possible solutions for them. In identifying the different generations<sup>1</sup> of African intellectuals after independence, Mkandawire (1995) notes that the first generation intellectuals had an inclination towards staying at home and taking part in the development of their countries. The prevailing socio-political contexts and the accompanying economic environment on the continent during this period played an instrumental role in determining “the choice undertaken by intellectuals of who stayed and who left” (Mwangola 2008: 9). According to Mkandawire (1995) the first generation of African intellectuals was marked by graduate Africans who generally returned home upon their graduation to take up employment on the continent. As earlier mentioned, these scholars had a relatively good working relationship with the state. There was job security and material and moral incentives that could energise them to come back and stay at home. In the world of academia, the African professoriate that emerged in the

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<sup>1</sup>The other generations will be discussed later on in the chapter.

1970s (Mkandawire 2005) enjoyed a great deal of academic freedom and their intellectual capacities made them an integral part of African development in their respective countries. It was a period of reaffirming African identity and the emergence of nationalist projects against the machination of imperial intellectual and neo-colonial domination (Mkandawire 2005). The brain drain syndrome that has characterised the entire continent was not so much of a problem as a proportion of African intellectuals were willing to come back to Africa and make their contributions from within the continent.

African scholars have always been occupied by the state of marginalisation of African scholarship. This marginalisation is a persistent condition as it continues to remain an area where geopolitical imbalances between the different knowledge systems are entrenched. Despite the fact that the colonial legacy of domination still lives on, African scholarship has undergone a transition through successive generations as scholarly agendas are informed by the periods in which scholars live. Frantz Fanon (1969) treatise on the reality of colonial legacy in his work titled “The Wretched of the Earth”, advocates the adoption of a generational agenda that challenges scholars to be able to contextualise their scholarship based on the peculiar experiences presented by the epochal context in which they live. In this regard the first wave of post-colonial African intellectuals’ discourse on African scholarship foregrounds the trajectory of a historical struggle from “its earliest phases of resistance, through different stages of the liberation struggles, to the manifestation of diverse experiences of political independence in the continent” (Mwangola 2008: 8). Doing a comparative analysis of works by prominent African scholars, Mwangola (2008) further notes that Africa’s intelligentsia has continued over different periods to provide different definitions for particular concepts to explain the situation of Africa and its complicated relationship to the rest of the world. In the area of African scholarship Mwangola’s assertion is not absolutely true because a cursory look at the current works of important African scholars of today still portrays a regurgitated thematic recipe of politics of marginalisation and an anti-colonial sting on western hegemony which characterised first wave post-colonial scholarship in Africa. Mama (2005), Philomina Okeke (2004), Francis Nyamnjoh (2007) and Anyidoho (2008) for

example have pointed out that contemporary African scholarship has hardly taken into consideration the multiple and shifting identities which are largely embedded in the present-day context of multiple contradictions posed by the historic contexts of globalisation and neoliberalism within which African issues should be understood. Besides this, my fieldwork experience revealed that anti-imperial debates still animate the discourse of African scholarship at the expense of other variables such as gender, class, ethnicity and racism for example, which could constitute important epistemological spaces for the dissection of African scholarship especially in this period of globalisation and neoliberalism.

The first wave African intellectuals could be appreciated for their role as pacesetters for the initiation of political movements and intellectual organisations which have laid the foundation upon which the intellectual works of successive generations have been built. Nationalist projects such as Pan-Africanism and intellectual organisations such as Council for the Development of Social Science Research (CODESRIA) have had a tremendous effect on the future of intellectual rigour and since their inception, have charted the vision and ideologies that contemporary African scholars have been able to use in their interrogations of the present day situation of the African continent. Pan-Africanism was an intellectual movement founded by African members of the diaspora during the days of colonialism to rally against colonial domination. An influential intellectual WEB Dubois, together with Kwame Nkrumah of the then Gold Coast (Ghana), Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Leopold Sedar Senghor became key patriots of African nationalist intellectualism with the vision to celebrate African culture and identity uniqueness which had been suffocated by colonial machinations (see Mazrui 2005, Ki-Zerbo 2005, and Mkandawire 2005). Even though pan-Africanism was founded by intellectuals, the idea of pan-Africanism was not so much a scientific issue but a political one which was largely built on the reclamation of African identity. In fact Ki-Zerbo (2005: 57) claims that “in *depth* pan-Africanism as a system of ideas did not aspire to be as „scientific“ as Marxism and modern socialism would claim.” Broadly defined pan-Africanism tailored a wider agenda concerned not only with the reification of the political economy, but also with displaying African culture, aesthetics, poetry and

philosophy holistically. Senghor's concept of „negritude“ an offshoot of pan-Africanism was in fact basically oriented towards the celebration of African identity through ideas and aesthetics rather than being seen as a form of political activism. As an emancipator in his own right, Senghor wrote poetry, hosted pan-African cultural festivals, promoted music and opera but was never a “flag-waving activist in pursuit of African unification” (Ki-Zerbo 2005: 57).

However, pan-Africanism regardless of its inattentiveness towards scientific nitty-gritty has played a paramount role in igniting rekindable flames of African consciousness towards the development of ideologies and philosophies that would continue to fight for the legitimacy of African identity in the global spaces. The united efforts towards the advancement of an African course birthed by the spirit of pan-Africanism have had far reaching effects in orchestrating the formation of other bodies that have continued to address the needs of the continent. I am not trying to lay a claim that whatever political or intellectual bodies that have been in existence after the formation of Pan-Africanism were necessarily informed by the agenda of pan-Africanism. Rather the point that I am trying to establish here is that as much as these bodies may differ with the agenda of pan-Africanism, the contributions of pan-Africanism as a nationalist project however cannot be ignored. CODESRIA, for example, has been instrumental in the promotion of African scholarship in the global intellectual space. Among other objectives CODESRIA seeks to “encourage and support the development of African comparative research with a continental perspective and a sensitivity to the specificity of the development process in Africa” (see [www.codesria.org](http://www.codesria.org)). This position of sensitivity, although much more „sophisticated“ and streamlined in CODESRIA's agenda, is implicitly reflective of pan-African propagations which stood in the defense of African identity. Although pan-Africanist activities did not squarely locate the politics of knowledge production, because of its broader holistic agenda, the African identity however also concerned itself with the kind of knowledge pursued by African scholars about the continent.

### **3.3 The role of the academic diaspora and African scholarship**

The African diaspora in general, since the days of colonialism, has always been an active context within which some of the important African visions, ideologies and philosophies have been imagined and have contributed to the policies that are being formulated and pursued in the different geographical contexts of the African continent. From a historical context, the African diaspora has made major contributions to the liberation struggles of the continent and has been instrumental in reinforcing principles that cater for socio-cultural and political wellbeing of the continent. The African academic diaspora forms a significant part of the African intelligentsia abroad. It is a rapidly growing area with larger numbers of African academics living abroad than ever before. Some estimates have shown that since 1990, an average of 20,000 highly educated Africans among them academics, have been migrating to the northern hemisphere every year (Zezeza 2005: 209). The reasons for their migration cannot be overemphasised, as the continent is constantly faced with deplorable social and economic conditions which most often have had the impact of leaving many of the African states in a chaotic political state. The current massive exodus of these intellectuals has intensified debates around the popular and controversial African brain drain discourse. Theorising on the concept of brain drain, different scholars have seen the international migration of skilled labour either as a liability or an asset. As a liability, various scholars contend that the outmigration of skilled professions is depriving the continent of the badly needed professionals who are most often trained at the expense of the state (see for example Cummings 1985, Johnson 1985, Lindsay 1985, Adepouju 1998). As an asset, some scholars have argued that the intellectual diaspora is capable of providing African nations with crucial connections to northern economies through diverse forms of capital transfers; which include technological, financial, cultural and political transfers (Agbo 2005, Zezeza 2005, Vertovec 2002).

Vertovec in his article titled “Transnational Networks and Skilled Labour Migration” has enumerated a number of networks worldwide, among which are some African elite diaspora associations, that have been formed to link African countries with their intellectuals working abroad. These networks include: SANSA (South African Networks

of Skills Abroad), ANA Association of Nigerians Abroad and AKA (Association of Kenyans Abroad), MARS (Moroccan Association of Researchers and Scholars Abroad, and TSC (Tunisian Scientific Consortium). Vertovec points out that these networks have become systematic and are now earning support from international agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme with its initiative on TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals) to render intellectual, technical and material support to their individual countries (Vertovec 2002: 9-10). Current literature is showing a shift from discourses of brain drain to brain exchange, circulation and gain (Vertovec 2002 *ibid*). Globalisation and advanced information technologies have contributed in animating the current debates of the „brain“ discourses in Africa. Information technology such the internet, telephone network and facsimile has contributed in accentuating brain exchange and brain circulation in the world. As Vertovec further claims, “transnational networks are ... used in attempts to build a locally based but far-reaching research and technico-industrial web” (*ibid* 10). The expatriation of African scholars living and working abroad could provide a promising perspective in which African countries can access not only their individual embodied knowledge but also the socio-professional networks in which these countries are inserted overseas (Meyer and Brown 1999).

The African diaspora both historically and contemporarily, has been a political and an intellectual body. The academic diaspora in particular has played a critical role as a site of knowledge production on Africa (Zezeza 2005). The promotion of African identity within the knowledge economy has witnessed the active participation of the intellectual diaspora and the academic diaspora in particular has been instrumental in harnessing the ideological and philosophical thoughts of the African elite towards the development of the continent. The emergence of Pan-Africanism (even though not so much of an academic affair) as a movement of liberation from the yoke of colonialism, and as a project of emancipation for the „African mind“, has made tremendous contributions to the various forms through which African identity has been conjugated, extending to the area of knowledge production. The vision of pan-Africanism as a nationalist project has produced far-reaching effects which did not only affect the first generation of the post-colonial African diaspora elites, but also subsequent generations even up to this period of

globalisation with its multiple and labyrinthine challenges (see Zeleza 2005). What is implied here is that even after the formation of pan-Africanism a long time ago, its legacy of liberation and emancipation has mutated through the different historical contexts. For each of these contexts, African scholars who have taken an interest in confronting and cracking Africa ideologically, epistemologically, philosophically and scientifically are prone to write from the generational context in which they find themselves. Apart from this, African scholarship is yet to make its way legitimately among the other global knowledge systems, since the colonial legacy of domination has always given African scholars across generations recourse to debates of liberation and emancipation pace-set by pioneer African intellectuals; especially the works of those who lived in the diaspora.

The world of academia has been one of the crucial sites targeted for African nationalism and African knowledge epistemology. From the time university education was introduced in Africa, African elites who studied abroad have had the duty of ascertaining that these universities are rooted in African ways of constructing reality. Quoted in Makgoba and Seepe (2004: 13) one of the influential members of Pan-Africanism and the pioneer president of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah once said:

*We must in the development of our universities bear in mind that once it has been planted in the African soil it must take root amidst African traditions and cultures (Kwame Nkrumah 1955).*

This statement is illustrative of the role of the African academe in foregrounding knowledge using African perspectives. This remark is a cautionary note against the marginalisation of African knowledge(s) and the dominance of western epistemologies in the way knowledge in and about Africa is produced. Colonialism with its repressive devices had essentialised Africa as an object and had denied African intellectuals scientific claims on knowledge generated about Africa. In fact, this tendency has not ceased to exist as neocolonial dominations continue to be reconfigured in the guise of the „post“ theories (post-colonialism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-feminism), neoliberalism and globalisation. These concepts, which could ordinarily be seen as liberating, are ladled with conventions and conditionalities that have made it almost

impossible for emerging non-orthodox scholarships such as African scholarship to gain acceptance among mainstream scientific knowledge systems. The precautionary statement by Nkrumah above was made just a few years into the creation of universities in Africa. Even though the statement was made by what I could contextualise as a first generation African nationalist intellectual, its impact lives on today. Amidst a number of changes that have currently been taking place in higher education, universities in Africa are still faced with an epistemological domination of European imperialism (Makgoba and Seepe 2004, Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2005, Nyamnjoh 2011).

In a period experienced by hyper international migration and heightened global activities orchestrated by the process of globalisation and propelled by revolutionary technological inventions, the position of Africa has become more complex to define and chart a way forward for its legitimacy and reckoning power. At the dusk of the twentieth and the dawn of the twenty-first centuries the world has witnessed the highest proportion of international migration. In fact Castles and Miller (1993:22) have argued that “international migration has never been as pervasive, or as socio-economically and politically significant, as it is today.” The African intelligentsia is among the highest streams of international migration in the world. The contemporary African intelligentsia in the diaspora has continued to play a role in the development and advancement of democracy on the continent. Even though the issue of brain drain has been a vexed issue among some contemporary African scholars and many African leaders, African scholars in the diaspora believe that they are still in a position where they can contribute to different bodies of developmental agenda on the continent. Some scholars such as Zeleza (2005) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2005), living in the diaspora, have strongly argued for the instrumental role that the African diaspora and pan-Africanists could play in advancing the agenda of African scholarship. In trying to identify the various ways that the African intelligentsia in the diaspora can contribute to the development of Africa, Zeleza (2008: 6) attempts a classification of these external African elites into three categories namely; Pan-Africanists, Northernists and the globalists. Depending on their paradigmatic orientations, each of these groups has the potential in making a contributions to Africa whether in ideology or development. Zeleza (2005) argues that if



well utilised, the African intelligentsia abroad, could play the crucial role in the theories and practices that seek to promote *Africanity* in the world of academia in Africa. Africa, being the least educated and the most underdeveloped continent in the world, ironically has the highest number of highly educated people living and working in the most developed countries of the world (Zezeza *ibid*). Even though this appears threatening to the development of African nations, Zezeza (*ibid*: 223) argues that the building of expatriate knowledge networks and the establishment of linkages between professional migrants and their home countries or regions of origin, can facilitate information exchange and knowledge and the transfer of skills, which could help in reversing the issue of “brain drain” into “brain mobility”.

### **3.4 Towards an inter-generational understanding of African scholarship**

African scholarship has been marked by unprecedented debates of continuities and discontinuities across the different generation of scholars since independence. Generational demarcations (even though fluid), as far as the concept of African scholarship is concerned, have been marked by major events which have characterised the post-colonial world, and which have inadvertently affected the state of Africanness in the process. The various political and economic transitions such as the Cold War, the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes in Africa and now globalisation, have had different effects, not only on the economic and political situation of Africa, but have also had an effect on the intellectual identity of the continent. These political and economic phases have produced different generation of scholars who have continued to unpack and repackage the concept of African scholarship at the interface of these processes.

Discussions in this section will proceed from a generational sequence of African scholars as outlined by Mkandawire (1995). Mkandawire in a note entitled “Three generations of African scholars” addressed on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CODESRIA’s celebrations identifies three categories of African writers in the post-colonial era. In this note, Mkandawire clearly demonstrates that a generational classification of scholarship in

Africa is identified by scholars“ paradigmatic focus and also how the conditions and experiences in which they pass through have had the potential of influencing their scholarship. The three generations identified by Mkandawire are outlined as follows:

- The first generation: this comprises of African scholars who studied abroad and returned home upon the completion of their programmes. As already mentioned in the preceding section, this generation of scholars had a cordial relationship with their different state governments and job security was not an issue of concern because these intellectuals could easily obtain jobs at very meaningful salaries. In addition to this, material and moral incentives played a huge role in encouraging scholars to return home and work for their respective countries.
- The second generation comprises of two categories of scholars who either have chosen to stay abroad or who have chosen to return from abroad. The depreciating economic situation and the hostile political climate that African states started experiencing just over a decade after independence produced growing disenchantment among African intellectuals and resulted in a high tendency of scholars migrating and staying abroad.
- The third generation is produced largely out of an era characterised by difficult socio-political and economic situations with their negative impact on the African academia and the lives of academics. In listing the characteristics of the third generation, Mkandawire claims that firstly a number of scholars of this generation especially those entering graduate schools in the latter part of the 1980s, received their training under extremely difficult circumstances. One of such being the harsh political environment within which this generation “lived its adolescence and entered its adulthood” (Mkandawire 1995: 79). The second hallmark was the depreciating material conditions within which they studied and taught. The third difficulty (which could be seen as a consequence of the two preceding hallmarks) is related to the identity crisis that African universities started to experience at this time. Notwithstanding the challenges, Mkandawire notes that it is this generation that has “assumed the reins of power in the universities and is beginning to constitute the medium to senior levels of the academic hierarchy” (Mkandawire

1995: 79), and also, it is in fact this generation that has begun to take the fate of their universities seriously by fighting against their marginal presence in the political arena.

Mkandawire's (Mkandawire 1995) classification of African scholars above establishes that a generational factor is fundamental and needs to be taken seriously in addressing the nuances of African scholarship. Even though he acknowledges that it is not always easy to neatly separate academic „generations“ into such discrete groups as he has done in this document, the effort is however worthwhile pursuing. Since scholarship generally is „work in progress“, it is but important to note the socio-political contexts from which scholars write. Being an ongoing phenomenon, African scholarship has meandered through different generational contexts often with overlapping and intersecting outcomes. I consider a generational approach an imperative tool in measuring the progress made by African scholars across the different generations in their articulations and advancement of African scholarship. Given that context plays such a crucial role in the production of knowledge, a generational approach to African scholarship would be able to provide an epistemic assessment of „generational“ scholarship and also provide an understanding of the contexts from which their various scholarships emanate. Context in fact is a compass that serves to direct intellectual endeavours in foregrounding human and societal experiences. Adesina in his tribute paper to the late Archie Mafeje argues that in “addressing real life problems, scholarship (however profound) must find its relevance in engagement” (Adesina 2008: 149).

An overview of scholarship in and on Africa both historically and contemporarily to some extent reveals regular patterns of overlapping and intersecting thematic analyses which are frequently anchored on the polar relationship between western and African scholarship and the dominance of western epistemologies in the production of knowledge in and about Africa. Anti-imperial feelings have spanned the different generations of African scholarship as identified by Mkandawire (1995) discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Although Mkandawire (1995) attempts to draw some distinctions between the three generations, a cursory look at the literature on African scholarship by scholars

across all three generations, reveals that there is a general tendency of re-visitation if not a replication of recurrent themes driven by anti-colonial ideologies enamoured by the „blame game“ doctrines. There is no doubt that the colonial legacy is still there and has continued to affect Africa’s development in different ways. While this legacy lives on, Africa however has not been left to the same level that it was at the dawn of its independence. The various transitions that have taken place in Africa and the world have produced new agendas which are potentially capable of providing alternative forms for example, of Africa’s subordinated relationship to the West. Nyamnjoh in his article “Potted Plants in Greenhouses: A critical reflection on the resilience of colonial education in Africa”, although critical of the „ills“ of colonialism on education in Africa, argues in favour of a scholarship that embraces creativity and prioritises an epistemological and methodological culture with “the interests and concerns of ordinary Africans carefully negotiated, navigated and blended with those of the elite, in the African tradition of accommodation and appropriation” (Nyamnjoh 2011:20). Commenting elsewhere on epistemological “recognition” and “conviviality”, Nyamnjoh challenges contemporary African scholars to consider moving from scholarship of assumptions to “empirical substantiation of claims about Africa” (Nyamnjoh 2011:19). Empirical studies are considered to be important in foregrounding African scholarship for a number of reasons. It is for example important to consider the lived experiences of ordinary African people, and even an understanding of the backgrounds and the lives of the African elite and scholarly writers themselves, are important issues that can generate new epistemological insights. For as Nyamnjoh further puts it “until the elite know what these epistemologies *actually are*, they [wouldn’t] know where and how, or with whom to dialogue. The angel may well be in the belly of the beast, just as the beast may be in the belly of the angel” (Nyamnjoh 2011:19).

What Nyamnjoh and a few other African scholars concerned with African knowledge paradigms are trying to challenge here is the routinised ways in which knowledge about the agency of African scholarship has been transmitted overtime. At the dawn of the twenty first century, African scholarship is timidly making progress towards new forms of epistemologies which are now attempting to factor in issues such as gender, class,

ethnicity, race and nationality which have largely been disembedded in the popular discourses of African scholarship (see for example Mama 2005, Okeke 2004, Sithole 2009). Mwangola (2008) taking on with the generational debate initiated by Mkandawire, has introduced a fourth generation of African scholars who are at the threshold of earning a generational mandate. Inspired by Mkandawire and quoting copiously from his treatise on “Three generations of African academics” Mwangola exposes us to an emerging generation (of which she herself is part of it) within which lies the onus of furthering the agenda of African scholarship marked with the peculiarities that apply to the present context. While proposing *to* work in liaison with preceding generations, Mwangola is at the same time trying to encourage the fourth generation of upcoming scholars to start engaging with scholarship that squarely explains the contexts, constraints, challenges and possibilities of this present moment and their influence “towards the discovery, planning and implementation of the historical mission that will be its own legacy to the future” *generation* (emphasis added) (Mwangola 2008:9). Dialogical epistemological generational intersections of discourses on African scholarship are capable of furthering the concept without compromising the possibilities of maintaining generational *distinctiveness* and the exploration of *new epistemological* paradigms.

### **3.5 The knowledge identity in post-apartheid South Africa**

The ascendancy of South Africa into a democratic state following the collapse of formal apartheid in the early 1990s that culminated in the first ever democratic elections in 1994 ushered in a myriad of agendas that were principally built around the idea of reconstruction and reclamation of all that was denied in the past. The knowledge economy has been a critical area in which various social formations are (re)constituted in the new South African society (Bawa and Mouton 2002, Bohler-Muller 2004, Lansink 2004, Ntuli 2004, Dowling and Seepe 2004). Higher education institutions in particular have been instrumental in sharpening the intellectual culture by finding and adopting new strategies that are meant to challenge the (South) African context in the global scene of knowledge productivity. As a relatively new sovereign African nation, the South African state is faced with challenges that are both local and global. The struggle for

reconstruction and development towards a knowledge based economy in post-apartheid South Africa is one which seeks to redefine and reposition Africa in the world by reclaiming her cultural values in the generation of knowledge (Ntuli 2004). The African identity has continually suffered from a history of marginalisation and there have been unprecedented ongoing efforts that are trying to address the issues of knowledge, ideology and identity<sup>2</sup> in (South) African institutions of higher learning. Defining African identity in a „post“era is complex and multi-layered; as it is embodied in factors that are not only built in the historical past of the African continent but those that are working in concordance with the new democratic dispensations that are set in place to guard against social fragmentation and to maintain national integrity. The new democratic machinery in the South African knowledge space is one which is consistent with and continues to function in the light of the aims, aspirations and values that were (are) embedded in the liberation struggle. African identity in the area of knowledge production is working in consonance with constitutional principles that highlight the respect for human rights and human dignity, and that seek to create a nonsexist and nonracist South African society – which are critical in the promotion of citizenship and the establishment of national identity (Makgoba and Seepe 2004).

In the wake of apartheid, higher education is a crucial area in the transformation process of the new South African society. The knowledge economy in contemporary South Africa is focused not only on correcting the „ills“ of the former longstanding undemocratic apartheid regime, but while doing so, as indicated by the White Paper (1997) it most importantly focuses on creating a niche in the globalised knowledge-based world. Contemporary South African scholars are preoccupied with educational debates that seek to legitimise and justify the application of African ontological, epistemological and methodological orientations in scientific knowledge. These approaches are what could provide the epistemological thrust upon which African scholarship would develop as a niche area among other global knowledge systems (Mthembu 2004). The agenda of African scholarship in (South) African universities is being engaged to continue an interrogation of the unanswered puzzle and the unfinished story that “can still be

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<sup>2</sup> See a collection of papers on “towards an African Identity of Higher Education” edited by Siphso Seepe.

changed, shaped, and authored” (Makgoba and Seepe 2004: 15). While there may exist other sites of knowledge production in society, Makgoba and Seepe (ibid) claim that universities are key players and better placed in the advancement, generation and dissemination of knowledge for systemic intervention. Mthembu (ibid) while preaching against intellectual and professional servitude of the African elite to the outside world suggests that relevance, engagement and service to Africa’s environment and socio-economic conditions and needs should be foundational in and made central in the current debates that inform the development of African universities.

In line with Mthembu’s argument Makgoba and Seepe are inciting an intellectual culture that should be able to fight against “complacency” and “mediocrity”. Rather than being custodians of knowledge, these two scholars are challenging universities in Africa to become more aggressive by being seekers of knowledge and excellence – a position they acknowledge is already pursued in some universities in South Africa. To make the exigency of this position more poignant, the observation by Mamdani as noted by Makgoba and Seepe sharply describes the pursuit of this truth and excellence in the following words:

What does strike a newcomer to the South African academy as curious, and eventually suspicious, is the frequency with which this refrain is chanted, ceremonially and officially. At which point does the claim to pursuing excellence turn into a claim of being excellent? What happens when knowledge-seekers turn around and claim to be custodians of knowledge? Knowledge-seeking is profoundly humble and a profoundly subversive activity. Its starting point, Socrates-fashion, is both the admission of ignorance in self and the questioning of truth. Knowledge-custody, on the other hand, is more of a self-appointed priestly affair, both arrogant and conservative (Mamdani 1997: 1-5 – interview with the Mail and Guardian)

For the African university to respond to the issue of Africa’s legitimation and representation as a knowledge system rooted in its own identity and epistemological convictions, it has to operate from a position of humility which would allow for a kind of an unquenchable curiosity that would continue to interrogate and adapt the development

of African scholarship to suit the changing socio-cultural, economic and political situations that the continent is subjected to. As Makgoba and Seepe rightly justify, Socrates a renowned philosopher asked a lot of important questions but never answered many of them (Makgoba and Seepe 2004:15). Operating from a position of humility, those African scholars and writers who are engaged with African knowledge-seeking approaches could produce liberal scholarship that would make allowance for generational follow ups on issues that are yet to be answered by generations to come.

The emphasis of the role of South African universities in the whole process of transformation focuses on the reconfiguration of notions of culture, identity and diversity in the post-apartheid society (Cloete et al 1997). These reconfigurations are factored in to promote African scientism in knowledge creation and innovation that are meant to put African universities at meaningful levels of competition with the rest of the other global knowledge systems.

### **3.6 South Africa's pan-Africanism – the role of African renaissance in the transformation of knowledge for Africa**

The term African renaissance was first used by the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki following the first ever democratic elections organised in 1994 after the collapse of apartheid. This term was seminally clarified in Mbeki's famous speech "I am an African" delivered in May 1996 following the adoption of a new constitution for the Republic of South Africa. African renaissance is an ambitious project of a highly multi-faceted nature, touching on every area worth-noting of Africa's plight and possible projections to overcome the numerous problems that confront the continent towards the close of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. In renewing Africa, Mbeki's mission of African renaissance is embodied in the elements of social cohesion, democracy, economic rejuvenation and growth, and the establishment of Africa as an important player in geo-political affairs (see Mbeki 1997, 1998, and 1999). For all these elements to be achieved, the intellectual space in its diversity is expected to play an imperative role of coming up with intellectual agendas that could possibly raise the



continent to the expected levels of development as designed by African renaissance. As far as the educational facet is concerned, Mbeki among other things urges an African-led intellectual class that would take pride in their heritage and take charge of the life of the people and the continent; and reverse the brain drain syndrome that has been characterised by increasing numbers of Africa's most skilled personnel serving the outside world. Thabo Mbeki's concerns over education and the generation of knowledge in Africa are suggestive of the fact that Africa must take advantage of this time in history to embrace pan-African epistemologies, social educational theories and practices that would advance "a corrective critique of education and knowledge production in Africa" (Zulu 2006:45).

African renaissance can be viewed as an extension of pan-Africanism. This is because just like pan-Africanism, African renaissance is founded on a fundamental principle that advances an agenda that seeks to liberate Africa from imperial domination. Notwithstanding the common standpoint of African liberation espoused by the protagonists of both concepts, their role in this liberation struggle is specific to the context within which they have been founded. Pan-Africanism, as a nationalist project on the one hand primarily focused on decolonisation, ending of apartheid and racism in South Africa and the promotion of the grand and ambitious idea to create a "United States of Africa" (Landsberg and Hlope 1999). African renaissance on the other hand could be seen as a "late twentieth century variant of pan-Africanism that seeks to confront challenges of globalisation in an international order dominated by the West" (Landsberg and Hlope 1999:1). It is referred to by some intellectuals as the brainchild of pan-Africanism (Alexander 2001, Zulu 2001, Maloka 2001). African renaissance is birthed in a world that is riddled with multi-layered interpretations of understanding various social phenomena which have been rendered complex by the increased economic, social and political changes and innovations that now appear to define the new world order. What is implied here is that African renaissance is not necessarily glued to the „United States of Africa“ tendency advocated by pan-Africanists but rather embarks on a mission that could be regarded as celebrating the phenomenon of „unity in diversity“. As Landsberg and Hlope (1999) point out, African renaissance is keen on responding to the

structural changes that are embedded in international systems. Living in today's post-colonial world of increased globalisation, Africa's articulations of its various social and political problems towards nation-building are inadvertently influenced by the so called global forces.

Knowledge identity remains one of the fundamental areas through which African renaissance strives to get African thoughts and philosophies (re)positioned in the global circuits of knowledge production. The knowledge paradigm plays the important role of creating meaning out of our natural world and African renaissance through the knowledge site aims at advancing education that is in keeping with the principle of "self-assertion of Africans through cultural, traditional, linguistic, philosophical and other means" (Landsberg and Hlope, 1999). On the occasion of the "First Conference of Intellectuals of Africa and the Diaspora" organised by African Union and in collaboration with the government of Senegal in October 2004, Thabo Mbeki alluding to Karl Marx's statement that "philosophy only interpreted the world, the point however is to change" emphasised the role that the intellectual leadership in Africa should be playing in changing the phase of Africa's development.

### **3.6.1 African Renaissance and the role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems towards the development of African scholarship**

As African scholarship is being rethought towards endogenous approaches (see Crossman 2004) indigenous knowledge systems popularly known by its abbreviation as IKS are making tremendous contributions to charting the way towards the development of an epistemological thrust in African knowledge systems. Indigenous knowledge (IK) is local knowledge that seeks to gain recognisable space in the world of science. Some scholars have noted that for higher education institutions to thrive in the mission of Africanising the African academia, IKS plays an important role of foregrounding knowledge based on African realities (Ntuli 2004, Crossman 2004). While it is argued that all scientific knowledge proceeds from IK to scientific scholarship, scholars in Africa have noted that there is this resistance to accept local knowledge emanating from Africa into the mainstream scientific fraternity (see Ntuli 2004, Sithole 2009).

Despite this resistance, in South Africa the notion of IKS has become an important academic discourse through which African identities are entrenched in this post-apartheid and postmodernist era. The idea of IKS has achieved so much prominence in public and scholarly discourses in South Africa not so much on its own merit, but because of its perceived significance as a channel of African identity (Crossman 2004: 332). This concept became propelled into academic discourse in the 1990s and is now in vogue as a major knowledge system among academics of various disciplinary backgrounds; ranging from the natural science through techno-science to social sciences.

Placing African conditions at the centre of knowledge inquiries is a *sine qua non* of developing relevant and appropriate systems of education in which there will emerge a truly African university that will pursue an agenda away from the routinised and deterministic paradigms through which knowledge in the continent has largely been generated and produced. Ideological frameworks such as *ubuntu* and African Renaissance are emphatically encouraging generation of knowledge that is cognisant of IK or local knowledge (LK) designed to give African scholars an epistemic impetus and the tutelage to generate and „own“ knowledge of their „kind“. In an explicit declaration made by then Minister of Arts, Culture, Language, Science and Technology, Lionel Mtshali said “the systematic revitalization of indigenous knowledge systems and indigenous technology is a major aspect of our experience for the African Renaissance” (University of the North West 1998) cited in Crossman (2004:332). Since the birth of these ideological concepts, IKS has become a popular refrain in the intellectual ventures of leading black intellectuals and politicians in contemporary South Africa. IKS became so important that universities were charged with the responsibility of mobilising this concept and in fact having it introduced into the university curricula. Benefitting largely from government grants, many departments in a good number of South African universities are gradually generating research programmes that are IKS-focused (Crossman 2004)

The idea of indigenous knowledge systems is a liberatory and an emancipatory concept in the geopolitical knowledge hemisphere. It is the ideological and logical demand for

knowledge pluralism and dynamism (Crossman 2004, Sithole 2009). African identity has overtime been in a continual struggle to extricate itself from the claws of western domination. This struggle has continued to reconfigure in the liberatory agendas of the various ideological and political movements that have spanned the different moments of African history. All of Africa's ideological and political movements regardless of their primary preoccupations, have never ignored the role of knowledge in the negotiation process of the different forms in which issues of identity and African cultures are understood. Intellectual knowledge as one of the sought after components in the (re)negotiation of Africa's significance in the global society, has always been reflected in ideological and political bodies such as Pan-Africanism, Black consciousness, African Union, NEPAD, African Renaissance and *ubuntu*. All of these bodies are working in connection with the intellectual space to create meaningful orientations through which knowledge in and on the continent can be generated and disseminated. The use of IKS, strongly pronounced in the agendas of concepts such as African Renaissance and *ubuntu* provides frameworks upon which the cultural values, traditions and the socio-economic and political experiences of the continent can be given the relevant epistemological dissection.

### **3.7 The immigration of Africa's skilled labour in contemporary South Africa**

In the current state of extensive and intensive migration flows in the world, South Africa is increasingly becoming one of the world's major destination areas for Africa's immigration. Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has been receiving new forms of migration flows into the country which were hitherto alien to the former state of South Africa in the days of apartheid. The democratic dispensation of the new South African state is one which is struggling to create political relevancy for its populace through the promotion of principles that have to do with addressing the equation of social equality and justice. In a continent which has generally been plagued with social and economic quagmires and their resultant effect on the dismal political situation across different

African nations, relatively speaking, South Africa remains the most politically stable country on the continent. This relative conducive political atmosphere coupled with the comparative economic buoyancy and South Africa's relevance in this new age of hyper technology and information, the country has become the hub of a „new“ migration phenomenon in Africa (Tati 2008). The (re)insertion of South Africa into the global economy (Crush and McDonald 2002) following the collapse of apartheid has introduced new agendas of transformation which have continued to affect every area of life in the country. Migration is one of the key dynamic areas involved in the reconstruction process in the post-apartheid South African nation; and some scholars have claimed that since the days of apartheid migration has been an intrinsic entity of the developmental process in South Africa (Tati 2008, Zinyama 2000, Crush 2000, McDonald, Zinyama, Gay and Vlettter 1998). Given the unprecedented influx of different categories of migrants in the country, international migration has therefore become an important index in assessing the developmental concerns of the new South African nation (Tati 2008).

The dawn of democracy in South Africa has promoted new migration tendencies into the country, especially from among many countries of the sub-Saharan African region. The legal and unauthorised ease (Crush and McDonald 2002) with which migrants make their entry to South Africa, has made the country a new destination area for both documented and undocumented migrants. Students, skilled professionals across different fields, asylum seekers, long-distance traders and entrepreneurs have become part of the main new migration configurations in contemporary South Africa (Bouillon 1996, Saasa 1996, Rogerson 1997). Skilled labour migration in the current state of South Africa is on the upsurge and the country is becoming one of the preferred centres for the burgeoning African emigration propensities. South Africa is increasingly playing host to a “truly pan-African global constituency” (Crush and McDonald 2002: 4) of skilled migrants of various professional and disciplinary backgrounds who are now working in the different departments of the South African workforce. The world of academia constitutes part of the new migration mosaics in South Africa and the department of education in general is one of the highest recipients of African skilled labour immigration into the country.

### **3.7.1 Understanding Africa's immigration and the internationalisation of higher education in South Africa**

Higher education in the present context of the South African state is undergoing rapid and unprecedented changes that are confronted with the multiple challenges brought about by the process of transformation in the first place, and the vast and complex processes of globalisation, skyrocketing technological innovations and increased international mobility and transnational migrations. While a lot has been going on in the transformation of higher education since the formation of the democratic government, a lot still needs to be established in the area of migration and the internationalisation of higher education in present-day South Africa. A quick gaze at the literature on higher education transformation in South Africa reveals that various state institutions of higher learning are fast responding to the call of equity and redress, while at the same time striving to (re)insert themselves within the global frameworks through which developmental concerns are (re)negotiated for a global participation (Kraak 1999, Austin 1999). Tertiary institutions in South Africa by virtue of their crucial role as knowledge spaces, are assuming the role of leading transformation among other stakeholders in education and development (Balintulo 2004, Msila 2007). The privileged position occupied by tertiary institutions as breeders and disseminators of knowledge, potentially privileges these institutions to develop models of transformation which could benefit wider societal circles (Ramphela 1995). Ramphela (1995) also stresses that the capacity for universities to do research, and to teach should enable their academics to lead the process of transformation as agents of change.

While international migration has been generally viewed as an important developmental tool for both the sending and receiving countries, its utility value as an area of development is however not an obvious affair in the various societal segments through which different developmental agendas are unpacked and repackaged. The internationalisation process of South African universities has witnessed an increasing influx of international students to South Africa especially from the rest of the African continent. In addition to this student influx, there have also been significant numbers of

African lecturers migrating to work in the various South African institutions of higher learning. Reasons for this influx cannot be overemphasised as they range from political to economic and from structural to personal reasons. Despite these increasing numbers of foreign African intelligentsia in the South African academia, not so much attention is given to the implications of their presence in the country. This is both a policy problem as well as it is a research problem. Cross and Rouhani (2004) have noted that the process of internationalisation of South African tertiary institutions as much as it is imperative for policy implementations, it is largely an under-researched area given the rapid transformations that are taking place in various universities.

The internationalisation of scholarship in South African universities, although reflective of larger numbers of foreign African students and a significant number of established foreign African academics, is still rooted in the colonial models that informed scholarship and the transfer of skills between institutions of higher learning in and outside South Africa in the days of apartheid (Cross and Rouhani 2004). In the days of colonialism and apartheid, international exchanges for student mobility and staff cooperation highly privileged a North-South (N-S) knowledge cooperation agenda. This agenda showed an asymmetrical relationship in which absolute power of control was skewed in favour of the North. This legacy still lives on as many universities in Africa are making the least efforts to have their cords severed from northern economies. The N-S cooperation paradigm initiated by colonialism promoted bilateral agreements that regulated the movements of ideas and knowledge, (Crossman and Rouhani 2004) and these have continued to be reinvented in either overt or covert manners in this era of post-colonialism and post-apartheid.

In a period when South African educational systems are focused on (re)building and reclaiming the African identity which was lost in the past, one would expect areas such as the immigration of skilled African professionals into the country to be taken much more seriously in research and policy formulation. The marginalisation of African identity with reference to the production of knowledge is an enduring phenomenon in which African knowledge(s) have continually been challenged on the basis of their scientism among

other global knowledge systems. The transformation of higher education in post-election South Africa is one whose agenda is being renegotiated to embrace endogenous approaches with the aim of Africanising the generation and production of knowledge in and about Africa (Crossman 2004, Balintulo 2004, Subotzky and Cele 2004) towards the establishment of a relevant knowledge economy. South to South (S-S) linkages can no longer be considered as an option but a requirement especially in this current context when the more composite African political and economic bodies such as the African Union (AU) and the New Economic Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) are advocating the pursuance of educational systems which are rooted in African conditions and understandings. While the South African government is preoccupied with initiating and pursuing policies such as *ubuntu* and African Renaissance to address issues of identity and national integrity, many individual universities in their visions and mission statements are also explicitly or implicitly striving towards the development of pedagogic and curricular structures that are geared towards highlighting the relevancy of Africa as an epistemological space on the map of global knowledge production. However the broader political context of South Africa within which these tertiary institutions find themselves somewhat constrains the operationalisation of the university as a free enterprise capable of independently running its own agenda. Cross and Rouhani (2004) have argued that because of the standardised, homogenised, harmonised and regulated ways in which South African universities have been structured and programmed, it has become difficult to accommodate new agendas which were not originally thought of from the time when the process of transformation was first deliberated. The issue of internationalisation with specific reference to foreign African populations in South African tertiary institutions, though a crucial area, was not programmed in the initial dialogue of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. No doubt some local South Africans would openly express, even in scholarly meetings, that South Africa is not part of Africa. This kind of understanding is working in opposition to the very value giving recognition to African identity as espoused by the spirit of *ubuntu* and African Renaissance.



### **3.8 Immigration and the brain drain discourse in post-election South Africa**

The concept of brain drain which denotes the flight of human capital involves large-scale emigration of groups of individuals with technical skills and specialised knowledge; who possess the expertise and competence in particular areas, and who utilise these skills within a professional context (Mattes and Richmond 2000: 12). Historically speaking this term developed as a result of the massive emigration of European scientist and technologists to North America in the days of European post-war reconstruction. Although originally Africa was never part of this brain drain eruption, Africa in the present-day context remains the most affected continent in the world. With Africa showing up in the picture, scholarly attention with regard to this issue (just as with many other issues) has been tilted towards understanding the trends and effects of this concept on the African continent.

Even though it is much more evident that Africa continues to lose its human capital mainly to northern economies and other parts of the world such as the Asian tiger nations of China, Japan and India, the issue of „brain drain“ calculated as „loss“ remains controversial in the present context of Africa. Despite this controversy, the continent through the different historical periods has steadily been faced with alarming rates of intellectual capital flight from the 1960s to the present. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) estimates, between 1960 and 1975 about 27,000 highly qualified Africans left the continent for the North. Between 1975 and 1984 the number almost doubled with an increase of 40,000 and in 1985 alone Africa lost 60,000 professionals including medical doctors, university lecturers, scientists and engineers. Since 1990 Africa has been losing an average of 20,000 of its skilled labour per annum. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) there are now 100,000 African skilled individuals living and working in the European Union (EU) and North America (Cited in Joseph 2005:7).

South Africa is one of the countries which has been rated as one of the most affected by the issue of brain drain on the continent. South Africa as a „new hub“ for Africa’s skilled

labour immigration lies at a contradictory intersection of assessing the effect of both the immigration and emigration scales in the country. Various studies have produced contradictory and often conflicting reports about the state of immigration and emigration in the post-election state of the South African Republic. While some scholars and researchers have noted that the immigration of people of African origin are steadily on the increase in this post-apartheid era ((Maharaj 2004, Matte, Crush and Richmond 2002), others are arguing that the influx of skilled persons in the present context of South Africa is declining as compared to the days of apartheid (Bailey 2006). This literature is claiming that the percentage of skills lost through emigration is far above the percentage gained through immigration (Bailey 2006). Due to the ability of South Africa to develop as a “knowledge society” following its technological advancement within the globe, this has earned her the mandate as a key player in global economic competitiveness (Bailey 2006: 236). Consequently the workforce emanating from South Africa qualifies to be recruited in other parts of the world based on its technological and scientific standing. South Africa’s tertiary institutions as transmitters of knowledge are relatively the best equipped on the continent and can be seen as favourably measuring with those of the North. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), human resources for science and technology as defined includes “highly skilled specialists, independent executives and senior managers, specialised technicians, or tradespersons, investors, business persons, „key workers“ and sub-contract workers” (cited in Iredale 2001: 8). These professions, broadly speaking, fall within the fields of natural sciences, engineering and technology, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences and the humanities (OECD 1995). Skill acquisition could be seen as an important prerequisite propelling the decision for many individuals to migrate. The „skilled“ in skills migration as explained by Tracey Bailey (2006) has the potential of inducing the migration of skilled persons. South Africa is counted among the world’s economies in transition which happen to meet the standards set up by OECD as enlisted above.

The high propensity of the South African intelligentsia to migrate abroad has produced a degree of irreparable economic consequences in the country. Despite the continual influx

of migrants from particularly the rest of the sub-Saharan region of Africa, this has not been able to surmount the problem of shortage of skills that the general South African workforce is facing. This shortage of skills which is exacerbated by the popular brain drain virus, is a critical problem in the present South African context. While many South Africans are clamouring for employment and job fulfillment in countries considered to be more buoyant such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, the paradox is that other countries from the sub-Saharan region are looking forward to working in South Africa for similar reasons that their South African counterparts are leaving their country. Indeed as my previous study (Otu 2011) reveals, amidst some hiccups with xenophobia being the main challenge, most of those I interviewed irrespective of where they migrated from<sup>3</sup> testify to a better academic and career life. The problem of skill shortages in South Africa could be blamed on the bureaucratic bottlenecks and the tight immigration policies which are far from benchmarking the positive contributions made by immigration.

These bureaucratic bottlenecks are orchestrated by the new government policies regarding employment in the new South African democracy. The employment Equity Law and its offshoot Affirmative Action are systematic mechanisms which the post-apartheid government has put in place as part of the political agenda to address the social injustices that existed in the past. According to these laws, the once advantaged groups namely the whites are now among the least to qualify for formal employment in the country. This categorisation is considered bureaucratic and many whites are not prepared to go through the filtering process which is a requirement for the laws of equity and affirmative action. Again the tight immigration policies in what appears to be a highly xenophobic context, have left many South Africans in a position where they are yet to grapple with the contributions made by immigration as an important economic injection to the host society (Matte et al 2002, Crush and McDonald 2002, Crush and Pendleton 2004).

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<sup>3</sup> See Otu 2011 – published master’s dissertation on the lives and livelihoods of African professional migrants in institutions of higher learning : the case of foreign African academics at UKZN. This work reveals migrants who migrated from within African universities and outside Africa.

Migrants are not drainers but are potentially net injectors to the economy of their host country. In a context that could be considered as the centerpiece for Africa Renaissance, it is imperative to formulate policies that would ensure an obvious degree of dignified treatment of African people from across Africa. As one of my research participants put it *“I think South Africa should mean a lot to an African man or woman regardless of where they come from ... after all it supposes to be the centre for African Renaissance and it is preaching the gospel of ubuntu.”* By implication, what affects South Africa, affects Africa. The issue of brain drain in South Africa could be addressed if foreign Africans with skills could be considered and be given a fair treatment by formulating immigration policies that could ease the process of their job application and acquisition; for many of the African nationals are prepared to take up jobs that are turned down by the locals. Literature is showing that many of the most qualified South Africans are not willing to work in the public sector basically because the public sector does not provide the required financial incentives (Matte et al 2002, Dodson 2002, Maharaj 2004). Foreign Africans are prepared to take advantage of this tendency to apply for and take up employment in the departments that the local are not willing to work in.

The issue of brain drain in South Africa is so rife that it became part of the major concerns voiced by the then South African President Thabo Mbeki as he embarked on his sermon for African Renaissance. On one occasion in 1998 he said:

In our world in which generation of new knowledge and its application to change the human condition is the engine which moves human society further away from barbarism, we do not have need to recall Africa’s hundreds of thousands intellectuals back from their places of emigration in Western Europe and North America, to rejoin those who remain still within our shores! I dream of the day when these, the African mathematicians and computer specialists in Washington and New York, the African physicists, engineers, doctors, business managers and economists, will return from London and Manchester and Paris and Brussels to add to the African pool of brain power, to enquire into and find solutions to Africa’s place within the universities of research the information of new knowledge, education and information.

This clarion call for the return of the African intelligentsia expressed by one of Africa's most talented heads of state, is a call for concern not only to the South African nation but for the entire continent. The "pool of brain power" on the continent is what the African people need for them to forge ahead with their development and provide solutions to African problems enquired by the African mind.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

African scholarship has been an enduring process since independence. Showing the extent to which the concept of African scholarship has metamorphosed this chapter has critically discussed how African scholarship has come to be defined and analysed by the different generations of African scholars. Drawing on a history of migration, the chapter highlights the role of the African diaspora in the promotion and establishment of an African knowledge identity within the global knowledge economy. The chapter has also advanced a debate on the knowledge identity in post-apartheid South Africa. Using the concepts of African Renaissance and *ubuntu* the chapter challenges South Africa and its knowledge spaces towards the formulation and development of policies that could work better in (re)asserting African identity in its diversity. The chapter has advanced the argument that since South Africa is becoming a hub for African immigration, it is important for South Africa to critically look into its immigration policies in keeping to the principles as outlined by the spirit of *ubuntu* and African Renaissance.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **POSITIONING THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL AS THE PREMIER UNIVERSITY OF AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP**

#### **4.1 Transforming higher educational institutions in post-apartheid South Africa**

The process of transformation is a popular discourse that has continually informed debates that have to do with nation-building in the post-apartheid South African state. Universities, and other institutions of higher learning, are one of the major spaces through which the agenda of transforming the new democratic state of South Africa is being engineered to bring about meaningful changes of social equality embedded in the political principles that currently govern the post-election South African nation. Political agendas such as affirmative action and the law of equity operating currently in South Africa attempt a discontinuity from the socio-political malpractices that bedevilled the former regime of apartheid. University education has been a key driver in influencing ideology and policy even in the days of apartheid. The Extension University Education Act of 1959 for example, was one of the centrepieces through which ideology and policy were entrenched in the days of heightened apartheid activities (Barnes 2005). During this period of apartheid, the South African government created and supported a higher education system which was strictly patterned along racial lines. This system restricted blacks to a narrow range of fields that corroborated a racially determined division of labour (Badat 1994, Bunting 1994). The Bantu Education Act of 1953 enacted by the apartheid state ensured that the majority black children receive education that confined them to unskilled and low job status. Contrary to this, education provided to white children prepared them for an almost complete monopoly of accessing, occupying and dominating high status jobs (Lemmer 1991).

Transformation is a process that attempts to challenge the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. It fundamentally aims at restructuring the contemporary South African state in

improving the quality of life by freely engaging with the potential of all individuals living within the South African borders. Generally speaking, the legality of transformation is an attempt to ensure equal treatment and the restoration of human dignity. The ideal of participatory democracy, which is a keen agenda of transformation, has broken down formal walls of power binaries by bridging the gaps of exclusivity which had hitherto undercut the legitimation of black participation in the broader social context during the apartheid government, while in the meantime, the minority white population was connected to highly privileged socio-economic and political opportunities. While the process of transformation embarks on dismantling the dehumanising structures of the former regime, it should be noted this process rooted in the very deprecations of apartheid principles and governance is negotiating a liberation struggle that is rooted in an inheritance of functional institutions of the past upon which new agendas of democratic principles are drawn. This dilemma is made poignant in the words of the pioneer chancellor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2005. During her inaugural speech Dr Noshir Ginwala commented that

*Unlike the situation in many other post conflict societies, the nature of our liberation struggle and negotiated settlement, allowed us to inherit functioning institutions. For all their shortcomings, they were operational. Our challenge was to maintain and use them while at the same time we tried to reshape and transform them for our purpose (see Chetty 2005: 6).*

Ginwala's commentary demonstrates the trajectory of a liberation struggle that was meant for a total breakaway from the apartheid system, while, at the same time, it has appeared as „mission impossible“ to totally do away with structures emanating from a most brutal and inhuman system which one would never have thought of revisiting after its demise. This paradoxical stance explains the issues of continuities and discontinuities in contemporary South Africa. As much as the democratic regime embarked on making every effort to fight against the policies of oppression, exclusion and repression that had characterised the apartheid regime, it is paradoxical that some of the current political rituals in terms of legislation are still informed by policies that were founded by apartheid. In explaining this dilemma Ginwala further comments that “*we sometimes felt*

*we were performing mental splits, and often wished we could have started from scratch.”*

It is not just South Africa which has been affected by the legacy of colonialism. In the entire continent of Africa, politics of reconstruction, transformation and nation-building have taken root from policies which had existed in the days of colonialism. The current South African state is defined by those same hierarchical powers and racial relationships that informed apartheid policies. The dialectical relationship between the apartheid regime and the democratic government is mutually exclusive in terms of policy application. The wheel of racialism and hierarchical power that has been reinvented in the present South African context is one which is foregrounded on democratic principles with the potential of restoring human dignity. While apartheid was built on racial dichotomies which arrogated political power to the white minority over the black majority, the present democratic government has taken a paradigm shift of a more open character of cultural diversity driven by principles of equality and equity. Although the policies of equity and affirmative action tend to privilege those who were once marginalised, these policies are not meant to counter the overall motive of bringing meaningful development and contributing to the general stability of the South African state. The preceding statement is made eloquent in the management echelon which still has white people dominating senior and top management positions up to today; even with such policies in place.

Since the advent of democracy the South African academy has been a key player in the politics of transformation and disentanglement from the past. In transforming the South African society, higher educational institutions across the country are challenged with the responsibilities of dismantling structures which in every respect constrained academic freedom. As noted earlier on, educational systems during apartheid were highly racialised and higher educational institutions in particular were faced with a system that was built on dichotomous pedagogic and curricular structures. The social privileges embedded in these structures were a response to a racial order of a minority white supremacy over the black. The curriculum and pedagogy that guided black institutions of higher learning were stifling and black identity was suffocated in order to accommodate the political agenda of „separate development“ which was the hallmark of racism in the days of apartheid.



Allocation of state funding was skewed in favour of white schools. White schools were heavily funded by the apartheid government and white children enjoyed the privilege of healthy learning environments with better classroom spaces, well equipped libraries, laboratories and well-trained teaching staff. The other racial groups of the black, Indian and coloured races received less funding and the outcome was overcrowded schools and inadequate classrooms with very high teacher-learner ratios (Rembe 2005). Besides the existing infrastructural divides, the school curriculum was imbued with racist and dogmatic material based upon outdated theories of learning and teaching practices. The curriculum perpetuated issues of race, class, gender and ethnic divisions; depriving a majority of people common citizenship and national identity. Nasson (1990) points out that essential stakeholders in the educational sectors were never involved in the curriculum development process in the days of apartheid. In addition to this, the curriculum did not offer equal access to knowledge which resulted in black students' low and unequal access to higher education opportunities and to the labour market.

## **4.2 Higher Education in the Post Election Period**

The transition government of the 1994 post election period witnessed a myriad of policy formulation and implementation in which democratic principles were enshrined. In education, the democratic government proposed and adopted fundamental changes envisioned to redress the inequalities and imbalances that had existed in the past. The transformational vision for education in contemporary South Africa was guided by a number of principles as outlined by the Department of Education (DoE) in 1995. The principles were as follows

- Equity and Redress: ensuring the removal of all forms of differentiation and providing equal opportunities to the majority of South African
- Democratisation: ensuring that democratic, representative and participatory governance prevails
- Quality: setting educational standards and ensuring that they are maintained

in conformity with transformative norms, standards and ideals of excellence

- Development: making certain that the educational system is transformed to enable it to contribute to the common good of society
- Effectiveness and Efficiency: ensuring that desired outcomes or objectives are achieved without unnecessary duplication and waste
- Institutional Autonomy: ensuring that organisational choice and self regulation are embraced and facilitated.

The principles of DoE as outlined above, are indicative of a transformation from racially segregated policies of exclusion and resource differentiation, towards a desegregated and disenfranchised character of equal participation and opportunities for all people of South Africa. These policies were essentially formulated to end „the racial game of segregation“ in South Africa and to open a new page of transforming the education system from its stronghold of inequality and inequity into that of equality and equity. The achievement of these policies in the current South African higher educational context cannot be overemphasised. One of the major and obvious achievements is the deracialisation of institutions of higher learning. Since the demise of apartheid, universities and other higher institutions of learning have developed a character of racial blend with students across different racial categories attending the same institutions. There no longer exist schools which are exclusively white or black, even though some are either white dominated or black dominated.

One of the outcomes of deracialised transformation in institutions of higher education is the merger system. For example what is now known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal came out of the merger that took place in 2004 of the two historically different universities of Durban-Westville (UDW) and the University of Natal (NU). This history will be explored in-depth later on in the chapter. In addition to deracialisation, the principle of resource differentiation in education evident in of apartheid has been uprooted. Universities have now become autonomous spaces with the right to determine

and manage their resources in keeping with the general national goals on education. State funding for higher educational institutions is a natural process of participation based on competitive scholarship. Government funding for tertiary education is initiated through different financial schemes such as NRF grants. The overall qualifying condition for such schemes is based on the principle of performativity. This principle is articulated within the frameworks of excellence in research, curriculum development and teaching involving the participation and outputs of both the academic and the student population.

### **4.3 Transforming the University of KwaZulu-Natal**

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is an integral part of the general transformation changes that have been taking place in South Africa since the collapse of the apartheid government and the rise of a democratic government in 1994. As an academic space, UKZN attempts to insert itself meaningfully to academic relevancy that is articulated within the broader frameworks of national development and social cohesion. The new University of KwaZulu-Natal was formed out of the merger that took place between the University of Natal (NU) established in 1910 and the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) founded in the 1960s. Before the merger it must be noted that these two universities, like most universities in South Africa, operated from two distinct historical contexts of exclusive social and academic privileges. These contexts have come to be documented today as historically black universities (HBU) and historically white universities (HWU). Born out of the ashes of „separate development“ in the era of apartheid, NU and UDW respectively epitomised the previously advantaged and disadvantaged institutions in the days of apartheid. While NU exclusively served the white population, UDW was eclipsed for the black and Indian populations.

Bringing together these two rich historical orientations, UKZN was among the first batch of South African higher institutions to merge in accordance with government's plans to restructure the world of academia as part of the national agenda of reconstruction and development in post-apartheid South Africa. In response to redressing „the social and the political“ in the new democratic state of South Africa, UKZN became branded as “The

Premier University of African Scholarship”. Engaging with this brand the university subscribes to a mission statement and a number of goals and core values that are rooted in the current democratic values of the state and the initiation of an African-oriented scholarship for global competition.

### **4.3.1 Mission, goals and core values**

**The mission statement of UKZN reads as follows:**

- A truly South African university which is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past.

**The goals are as follows**

- **African-led Globalisation:** To promote African-led globalisation through African scholarship by positioning the university, through its teaching, learning, scholarship, research, and innovation, to enter the global knowledge system on it
- **Responsible Community Engagement:** To contribute through knowledge to the prosperity and sustainability of our province, and to nation-building, by connecting with and committing ourselves to the communities we serve in a manner that adds value and earns their respect, admiration and trust
- **Pre-eminence in Research:** To build a research ethos that acknowledges the responsibility of academic staff to nurture its postgraduate students, and to be pre-eminent producer of new knowledge that is both local and global in context, and defines UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship
- **Excellence in Teaching and Learning:** To promote excellence in teaching and learning through creative and innovative curriculum design and development, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices in accordance with the highest quality management principles
- **Institution of Choice for Learners:** To establish the University as an institution

of choice that values students in all their diversity and has a student-centred ethos, providing students with curricula, teachers, infrastructure and support services designed around their needs and producing well-educated, competent, sought-after graduates

- **Institution of Choice for Staff:** To establish as an institution of choice that attracts and retains academic and support staff of the highest calibre by creating an intellectual environment that fosters and stimulates academic life, and a climate of organisational citizenship in which all staff recognise and understand their role in ensuring the success of the University
- **Efficient and Effective Management:** To establish and maintain efficient and effective management systems and processes that provide a caring and responsive service to meet internal and external needs in a pragmatic and flexible manner.

**The core values are outlined as follows:**

- Actively encourage and respect the rights of all scholars, staff and students to engage in critical inquiry, independent research, intellectual discourse and public debate in a spirit of responsibility and accountability, in accordance with the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy
- Promote access to learning that will expand educational and employment opportunities for all
- Embrace our responsibility as a public institution to support and to contribute to national and regional development, and the welfare and upliftment of the wider community, through the generation and dissemination of knowledge and the production of socially responsible graduate
- Conduct ourselves according to the highest ethical standards, and provide education that promotes an awareness of sound ethical practice in a diverse society
- Manage and run our institution in conscious awareness of the environment, and

foster culture of responsible, ethical and sustainable use of natural resources

- Ensure effective governance through broad and inclusive participation, democratic representation, accountability and transparency that serves as an example that contributes to building the democratic ethos of our country
- Acknowledge the value of the individual by promoting the intellectual, social, and personal well-being of staff and students through tolerance and respect for multilingualism, diverse cultures, religions and social values, and by fostering the realisation of each person's full potential.

#### **4.4 Defining African scholarship at UKZN**

The University of KwaZulu-Natal is dubbed “The Premier University of African Scholarship”. As an African university, the vision of UKZN engenders the generation of knowledge which must arise from “interfacing with our local context” which has many geographical, socio-political and economic dimensions (see [www.ukzn.ac](http://www.ukzn.ac)). As mentioned earlier, UKZN is among the very first universities to have successfully managed the process of merging-established institutions as part of the post-election transformation in higher education. Through “Interfacing with our local context”, UKZN attempts to initiate scholarship that speaks to the relevance of the (South) African context in its interaction with other forms of scholarship around the globe. In his inaugural address the Vice Chancellor of UKZN, Professor Malegapuru William Makgoba alluding to a number of anecdotes about William Wordsworth's poem, Sir Isaac Newton's and Archimedes' discoveries<sup>4</sup>, highlights the fundamentals of knowledge production which have to do with meaning, context, relevance, interactiveness, its use and its culture-relatedness. This position explains that for UKZN to be branded as the premier university of African scholarship knowledge has to be foregrounded within the framework of African experiences based on cultural relativity with the view of highlighting its meaning

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<sup>4</sup> See Chetty (2005) “Makgoba inaugural speech in the document “Towards African Scholarship: Inauguration of the chancellor and vice chancellor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Allusions made to Wordsworth's poem “Daffodils”, Newton's law on gravity, and Archimedes principle on volume and weight.

and use as it interacts with other forms of scholarship in the global world.

From the time of its inception, UKZN has been charged with the responsibility of defining what African scholarship means. In trying to provide an understanding to this vision, UKZN had to set out a framework explaining the meaning, and the means through which the vision can be driven. This has been spelt out by the mission, goals and core values already highlighted in section (4.3.1) of this chapter. Different shades of meaning came up as I interrogated different participants in this research on the question of defining African scholarship. The term African scholarship means different things for different people. African scholarship is an elusive term encumbered with a multiplicity of voices inclined towards its establishment as a scientific space of knowledge. While African scholarship could simply mean „doing things the African way“ there is still a call to explain what these African ways are. In trying to problematise the complexities and dynamisms of this term, the argument advanced by most of my research participants rested on the cliché „African scholarship is context specific“. As I listened to various participants commenting on African scholarship as being context-specific, a myriad of questions crossed my mind:

- What then does it mean for UKZN to be branded “The Premier University of African Scholarship?”
- Is it about geographical space? In this context does African scholarship mean South African scholarship?
- To what extent can UKZN claim the authenticity of its vision as the premier university of African scholarship?
- When we say context specific, does it have to do with demographic representation?
- Is UKZN taking into consideration the different variables that inform African scholarship in its epistemic culture?

In attempting to provide answers for these questions, UKZN is still faced with the challenge of defining what African scholarship really is. While all those who participated

in this research do not doubt the fact that there is after all a form of scholarship which could be identified as African scholarship, there is much more to it than meets the eye. The very definition of African scholarship is first of all rooted in our understanding of the African identity. In defining who an African is Mama (2005) asserts that the term „African“ cuts across a spectrum of factors which include class, ethnicity, gender, religion and I would like to add race and nationality. As the premier university of African scholarship, UKZN is challenged to develop a character of diversity which is expected to play into the dynamics that are embedded in what constitutes the African identity. Looking at the mission statement, goals and core values guiding the academic culture of UKZN, one would notice in them a multi-layered agenda of academic values geared towards establishing UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship. In line with its vision, of excellence and innovation in research UKZN must interface with a societal ethos of inclusivity founded on the identity paradigms of cross-culturalism, multiculturalism and pluralism. An ethos of inclusivity and diversity is underpinned in all the three pacesetters of mission, goals and core values that were set to conflate the vision of the institution. The vision of African scholarship at UKZN is an ongoing process. African scholarship at UKZN, just like elsewhere, is a concept riddled with multi-layered complexities with no clear-cutting definition. For one to understand the multiplicity that is embedded in the conceptualisation of the term African scholarship at UKZN, one has to look at the popular and the specific.

#### **4.4.1 African scholarship as embedded in the popular**

African scholarship is a relatively novel term in the history of the new merger University of KwaZulu-Natal. Although this concept is relatively new at UKZN, African scholarship has been an ongoing process from the pre-independence to post-independence eras in Africa. The issue of African scholarship at UKZN is largely informed by the very debates that have been taking place among different scholars who are involved with the politics of knowledge production in Africa. UKZN, just like other pockets of African scholarship, is still trying to grapple with the meaning of this concept in its attempt to position itself as a premier university of African scholarship. In defining what African scholarship is, there



are fundamental issues that were evoked by everyone who participated in this research. At a most basic level, African scholarship has been broadly defined as „doing things Africa“ in relation to the production of knowledge. In engaging with the „popular“ African scholarship at UKZN is a buzzword with so much still in expectation of having this vision meaningfully streamlined. The „popular“ in this context is defined in the broader sense of a (re)negotiated identity and legitimacy of knowledge in and about Africa. African scholarship as a popular discourse at UKZN therefore lies at the intersection of locally inspired and globally competitive knowledge approaches articulated within the frameworks of “meaning, penalty and responsibility” outlined by Makgoba during his inaugural speech as the pioneer Vice Chancellor of UKZN. Alluding to a comment made by Chinua Achebe in 1982 during Achebe’s interview with Kwame Appiah, Makgoba highlights meaning, penalty and responsibility to suggest the need to overcome African colonial history and reclamation of knowledge that takes the responsibility of foregrounding African identity.

In responding to the definition of African scholarship, much of what has been said by those who were interviewed for this study does not depart much from what has been said already by other scholars in respect to the concept of African scholarship. It is based on this reason that I came up with the subtitle that looks at how the popular is embedded in the politics of African scholarship at UKZN. This section therefore attempts to highlight some of the fundamental principles upon which the concept of African scholarship has been conjugated by the different pockets of scholars at UKZN who participated in this study. In defining what African scholarship means in a broader sense, three major issues emerged across the interviews. These issues include:

1. Foregrounding the African identity
2. Surmounting the colonial legacy
3. Instilling a sense of pride through the valorisation of African-led knowledge

#### **4.4.1.1 Foregrounding the African identity**

The politics of identity is one of the major elements that have preoccupied both historical and contemporary scholars and leaders of Africa. The African identity in general has been muffled and stifled in many respect across the different political epochs. From the time of colonialism to the time of decolonisation and to this present time of the „posts“ (that is post-colonialism, post-structuralism, post-modernism) agendas of deconstruction and reconstruction, as well as African identity has suffered from perpetual marginalisation. Even though it has made significant inroads with some individual nation-states representing Africa at a global stage in politics and development, Africa is still viewed and constructed in the same way it was viewed and constructed in the historical time of colonialism. Some nation-states such as Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa have been members of renowned international bodies such as the United Nations organs of the Security Council and the International Court of Justice at The Hague. However their participation in such organs does not put them at the same level of political power as their counterparts of the western world.

Regional political organisations such as the African Union (AU), and the New Economic Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD), are fundamentally founded to assert African identity by managing African socio-economic and political affairs and to fight against discrimination, exploitation and imperialism. Even though there exist these bodies and all sorts of international declarations that want to deal with the material forms of discrimination, the world has not begun to deal with the problem of intellectual forms of discrimination.

The politics of representation in the knowledge production paradigm is one which has obliterated the voices of other forms of knowledge(s). The knowledge economy is one which is still characterised by the binaries of power relations with ascribed intellectual dichotomies such as those between the global and local, the centre and periphery, North and South, traditional and modern, scientism and empiricism which are seen as notional spaces in the intellectual division of labour. Much of what constitutes the African

scholarship discourse has been predicated on these asymmetrical power relations which have tended to obscure the African identity in the geopolitics of knowledge. Sithole (2009: 21) observes that much of what African social scientists have contributed towards African philosophy “is seen as only existing in response to the dialectic of power struggles resulting from colonial and imperial squabbles.” She (Sithole 2009: 21) further argues that limiting African philosophy and social science to the “contingencies of power dynamics” is an affirmation of its inferiority. Up until now African scholarship is still suffering from intellectual discrimination within the globe. In a multipolar, globalised and post-colonial world of today, the legitimacy of some knowledge(s) as scientific spaces is still very much contended. Exclusionary and discriminatory discursive practices from the West have continuously confined Africa, in particular, to the margins of global knowledge (Moore 1996, Lansink 2004).

African scholarship attempts to claim space for Africa and institutions of higher learning are making tremendous efforts in institutionalising intellectual and ideological infrastructures as emerging sites of knowledge pluralisation (Zezeza 2008). This pluralisation suggests foregrounding and legitimating African identity in the production of knowledge as African scholarship attempts to interact with other scholarships within the global world. The University of KwaZulu-Natal inserts itself within the discourse of identity affirmation as it seeks to redress social inequalities and marginalisation between the racial categories of white and blacks that existed in the past. The founding of the vision at UKZN is a rejoin to the ongoing discourses of African identity in the area of knowledge production. African scholarship, as defined by scholars at UKZN, is an emancipatory process that attempts to illuminate African identity in the kind of knowledge that is produced in the institution. As part of the emancipatory process, African scholarship at UKZN seeks to foster knowledge that is cognisant of the historical and cultural values of (South) Africa. Such a position is highlighted in the mission statement of the university that reads thus “*a truly South African university which is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past.*”

As an international institution, UKZN is very much part of the global processes that are taking place in the world. As an actor in the global economy of knowledge production, UKZN envisions entering the global stage with an African-led globalisation agenda that seeks to promote African scholarship by positioning the university through its teaching, learning, scholarship, research, and innovation at competitive global levels with other forms of scholarship. By African-led globalisation, UKZN desires to take on the responsibility of pursuing africanised knowledge systems that are geared towards its establishment as the premier university of African scholarship. Part of the efforts made to have these values integrated in the global knowledge economy is through the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) – an approach which African scholars believe would de-objectify Africa from the stance of objectification through which African communities have been studied overtime by the outside world and even by African scholars themselves. Being a knowledge institution, African scholars at UKZN both the local and the foreigners interviewed for this study, see it as a moral and intellectual responsibility to mainstream the African identity in the type of knowledge(s) they produce about Africa and its people.

In doing so they seek to engineer knowledge paradigms that would celebrate the historiography, anthropology and sociology that is adapted to the social structure and the cultural environment of Africa. Crossman (2004:326) referring to the process of endogenisation proposes that, the development of African universities and their production processes must flow “along lines consistent with the cultural orientation and material situation of the groups of people to whom they belong or whom they serve.” In this regard orientations and structures of an institution are to develop in new directions and forms that would guarantee the intellectual autonomy of the institution although never in isolation from global forms of education.

#### **4.4.1.2 Surmounting the colonial legacy**

The knowledge economy in Africa has perpetually been subjected to western scrutiny.

The colonial legacy on knowledge production in Africa has been that of exploitation, discrimination and marginalisation. In both historical and contemporary Africa, the popular definition of African scholarship has been anchored on issues to do with claiming identity and undoing the legacy of colonialism in the production of knowledge in and about Africa. It is about generating knowledge that speaks to African experiences and that has relevance for the continent. African scholarship is a form of knowledge that seeks to unyoke African philosophies from colonial knowledge paradigms which have continuously informed the production and dissemination of knowledge about the continent. It is an anti-imperialistic contention against those forms of (namely western) scholarship which are couching themselves as mainstream scientific knowledge spaces.

Viewing African scholarship in this light is a recurrent theme that cuts across the various interviews conducted with research participants. Coming from a history of colonialism, the African intelligentsia at UKZN like other pockets of intellectuals concerned with African scholarship has expressed their strong disapproval of the imperial and neo-colonial infiltration of western scientific paradigms in African knowledge systems.

For a university such as UKZN to be called an African university, there has to be that tendency to engineering and generating knowledge that is inclined towards the use of African philosophical tools in the production of scientific knowledge. For a very long time the construction of social reality in Africa has been dissected through informed western theoretical, epistemological and methodological frameworks. UKZN in transition is confronted with the major challenge of advancing scientific knowledge that freely engages with the African reality by transcending traditional boundaries of colonialism which have overtime had an imposing character in the way knowledge in and about Africa has been conceived, produced and disseminated. The colonial legacy on the knowledge economy in Africa is one which has largely constructed the African experience at the most basic level with much of the scholarship limiting itself to the material, existential, experiential circumstances of people living in the continent of Africa. Although one may agree with this kind of definition, to limit African scholarship to this kind of definition is reductionist as it forecloses the possibility of African knowledge(s) creating their own epistemological subjectivities. Commenting on such

positionality, a senior academic had this to say:

But there are things that happen in the African continent that place this continent in a specific relationship with the globe which make people who are studying this continent focus on certain issues. Usually these issues are issues of survival, the colonial history, the particular types of social formations within Africa that are unique to the African experience and some people tend to associate African scholarship with that. I agree with that kind of definition of African scholarship but it is not the only thing. I believe that there is more to it and for me this means there is other stuff that others will like to obliterate and that other stuff relates to fundamental ideas on the way that African forms of knowledge are defined as in ... overwhelmingly as scholarship that comes from elsewhere seeks to expropriate positivism, they expropriate the instrumentalist kind of knowledge, where you find empiricism, those kind of things. In Africa, there is a tendency to see knowledge as objective, but also allows for others to see as subjective and what Africans see as extra-empirical, in other words extra-objective.

In this era of the „posts doctrine“ (post-colonialism, post-structuralism and post-modernism) and neoliberal advocacy, African scholarship has continued to function as the “defining trope of an alterity which grounds western subjectivity, reason and identity” (Moore 1996:4). In a separate interview with one professor in the School of Politics and Political Sciences, he commented:

The colonialists study us in comparison to their own history. That is why they continue to see Africa as a hopeless continent. They look at their own history... the democracy they ask us to imbibe is a cultural model of their history – the struggle for their own people. Our own people also have been struggling to have a better life, before independence, after independence and each time western powers support our governments it is against African people.

The denigrated position which African scholarship has been subjected to has been masterminded by the fact that northern philosophies have forever established themselves as normative centres of scientific inquiry. For those individuals to whom the concept of

African scholarship appeals, they, in their individual capacities as scholars of UKZN, are striving to interrogate the asymmetrical relationship between western and southern scholarship with the intention of privileging African philosophies in the type of knowledge they produce and disseminate. The issue of African scholarship at UKZN is an ongoing process that cannot be achieved in a day. For as Chinua Achebe claims:

*The African identity is still in the making. There isn't a final identity that is African. But at the same time there is an identity coming into existence (interview with A.K Appiah, 1982)*

Makgoba (2004) highlights that the UKZN merger has created

*a unifying and inspirational vision – a vision that is not an answer but that continues to question, challenge, to conscientise, to excite and remind us of „who we are“ and the journey we have to travel*

Even though there is still much to be achieved with regard to the ongoing dialogue of African scholarship, UKZN is making progressive efforts in institutionalising a new identity, a new culture and ethos introduced to serve the post-apartheid learning environment in teaching, research and community service as outlined in the UKZN's goals and core values already mentioned in the chapter.

#### **4.4.1.3 Instilling a sense of pride through the valorisation of African-led knowledge**

Africa has always been associated with images of „differentness“, and „otherness“ in trying to provide understanding to what is happening around Africa and its people. This depiction of differentness and otherness only serves to undermine and compromise the integrity of African societies; depriving them of the legitimacy to have their socio-cultural affairs competitively and freely articulated within the various global frameworks of socialisation. The notion of what Africa is and who Africans are has largely been defined and determined by people of the outside world. The colonial images of otherness or differentness are a denigrating agenda which had to do with associating Africa with primitivism and backwardness. The colonial construction of Africa ignored the cultural

pluralism of African societies to the extent that the entire continent was reduced to a singular racial entity of backward people. The values acquired during the colonial period are those which revealed the superiority of the coloniser and the inferiority of the colonised.

The intellectual space has been one of the spaces through which the politics of discrimination, exploitation and marginality have overtime been entrenched in Africa. Education is a means of making socio-cultural values communicable through systemised institutionalisation of knowledge. Nyamnjoh (2011:1) argues that when these values are not “appropriate or broadly shared, the knowledge acquired is rendered irrelevant and becomes merely cosmetic or even violent.” The intellectual space in Africa is one which has failed to make provision for a „democratic“ appraisal of African values within the global knowledge space. In Africa even up until this time of post-colonialism, the intellectual space has continued to imbibe knowledge models from the west and western epistemology has continued to dominate this space. The African intellectual space is one which is currently struggling to resuscitate from an attempted epistemicide – “the decimation or near complete killing and replacement of endogenous epistemologies with the epistemological paradigm of the conqueror” (Nyamnjoh 2011:11). The establishment of western epistemological hegemony in African knowledge paradigms in a sense is telling that *„nothing good can come out of Africa“*, a concern expressed by many of those who participated in this research.

The merger politics that positioned UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship was partly informed by an agenda initiated to foreclose the pride of the African mind in the creation and navigation of knowledge. One of the goals amplifying the vision of UKZN is the one that has to do with African-led globalisation. In relation to taking pride in what is African, this goal suggests that while interacting with the global world with regard to the production of knowledge, UKZN has to champion an African-led orientation in knowledge that is produced both locally and globally. African-led globalisation means overcoming the pride of valorising that which is externally driven and the spirit of demonising that which is internally driven. In order to overcome this,



UKZN through its mission, goals and core values is striving to instill a sense of commitment from the academia to respond with sensitivity to knowledge creation and dissemination in the global context.

Such sensitivity has to do with carrying out research that is relevant to the (South) African context and equipping students with knowledge that is grounded within African perspectives and philosophies. Although the university does not have formal structures across the board to oversee the actualisation of the vision of African scholarship, some individuals by virtue of their presence in this space are connecting with this vision in the kind of material they teach and the kind of research they do or encourage their students to do. In an interview with one senior lecturer in the department of linguistics, he commented:

The idea of African scholarship as the motto for UKZN is a genuine initiative. Personally I think it is a bold step and it is the way forward to getting African scholars and others out of the general tendency of looking down on the continent. The west shouldn't set the standard for us. It is amazing how much some of us (referring to academics at UKZN and other African academics elsewhere) have been rated and distinguished as seasoned researchers. We are being celebrated as outstanding scholars... the question is what kind of legacy would you leave for your students? What kind of knowledge do you produce in your publications? How much of it reflects and advances an African course? You see when it comes to research it is almost a self-glorification issue. What I do as an individual together with some colleagues in the department is to integrate African language structures in our curriculum. We teach the Bantustan language structures – teaching material is much more African centered. Africa is rich in raw data that theories can be generated. The problem is that we have always taken western theorising to dissect these data. UKZN has taken a major step, let us have this initiative established, let students be exposed to a sense of pride about Africa by locating African ways of philosophising within the global context of knowledge production.

This sense of pride or the lack of it in „doing things the African way“ is a contributing factor to the recurrent positionality of African scholarship as „work in progress“. As

highlighted in this excerpt, the initiative of envisioning UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship is a milestone initiative that if vigorously and scrupulously followed up in curriculum and research would go a long way to salvaging African scholarship from the „look down approach“ position it has always suffered from. The position of this particular lecturer announced in this excerpt was echoed by many other academics, both foreign and local, who believe they could galvanise their different disciplinary and academic potentials as political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and historians to offer solid broad-based curricular and pedagogic facilities to students that would be cognisant of the South African and African contexts.

#### **4.4.2 Structural embeddedness of African scholarship at UKZN**

This section looks at some of the existing structures within UKZN that indicate some sign of tangibility with regard to positioning the institution as the premier university of African scholarship. However, by engaging with these structures I do not attempt to celebrate an already existing success story of UKZN thriving in its vision of African scholarship, but I am rather trying to highlight the role which these structures could play in the yet to be resolved problematic of the African scholarship debate in the institution. Embedding African scholarship within the „specific“ presents a discussion on the vision of the College of Humanities within which the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (FHDSS) is found. It further discusses some structures within the faculty with the label „Africa“ explicitly or implicitly tagged to them.

##### **4.4.2.1 Positioning the vision of African scholarship within the College of Humanities**

The College of Humanities is in complete resonance with the overarching vision, goals and core values that attempt to define and position UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship. In collaboration with the vision of the institution the College of Humanities which consists of Faculties of Education and Humanities, Development and Social and Sciences (FHDSS), specifically envisions to “to be a centre of excellence in

African scholarship in the fields of education, humanities, development and social science” with the mission of positioning the College to the level of “excellence in African-led scholarship through teaching, research and community engagement in the global context” (see UKZN Strategic Plan 2011-2016).

The UKZN strategic plan for 2011-2016 targeted by the College of Humanities provides a number of provisions for each of the pacesetters (that is vision, mission, goals and core values) which have laid down the foundation upon which UKZN should function as an academic space. In providing these provisions, the College has been able to highlight the strengths and weaknesses for each of these pacesetters (refer to appendix - for a comprehensive targeted plan for the years 2011-2016.) Among other things the College and the Humanities faculty are committed to valorising African-pursued knowledge(s) in curriculum development and research participation. With regard to curriculum development, the college and the faculty are focused on curricular transformation redesigned to largely accommodate an African agenda and the willingness for academics to engage with the concept of African scholarship as they actively engage themselves in the production of knowledge for global competitiveness.

Curriculum development remains a top priority in maintaining standards of excellence in the area of teaching and learning. In line with the vision, the UKZN Strategic Plan of 2011-2016 has shown strength in African-based curricula across the college and faculty. Many academics feel strongly about the need for curriculum transformation in their different departments. Especially at this time when the university is going through the transition of reconfiguration, many scholars are increasingly driven towards the tendency of dissecting knowledge using an afrocentric lens. New templates are being developed here and there in the college and the faculty either for the revival of existing programmes or for the creation of new programmes that are earmarked to position various disciplines of the faculty within the discourse of African scholarship. The agenda of curriculum transformation is gearing up and some academics are making resilient efforts to have some programmes overhauled to promote the agency of African scholarship at UKZN.

The School of Politics and Political Science, for example, runs a number of modules which are aggressively positioned within afrocentric debates. In an interview with a senior academic for this programme, he intimated how over the years the transmission of knowledge to students under this programme had hardly taken into cognisance the legitimacy of an African appraisal of reality in the production of knowledge. He said currently he has been engaged in reviving the Public Policy Programme given the current context of South Africa and the need for capacity building in terms of policy making and implementation for service delivery in the country and the continent. The reconfiguration of the institution is a process meant for a general reorganisation of UKZN with the ideal of facilitating managerial and academic competences geared towards establishing excellence and celebrating the uniqueness of UKZN as the centre for African scholarship.

#### **4.4.2.2 African-centered structures within the Faculty of Humanities**

As an institution that is founded on a vision that aims at championing an African discourse in the area of knowledge production, UKZN has put in place a number of structures which could be seen as visible agencies working in tandem with the vision of African scholarship. The Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science (FHDSS) hosts a number of structures which are oriented towards the promotion of an afrocentric vision in both the research and teaching and learning domains. The faculty has centres such as Centre for Creative Arts (CCA), African Centre for Childhood (ACC) which are multidisciplinary centres striving towards showcasing and integrating „the African art“ and psychosocial experiences to the global knowledge economy. Besides these centres a number of programmes have been created to vociferate this vision of African scholarship. The School of IsiZulu Studies at Howard College and the envisaged Kiswahili programme for example, are evidenced of the efforts that the university is making towards the promotion of African indigenous languages in higher educational institutions.

For an institution that has envisioned championing the course of African scholarship, one of the ways to have this vision meaningfully promoted is through language. In an

interview with the Dean of the faculty, he said:

I find the study of African languages in this university a fundamental issue. Otherwise how can we brand ourselves the premier university of African scholarship without a single African language being part of our curriculum? The IsiZulu programme is already in action. And soon we will be having Kiswahili another African language in the faculty. These are things that are ongoing. There are also things that are in the pipeline for example, last week I met with colleagues in IsiZulu and French and I explained to them there is a lot of indigenous literature that is written in French, there is a lot of IKS that is written in French perspective. We in Africa cannot accept that knowledge. So I said to them go and develop a programme in IsiZulu and French which would help the IsiZulu students to interpret that indigenous knowledge which is captured in French. We shall tell the rest of the English speaking universities what knowledge there is. The basic idea is not just to learn IsiZulu and French but it is to read the indigenous African philosophies and histories that are written in the French language because they are very rich. Some of the stuff has been translated into English and I have come to read it.

Judging from the above commentary, the position of African languages is crucial if UKZN has to set itself apart as the premier university of African scholarship. The use of African languages in higher educational curriculum could be seen as a process of emancipation that would allow for the freedom of African philosophies to navigate the knowledge space naturally in their indigenous languages.

Even though there is hardly any formal forum where students are given orientations with respect to sensitising them towards the concept of African scholarship, most programmes in the faculty, in a way, are trying to incorporate the vision in their programmes. Without an obvious tag of „africinity“ labeled on them, the curriculum of certain programmes in the faculty deals with issues that run in line with the vision. Summarily, the vision attempts to establish African thought patterns in the production of knowledge. Issues to do with foregrounding African identity in various domains are dealt with. Such an approach is evident in the schools of Philosophy and Ethics, Music and the School of

Politics. In all these schools African perspectives related to ethics, politics and identity are clearly defined with much more emphasis made on the South African context. Asking how much Africaness is represented in the different programmes in the faculty, the dean commented:

We have a long way to go, but first of all I must salute UKZN for an illustrative vision. At the moment we have a few centres that are patronising this vision. Things at the moment are done in an ad hoc manner. Some disciplines may not be running streamline with the vision, but that does not mean that we qualify less to be called the premier university of African scholarship. Because there are things happening already, the very fact that the vision exists in itself means that things are happening. Moreover this vision is embedded in our mission, goals and core values. However a lot still needs to be done for the vision to take root. We are working towards that and it is achievable, the African perspective is very much alive at UKZN.

Many of those interviewed for this study also resonated with the fact that the vision is not yet given „an official status“ in the many programmes that are run in the faculty. In fact some pockets of individuals are engaging with this; but this is largely reflected in their research rather than in the curriculum. Most students in fact are not aware of this vision and it really does not make much of a difference to them to be called a student of UKZN. Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) is being emphasised in curriculum transformation and research endeavours at UKZN. This approach is meant to expose students on the relevance of African perspectives in studying, producing, reproducing and disseminating knowledge in and about Africa. Scanning through the curriculum of some programmes including linguistics, sociology, social work, anthropology, community development and political science, one would realise that in each of these programmes there is at least a module both at the undergraduate and the postgraduate levels that is specifically designed with a focus on the „African example“ in the material that is being taught to students. A cursory look at the course readers and templates developed for such modules (in their different capacities) highlights issues that have to do with cultural identity of African people, African perspectives in knowledge and ethics, African approaches to social phenomena and African approaches to global phenomena.

Courses like Africa in the World run by the Access Programme, Culture and Society in Africa and Local Knowledge and sustainable Development run by Anthropology for example are an eloquent testimony that the university is moving towards the Africanisation of knowledge. The major challenge lies with the fact whether what is being taught in such courses actually reflect what it takes for UKZN to distinguish itself as a bona fide African university. As important as these courses may appear to be, the material contents in themselves do not suffice enough to qualify UKZN as an Afrocentric institution. It is not just what is being taught about Africa that makes it African scholarship, but the perspective from which it is taught coupled with its relevancy to the social conditions of African continent that makes it African scholarship. For it is not only at UKZN that African affairs are being taught.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The University of KwaZulu-Natal has been positioned within the politics of the general transformations that have been taking place in South Africa since the demise of apartheid. The transformation of education as a whole and higher education in particular, as a process, is founded on democratic principles that seek to redress the inequities and imbalances that had characterised education in the apartheid era. As part of the agenda to transform post-apartheid higher educational institutions, the new merger of UKZN was founded on a vision that is aimed at dislodging the colonial hegemony on knowledge construction and development. Branded as the premier university of African scholarship, UKZN intends taking a paradigm shift to challenge the structures through which knowledge was previously produced or disseminated. This chapter has discussed the transformation process of higher education in post-election South Africa which is largely built on the politics of deracialisation of scholarship and the non restriction of academic freedom.

Operating under the banner of African scholarship, UKZN has highlighted its commitment to contribute to the social process of transformation in post-apartheid South

Africa. Mindful of the African situation, the vision through its mission, goals and core values intends to become a centre for excellence for learning and research; and to contribute to the overall developmental concerns of (South) Africa through community engagement. As a knowledge space, UKZN, through its vision, attempts to position itself at competitive levels with other scholarly spaces within the globe by asserting the „Africanness“ of the African continent in the production and expansion of knowledge. Even though UKZN has taken this giant step to valorise things Africa in the area of knowledge production, the concept of African scholarship is yet to take root in the institution. African scholars at UKZN, like others elsewhere in the world, are also involved in trying to grapple with the ongoing debate of African scholarship - a debate which is largely couched on the need to unyoke African knowledge(s) from the epistemic culture of the west. As the premier university of African scholarship, UKZN has put in place certain centres such as Centre for Creative Arts (CCA) and African Centre for Childhood (ACC) which could be seen overtly as African-led centres in the production of knowledge. However UKZN envisions doing much more to have its vision driven by those who happen to be part of the institution.



# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **THE ROLE OF TRANSNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS TOWARDS THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP**

### **5.1 Introduction**

At a time when the knowledge economy is gaining growing international significance, the global circulation of African scholars appears to be of crucial importance to the competitiveness of modern nation states and individual academic institutions. Articulating the developmental needs of the entire African continent has been a longstanding concern among early as well as contemporary African scholars. Higher education institutions have a critical role in fostering innovation and economic development on the continent. The unprecedented outflow of the African intelligentsia from the continent has received a number of criticisms outstanding among them is the brain drain hemorrhage to the more developed nations of the west. This phenomenon has largely been blamed as part of the reasons for the dismal economic situations of most African states.

Shifting towards the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, scholars such as Ratha and Shaw (2007) have noted paradigm shifts of a south-bound international migration propensity. In their study they indicate that about 74 million south migrants reside in other developing countries. They also indicate that most of the migration is done intra-regionally; especially among countries with contiguous borders. The new democratic state of South Africa is among the developing countries that are well known today as migrant-receiving countries (Ratha and Shaw 2007, Gwebu 2006). The new dispensations of the transformation agenda of a new democratic South Africa have ushered in a number of reforms which have placed South Africa competitively and favourably in the ranks of the developed economies. South Africa's relative economic buoyancy, technological advancement and relative sanity in its democratic values are

major inducers to the unprecedented influx of professional migrants mostly from the rest of Africa.

The transformation of educational systems remains focal in the political discourses of nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa. The knowledge economy of the new South African state is one which seeks to dismantle traditional structures which constricted the participation of the marginalised groups in the various educational spaces. As mentioned earlier, the educational system of contemporary South Africa is one which is embedded in advancing the democratic principles of equity and equality. Institutions of higher learning have been targeted as key drivers in this continuous journey of transformation. In line with the transformation agenda UKZN adopted the vision of being “the premier university of African scholarship” as a way of claiming the „Africanness“ that was lost to the colonial rule in the days of hard core apartheid.

Based on the discussion above, and with particular attention to the concept of African scholarship, this chapter sets out to critically analyse how the transnational experiences of foreign African academics in the Faculty of Humanities Development and Social Sciences (FHDSS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) contribute to the promotion of African scholarship both within and outside UKZN. Using the perspectives of both students and established foreign African scholars interviewed for this study, the chapter mirrors the effectiveness of the transnational space as a site of knowledge production. It highlights the various processes through which the vision of African scholarship can be expanded and also problematises the status of UKZN as an international university that is envisioned to champion the African course in the geopolitics of the knowledge production. It also emphasises the implications of its international stature as a university in Africa.

## **5.2 The transnational space as a site of knowledge production**

We are living in a world of increased transnational activities. At the dawn of the new millennium, many of our human activities are defined and shaped by global forces such as transnationalism. Virtually all aspects of our modern world centre our jobs, culture, educational systems, ideologies, identities and even our relationships with one another are highly negotiated and inadvertently transformed by the profound forces of transnational links. The world of today is witnessing migration fluxes of global proportions. Migration in general has been one of the instrumental indices through which social phenomena have been studied and developmental agendas negotiated among the different African nations. The migration site has always played an important role in negotiating social processes in Africa (Massey, Hugo, Kowachi, Pellegrino and Taylor 1998, Adepoju 1998). African intellectuals in the transnational space have always played an elitist role in influencing the visional, ideological and philosophical practices that are taking place domestically in Africa (Mkandawire, 2005, Ki-Zerbo 2005, Zeleza 2005).

In relation to knowledge production, the migration site has played a significant role in igniting or rekindling flames of African nationalism and philosophy. From the days of colonialism, African scholarship has been part of the nationalistic inclinations espoused by the African intelligentsia in the diaspora attempting to bring to the fore African philosophies and perspectives in the production of knowledge.

Operating largely under the banner of pan-Africanism, the African diaspora has been playing a major role in bequeathing Africa a significant part of the concept of African nationalism ((Mkandawire 2005, Mazrui 2005, Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2005). In line with the politics of knowledge production, the African diaspora became preoccupied with the idea of constructing and promoting Africa as an idea and object of study in the "establishment of Africans as academics and pan-Africanism as a project" of emancipation (Mkandawire 2005:8). Scholars such as Tiyaambe Paul Zeleza and Ngugi wa Thiong'o have emphasised the instrumental role that the African diaspora could play in the advancement of intellectual and political agendas of the African continent (Zeleza 2005, Zeleza 2008, Thiong'o 2005).

African elite in the transnational space has continually exercised agency as part of the agenda through which many of Africa's political and developmental processes have been negotiated and renegotiated throughout some key moments in human history (Zezeza 2004, Agbo 2005, Zezeza 2008). From the historical epoch of colonialism to post-colonialism and to these modern times of globalisation and increased transnational activities, African intellectuals from „the outside world“ have continued to make an impact on the socio-political and developmental agendas of their various nation-states. Driven by their transnational experiences African external elites all over in the world have been targeted as important agents of development in the different phases of human history. The contemporary African academic diaspora has continued to make an impact towards the valorisation of African philosophies within the global knowledge economy. It is strongly believed and evident that the contemporary African external elite of the world of academia is well positioned to facilitate “the globalisation of African knowledges and the Africanisation of African knowledges” (Zezeza 2008: 2).

Foreign African academics at UKZN constitute part of the external elite in relation to their countries of origin. The fact that the institution they are working or studying in is geographically located within the continent of Africa does not make these foreign nationals qualify less in their elitist roles as their counterparts in other transnational spaces. Their significant role could be attributed to the fact that a new transnational space regardless of its physical positioning could always offer novel experiences that migrants may readily want to convey to their countries of origin. Moreover, relevance of the vision of African scholarship as niche area at UKZN appears to be fundamental and appealing to the discourse of intellectual propriety across Africa. Intellectual propriety in every area of scholarship has been a longstanding struggle against western domination that African scholars have been engaged in. The contemporary African academic diaspora in the North, Zezeza (2005) notes, is becoming a force to reckon with as far as knowledge production on Africa is concerned.

Being part of an emerging African diaspora in the new democratic South African state, foreign African academics at UKZN are becoming key players in the efforts to have the vision of African scholarship taken to other universities in Africa. Interviews with many participants on the kind of role these migrants are playing in respect to the promotion of the vision across the continent reveal a level of consciousness and commitment as these migrants are prepared to plough back their newly acquired experiences to their respective countries. In an interview with Jeremy a postdoctoral fellow from Cameroon, he said:

My studying at UKZN has been a blessing indeed. Amidst some challenges that I have encountered, I must admit I have learnt so much from this space. This space has given me the kind of empowerment that I needed and my feeling is to start up something new with my former university back home. African scholarship is such a laudable idea and the kind of training I have received from this university as a learner is so empowering. As I am speaking with you I have started initiating meetings with the authorities of the University of Buea (UB), my former university, to expose them to the kind of things that are done here at UKZN. Already the Vice Chancellor has agreed to meet with me. I sent a proposal a couple of months back in which I am encouraging UB to consider forging links with UKZN. Research collaboration between UKZN and UB, and even exchange programmes for students and staff, I believe would be of mutual benefit to both universities. In terms of academic output, UB is far lagging behind UKZN. And I think it is our responsibility to reach out to the needs of other universities in Africa that do not yet meet global standards.

This excerpt is significant because it falls in line with the new initiatives currently undertaken by UKZN to partner with various universities across the continent. Interviews with the top management of UKZN, that is the Vice Chancellor (VC), the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) for the College of Humanities and the Deans of FHDSS, reveal that the university is making unprecedented efforts to partner with various universities across the continent for academic collaboration in the different spheres of knowledge production. While the university has already concluded a number of memoranda of agreement with a few universities in some parts of the continent, the university is still

planning on forging links with universities from all the different regions of Africa. The universities so far mentioned in their interviews are the universities of Ibadan in Nigeria, Makerere in Uganda, Legon in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and the DRC. Although Cameroon and many other parts do not yet feature in this agenda of academic collaboration between UKZN and other universities on the continent, the presence of migrants from some of the other places could draw UKZN's attention to their respective universities. Considering that the concept of African scholarship is valued by many of these foreigners, their presence at UKZN, if well utilised, has the potential of playing an influential role in the expansion of the vision to all the nooks and crannies of Africa. In the excerpt above, it has been noted that the University of Buea in Cameroon is "far lagging behind UKZN." This „lagging behind“, though not mentioned in the excerpt, is related to low academic outputs at every level of knowledge production as the interviewee continued to explain. Given that UKZN has branded itself as the "premier university of African scholarship", it is incumbent on it to take responsibility to embark on an indiscriminate sensitisation campaign towards the promotion of this vision beyond the confines of South Africa. One way of achieving this is to engage postgraduate students and staff from these countries to use their personal initiatives and connections to create links with their former universities back home. The example cited above is an illustrious and positive initiative that the university could capitalise on to ensure that what this student is trying to initiate is taken up to a meaningful level.

The maxim motto for the University of KwaZulu-Natal branded "the premier university of African scholarship" appears to arouse feelings of deterministic affiliation from many foreign African academics of various geographical and disciplinary backgrounds. The vision is a salutary effort in which some of these foreign African scholars reckon UKZN and South Africa could become the hub through which other universities in Africa could emulate by prioritising and streamlining African ways of thinking and knowing in the production of knowledge. Once a particular institution establishes its niche, scholars of that institution can begin engineering links with other institutions which have other niches in Africa; and be able to capitalise on mutual rapport between institutions. UKZN, being the premier university of African scholarship, emphasises the production of

knowledge that must “arise from and interface with our local reality” (see UKZN’s strategic plan 2007 – 2016). Interfacing with this local reality calls for an epistemic culture that would identify the needs of the African continent and privilege African ways of constructing reality based on the continent’s experiences. The transnational space of UKZN could be seen as a steering wagon and a force provocateur inducing intra-continental activities in scholarship and development in Africa. Many foreign African scholars at UKZN are increasingly becoming alert of the need to rethink Africa in the generation and valorisation of knowledge between UKZN and other universities across the continent. As will be examined later in this chapter, the initiative of transnational linkages between foreign African scholars at UKZN with colleagues in other universities in Africa is reflected in research and the exchange of curricular programmes which are mostly afrocentric in nature.

There have been heated debates by scholars on the impact of the African external elites on nation-building in the African continent. One of the contentious and most documented debates mentioned earlier, is drawn on the popular and policy discourse of the brain drain (Cummings 1985, Johnson 1985, Lindsay 1985, Adepoju 1998, Agbo 2005, Zeleza 2005). The issue of brain drain is controversial; for some scholars have viewed the out-migration of skilled professionals from their countries either as a liability depriving African countries of their much more needed professionals, trained at enormous cost by the state, or an asset providing the continent with crucial connections with immigrant countries that can facilitate the transfer of economic and social capital (including technological, financial, cultural, political and intellectual) that could mediate and advance African development in every respect (Matte et al 2002, Vertovec 2002, Zeleza 2005).

Notwithstanding the controversies surrounding the „brain“ debate, this study would like to underscore the fact that the transnational space remains an important avenue through which African visions and ideologies can be advanced. As people working, studying and living in an intra-continental transnational space, foreign African academics at UKZN could be viewed as an asset both to the South African society and their sending countries.

Interviews with various foreign African academics reveal a tendency that could associate the transnational space with some daily practices like „bring and share“ and „give and take“ that are embedded in casual social interactions with friends. These practices metaphorically represent the bi-beneficial tendencies which often result from increased transnational activities between nation-states. Their role as transnationals within the African continent itself further validates the view that the transnational space is a potential asset to the development of Africa. For whatever academic endeavours that these scholars are engaged on, in line with the vision of African scholarship, is done with the interest of the continent at heart. The following excerpt from an interview conducted with a senior African academic from the School of Architecture elucidates the significant role that transnational migrants can play in the promotion of developmental agendas and visions:

I am originally not from South Africa, but I believe wherever in Africa I find myself I do need to make the kind of contributions that my expertise as a specialised academic can offer. The most important thing is that I at least have the opportunity to serve the continent especially from within Africa. I would have loved working in my home country, but unfortunately the structures there are not accommodating enough for people of my kind. South Africa, as you can see, at least has the standards and relatively you find fulfillment in the kind of job you are doing because the facilities are there... being out of my country could be considered as loss, but it is not always the case. In fact I have never ceased to support constructive projects back home since I became a migrant. I have been to several places in the world before coming to South Africa. For each of these places there is something that you give in and there is that which you borrow from those places. What I imply here is that my being in South Africa (like those other places he has been too) (emphasis added) is beneficial both to the South African society and my home country, and in fact Africa as a whole.

This excerpt highlights an important and most often left out factor of mutual benefits involved in migrants“ transnational transactions for both the host and sending



communities. In a separate interview with another senior foreign African academic from the School of Music she said:

Once you become a migrant living in another country, it means that you have more than one space wherein lie your obligations. As a foreign African and lecturer at UKZN, I think my responsibilities lie with both UKZN and my former university to mention the least. That said when we are talking about the vision of African scholarship for example, I know I do have to contribute to its promotion both within UKZN and Kenya. So while here at UKZN I am able to integrate the experiences I have had from Kenya into the South African context and the same thing would apply to my university back home, because there are a number of good things I have learnt from here that are worthwhile emulating. In fact the vision of African scholarship in itself and what it purportedly envisages is an acclaimed effort... other parts of the continent need to know about this so that they can consider starting to engage with such a vision.

Drawing on these two excerpts, the transnational site could be seen as a critical avenue through which the concept of African scholarship can be promoted both within the university and other parts of the continent. The experiences they bring in as migrants in the new transnational space are capable of orchestrating new agendas which could contribute to reinforcing and bringing into prominence this vision within and outside the university.

The knowledge economy in Africa has for a long time been negotiated and renegotiated mostly outside the continent by various African scholars. The African academic diaspora in both the historical and contemporary times have resiliently attempted to position Africa legitimately as a knowledge space capable of producing its own kind of knowledge(s). The attempt to globalise and Africanise African scholarship (Zezeza 2005, 2008) has been the onus of those African academics, mostly from the outside world, who have continued to display a keen interest in advancing the agenda of African scholarship. Even though the North continues to be the hub of the African intelligentsia and the academic diaspora in particular, there has also been a significant number of intra-regional

migration of African professionals and academics within the African continent itself. Since the demise of apartheid, South Africa for example has been ranked among the preferred destinations for African skilled migrants of different professional backgrounds and is becoming the new hub of African intellectuals from the different regions of Africa (Gwebu 2006). This new development in African skilled migration directed towards South Africa is motivated by its current status as an emerging economy validated by its relatively buoyant economic and advanced technological status among the leading economies of the world.

### **5.3 The impact of transnational migrants on academic productivity at UKZN**

The academic composition of UKZN reflects significant numbers of foreign academics and students of African origin from all over the continent. Their presence in this institution forms a critical research site upon which several issues relating to the production of knowledge can be unpacked. This section of the chapter attempts to look at the kind of impact that the transnationalised lives of this group of people create in the academic life of UKZN. It sets out to examine the kind of contributions they bring in their individual capacities as qualified and aspiring scholars in a transnational context. Being a multinational, multiracial and multicultural institution, UKZN could be seen as a reservoir of knowledge pluralism emerging out of diverse backgrounds of cultural, social and ideological intermingling. These contributions are discretely examined through the categories of academics and students. This categorisation is based on the fact that their statuses as already qualified scholars and students impact differently on the way they respond to issues on scholarship and knowledge production in the institution.

### **5.3.1 Contributions from qualified scholars**

The category of established foreign African scholars in this study includes academics who are at the senior lectureship and the professoriate academic echelons in the institution. All these academics but one within this category are all permanent members of staff. The one exception, a senior professor in the faculty at the time this research was conducted, was on the verge of completing her three-year contract and was contemplating if she was going to renew her contract for another term. It finally turned out that she resigned before her contract could come to an end for reasons undisclosed to me. Being people who have been in more than two places, these established academics have a lot to contribute in many areas of their professional lives. The significant role played by these foreign academics is measured in the kind of research they are engaged in, in their role in student supervision, and in their role in addressing the pedagogic and curricular needs of the institution.

#### **5.3.1.1 Research Endeavour**

As a research-led institution, UKZN is striving to build and promote a research ethos among the academic staff that focuses on nurturing postgraduate students, and also focuses on positioning the university at as a producer of new knowledge within local and comparative frameworks. Over and above this, the university is encouraging a research culture that would be well-seated in its vision of becoming the premier university of African scholarship. Research output and scholarly publications play a crucial role in raising the standards of excellence for every institution of higher learning worldwide. UKZN currently ranks among the first ten best universities on the African continent, and occupying the 500<sup>th</sup> position worldwide<sup>5</sup>, and research has clearly been a key driver towards such developments.

Foreign African scholars are demonstrating a level of commitment towards the promotion of a research culture at UKZN. Their loyalty to the production of knowledge as researchers is first of all made eloquent in the number of scholarly works that they have

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<sup>5</sup> Ranking by The Times Higher Education.

produced and are producing while working here at UKZN. Every individual interviewed for this study intimated having a sound track record of different scholarly publications. This fact is made authentic through their employment and promotions to senior lecturers and professors. This category which is made up of twelve scholars; six of whom are fully qualified professors while the other six are senior lecturers. In addition to this, most of them are occupying headship positions in their different capacities at the departmental, school and deanery as well as the chancellery levels. Their appointment to these positions is a further testimony of their academic achievements.

Research is one of the fundamental outlets to these positions of management. It must be noted that employment and promotions in any South African institution or department, whether private or public, are subject to the provisions of the employment equity policy. For any foreign national to qualify for these kind of positions, they must have passed through the filtering and rigidly procedural process of equity policy and the laws of affirmative action. However, these provisions are just a means to an end and not an end in itself. This so because as a knowledge space the South African university is called to maintain the highest standards of excellence which cannot in any way be compromised just for the sake of adhering to the policy of equity. This therefore insinuates that the employment and promotions of foreign African migrants at UKZN is par excellence. And of course, as one research participant put it, *“the appointment of us, foreign academics is a tailor-measured process that takes a lot of „merits of all kinds“ that one would ever imagine in order to qualify and belong.”* To further illustrate this statement, in an interview with one of the senior foreign African professors in the faculty, he said:

My appointment up to the level where I happen to find myself right now has not been a walk in the park. It has taken the least condition that a university in the current state of South Africa could consider before employing someone of my status (referring to his status as a foreigner). Before coming here I was working in the United States. My applying for a job in Africa was driven by my vision and passions towards „doing things African“. I never thought of coming to South Africa, I was thinking about working in Botswana until a friend of mine encouraged me to apply for the position that was advertised in the former University of Durban Westville. Following the merger in 2004, the vision

of African scholarship came into play. This to me was a long awaited agenda that really pushed me to come to Africa. I came here really aspiring towards helping to bring about meaningful transformation within the areas that I'm involved in. I have made several scholarly contributions that I think the university has taken cognisance of. That for me is a major reason why I qualify for the various positions that I have occupied so far. I am not a South African, though I qualify to become one, I do not want their citizenship. At this level it doesn't really matter whether I am a citizen of this country or not. I have already made my mark. Whatever needs to be done I would not hesitate doing it.

This excerpt is in support of the statement mentioned earlier by the previous participant in the earlier paragraph. As could be inferred from both excerpts, merit is a critical factor as far as the employment of foreign nationals into the South African workforce is concerned. While UKZN just like other departments strictly adheres to the national provisions of the equity policy, it is meticulous about the way it goes around employing its staff. What is insinuated here is that in addition to the conditions of equity, UKZN, like others, is also obligated to a set of conditionalities that have to work in tandem with ensuring the highest standards of excellence. In other words policies such as equity and affirmative action cannot reasonably work against institutional policies that are geared towards raising standards of excellence for the country.

The process of transformation in the post-election era has targeted South African institutions of higher learning to act as leverage for redressing the racial and gender inequalities that existed in the past. As sound, serious, important and most welcomed as equity and redress are, growth, development and excellence cannot be simply overridden by these policies. For a South African institution to thrive at desirable standards, the law of equity has to be juxtaposed with best standards of excellence. As a research-led institution founded on such a commendable vision of African scholarship, UKZN is gearing on with issues that do not only address South African problems, but those of the entire continent. With such a picture backstage, foreign Africans who distinguish themselves as seasoned African scholars are likely to be accepted on such grounds as made evident by the two interviews above.

The nature and quality of research produced by this group of scholars is significant to the development and purpose of the institution becoming the premier university of African scholarship. Interviews with nearly every participant within this category of scholars currently under discussion revealed that most of their research scholarly endeavours are central to explaining and understanding African conditions. Based on their various disciplinary backgrounds as anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists, historians, gender advocacy practitioners and language and linguistic experts, these scholars are involved in research that engages Africa and the African condition at different analytical, philosophical and intellectual levels.

Depending largely on their disciplinary orientations, the African condition is dissected and articulated within specific frameworks that generally speaking, are seen to promote Africa as a place, context, vision, philosophy and ideology. A glance through some of the scholarly works including journal articles, book chapters, conference and seminar papers from a few of these scholars, present evidence of their scholarship focusing on African affairs. Topics covered range from political problems (for example conflicts and conflict resolution in Africa, traditional and political leadership in Africa, Africa and globalisation), social problems (HIV/AIDS in (South) Africa, problems of urbanism, pollution, and education), gender issues (understanding gender dynamics in Africa), language and linguistics (comparative study of African languages, lexicographical and semantics similarities of African dialects and sociolinguistic approaches in Africa) and migration studies (understanding the concept of transnationalism, international migrations and their impact on Africa and the politics of identity and belonging in (South) Africa). While focusing on Africa, these scholars are also drawing from their transnational experiences to give their research a comparative and global outlook. This comparative approach therefore positions them within the university framework of African-led globalisation which is a fundamentally defining goal in relation to knowledge production at UKZN.

Besides the growing attention of these researchers' scholarship being focused on African conditions – that is promoting Africa as a place, many of them are also becoming keen on how the African problem can be better understood both methodologically and

theoretically. These scholars are saying that for Africa to get through its intellectual analyses about what the continent faces, it must arise from African perspectives and epistemologies that are foregrounded within African cultures and traditions. The knowledge economy plays a quintessential role in providing intellectual capacities that in the first place attempt to position higher education institutions as formative centres necessary to develop critical thinking and reflective inquiry (Ntshoe 2010). For the „African condition“ to be relevantly dissected within the knowledge paradigm, such knowledge must take cognisance of context. Context is very crucial in the articulation of Africa because the African experience is not homogenous. Looking at African conditions, whether from local or global perspectives, calls for the development of an African epistemological culture that would help us understand better what is happening in the various socio-cosmological spaces in Africa; and how Africa is related to worldwide global processes.

In this era of accelerated growth in globalisation and increased transnational activities, western paradigms have continued to dominate the knowledge economy. Africa is one continent which has been much more affected by these processes of globalisation and transnationalism as cultural heterogeneity is fast being eclipsed by one civilisation trying to enforce cultural homogeneity across the world (Moore, 1996, Quinlan, 2000). However not everything about the west is dismissive. Some African transnational scholars at UKZN who migrated from some western countries are ready to utilise models from those countries that could be useful for the generation of African scholarship.

This study reveals that for UKZN and the African university in general to pursue this vision of African scholarship to the point of making it an authoritative voice among other forms of scholarship, there is a need for African scholars to develop an African cosmology that would override the notion that the African situation can only be studied as an object. An African cosmology supposes that knowledge about Africa should not only be limited to experiential and empirical ways of producing knowledge but rather that such knowledge should also be accompanied with African subjectivities to their belief systems. In other words, over and above the experiential and existential things that you see defining African scholarship, one would need to add the fact that there is in African

scholarship the respect for permeability of space between the subjective and the objective, such that there is belief in the broader ontology or cosmology of knowledge. As one of the research participants put it, “*what you see with scholarship from elsewhere is this fundamental belief of objective reality of tangible things as if it is religion and to itself that they actually believe that nothing else exists other than what you see.*” What is implied here is that in trying to establish „the objective“, the subjective should be understood as playing a fundamental role in establishing a natural and holistic picture of what is being studied as objective knowledge. The following phrases were recurrent in interviews across the various participants interviewed for this study:

- Africa has been objectified for too long
- We have to study Africa by analogy
- African scholarship is about producing knowledge from African perspectives
- the African perspective is also ethical
- African scholarship is not just about content
- African perspective should be able to take cognisance of African heterogeneity and must be ready to accommodate such diversity within the scientific production of knowledge

These remarks point to the argument that to study Africa only as content would not make it different from what is being written or studied about Africa elsewhere in the world. These foreign African scholars are saying that for African scholarship to take root at UKZN and Africa as a whole, research and other scholarly endeavours must be emphasised in African ways of *knowing* and *doing*. This argument is underpinned in this interview with the Dean of the newly reconfigured School of Social Sciences<sup>6</sup>, a senior academic and Nigerian born Professor, he argues:

Africa is being studied everywhere in the world. In fact even in the so called hegemonic western civilisations, they do have Centres for African Studies. So ours is nothing new with respect that we are dealing with issues that are related to the continent. Yes as important as this may appear to be,

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<sup>6</sup> The School of Social Sciences is one of the reconfigured schools that have been created out of the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences.



it is not enough to say that we are an African university simply because we claim to study let's say issues of poverty, hunger, famine, conflicts, (you name the rest) in Africa. These issues about Africa are being addressed by many centres of knowledge production everywhere else in the world. For me what would make a difference for this institution is both content and perspective. We need to study Africa using our own methodologies and perspectives. When you for example are talking about the Anglo-Zulu war, what is it that you are talking about? You should be concerned about engaging in meaningful interactions with the Zulu Kingdom and its people. How has the war impacted on their identity? How have they come to reorganise themselves politically? and so on.

This concern is re-echoed in the following interview with the then Dean of FHDSS, a South African-born senior academic. In his definition of African scholarship, the dean said:

African scholarship is scholarship that is grounded on the continent not only in terms of problems that it addresses; you know there are a number of problems we face in Africa, problems such as poverty, ethnic violence, HIV. African scholarship goes beyond those applications as some people think to involve a very much philosophical basis of our knowledge, that includes the very paradigms that are grounded on the continent in terms of the assumptions, in terms of the values, philosophies, and how we look at the world; for example a world in which we are interconnected, versus a world in which we are all discrete parts. I will see African scholarship primarily as knowledge grounded in the perspectives and ways of life of the African continent. It doesn't mean though that this knowledge is interconnected but we start with Africa as our base as we move towards the rest of the world.

Many other participants interviewed for this study both the established and emerging foreign scholars of African origin resonate with this issue of viewing knowledge in and on Africa through various epistemic paradigms. Emphasis on African philosophies and epistemologies are not a novel issue in the discourse of African knowledges. Overtime leading African scholars such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Chinua Achebe of Nigeria, Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, Cheik Antap Thiop of Senegal, Ngugi wa Thiong'o

of Kenya and other contemporary African writers such as Paul Tiyemba Zeleza, Mahmood Mamdani, Ali Mazrui, Thandika Mkandawire, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, William Makgoba and Siphon Seepe have been trying to encourage the foregrounding of African knowledge(s) that is reflective of the socio-economic, cultural and political realities of the continent. The African continent is vast, and it is also part of what is taking place in the global world. While seeking to claim an authoritative space and be legitimised as a scientific knowledge system, African scholarship is also striving to connect itself to global processes that attempt to serve the needs of this continent. Processes such as globalisation and transnationalism for example, form part of what define contemporary knowledge in Africa. As an institution operating within the matrix of African-led globalisation, some foreign African academics at UKZN are striving to commit themselves towards the deployment of global models that relevantly advance growth and development in Africa. Hailing from different backgrounds these foreign academics believe that their heterogeneous national and ethnic backgrounds could contribute to a meaningful interaction of Africa's socio-cultural diversities within the global knowledge economy. This implies that while engaging with global processes, researchers in Africa should be able to privilege their culture, development and democracy that are people-centred and people relevant manner.

IKSs are becoming a major area through which many African scholars are trying to generate knowledge that is relevant to their different communities. UKZN in particular is taking a front stage in engaging with IKS for cultural and systemic relevance. These IKS engagements however are mostly addressed in the areas of medicine; what can be qualified as ethno-medicine<sup>7</sup>. This study highlights the importance of IKS approaches on rethinking knowledge in Africa within the humanities and social sciences. Interviews across the different categories of scholars in this study reveal that IKS approaches within the social sciences are yet to make meaningful contributions towards the unpacking and repackaging of knowledge on Africa. Foreign African scholars of the social sciences at UKZN are striving to create research synergies that would attempt to rethink Africa along

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<sup>7</sup> UKZN online magazine features many of these IKS contributions mostly coming from the field of biomedicine. See [www.ukznonline](http://www.ukznonline)

African philosophical perspectives within the global knowledge economy. Some of these research synergies are geared towards the establishment of journals such as Afrika – Journal of Politics, Economics and Society, a biannual publication of the newly formed Forum for Constructive African scholarship.

### **5.3.1.2 Postgraduate supervision**

Postgraduate scholarship is an important structure within every institution of higher learning. Postgraduate scholarship is at the core of the defining goals that attempt to position UKZN as an institution of academic excellence. In fact the level of excellence in a university is measured by the quality and number of postgraduate students that a college or a university is capable of producing annually. As future scholars postgraduate students need to be equipped with the necessary skills that they would need to articulate the problems and foster development in their respective communities or societies. The role played by foreign African academics in the supervision of postgraduate students is very significant in the kind of knowledge that is currently produced at UKZN. These scholars have, to say the least, one student they supervise at the different levels of postgraduate scholarship – that is beginning from the Honours through Master's to the doctoral and post-doctoral levels.

In their supervision of students, many of these scholars attempt to encourage students to conduct research on issues that are relevant to the African continent. As much as students have the right to choose to work through a particular subject area that they are comfortable with, they are most often also guided by the curiosities of their supervisors. Interviews with some of these scholars within this category show that these scholars' supervision of students is done with an African oriented consciousness. Some of them are claiming that with UKZN being an African university that professes to advance knowledge within the African context, it is important that students be nurtured towards developing the propensity of generating knowledge that is African-centered. Consequently depending on their disciplinary orientations and their expertise in different areas of research, these scholars have been succeeding in assisting their students to

identify niche areas of academic inquiries in the various socio-cultural, economic and political landscapes in the production of knowledge in and on Africa. As one of the interviewees pointed out “*Africa, even in this our present times, still presents a vast land of unexplored and unexploited knowledge. I believe we still have generations to come for this knowledge to be fully explored.*” In this regard students are encouraged by these scholars to engage with their different contexts while trying to understand what is happening around the world. As far as the social sciences and humanities in particular is concerned, Africa largely remains an unexploited *terra incognita* at least as far as the production of scientific knowledge is concerned.

Many of these scholars reported having postgraduate students that they supervise coming from different African nationalities. Such a scenario presents yet another opportunity where these supervisors would attempt to motivate students to embark on research that is based on comparative and global approaches. The implication of this is to encourage the development of scholarship in Africa that is well-seated within global processes. The comparative and the global approaches embraced by these scholars seeks to assist students in becoming developed and advanced scholars of the future who are well equipped to articulate the developmental concerns of the African continent and putatively position African scholarship as a bona fide knowledge system within the globe.

In trying to facilitate the students’ work, and make them pursue their passions, some of these foreign African academics are trying to create research projects in which they envisage encouraging incoming postgraduate students, especially at the Master’s and doctoral levels, to pursue their studies within a broader research project. In other words students would be encouraged to choose any area of interest within the research project to work towards their qualifications. While no one in this study acknowledged that they have this initiative running as of the time I was conducting this study, most of them however are strongly convinced that it is an initiative worth pursuing. This is especially the case given the current financial boost that the university is giving to research proposals for the different schools in the university. Many of them indicated that they have come up with proposals that have identified key areas and new paradigms with a

special focus on Africa. They have indicated their readiness to be sending their students to the different African countries to conduct research that is comparative in nature, either as Africa, versus Africa or Africa versus the global.

Some efforts are already underway, where using their research codes, foreign African scholars are already assisting students to go and collect data from their home countries. In an interview with one senior foreign African lecturer from the FHDSS faculty, she said:

I have been sending my students to collect data from their respective countries. I supervise students from different parts of Africa, from Kenya, Cameroon, Sierra Leon, the DRC, and South Africa. Though it is not a research project as yet, I send them to these countries to collect data so that we can write and publish papers together. I encourage them to use the South African context to develop comparative and critical approaches towards understanding the social, economic, cultural, traditional and political dynamics of the African continent. I am passionate about seeing this happening; I have already co-authored a few articles with a few of my students. I am blessed to have such a mix of students. For me it provides me the texture and richness of what is happening elsewhere in Africa. We need this kind of information to be well informed, so that the nuances of the African reality can be reflected as we engage with scientific knowledge.

Citing the above excerpt as an example, foreign African scholars at UKZN are emphasising the need to expose students to the various African experiences that would have the effect of these students using comparative approaches in their scholarly endeavours. These kind of endeavours would also benefit local South African students as they would now be exposed to other forms of knowledge within the continent. Many of these foreign African scholars, in my interview with them, acknowledged that as bright as some local South African students may appear to be, these scholars bemoan the fact that their knowledge of what is happening elsewhere in Africa is so limited. As a result, many of these foreign African scholars in their individual capacities are trying as much as they can to introduce the local students they supervise to research areas that would involve consulting literature that is written about other communities in Africa. Their complaints

are not only directed to local students. Foreign African academics have also found that even among many of their local colleagues, there is this “inward looking” tendency in their research and scholarship. Their (the local) scholarly productions are not comparative enough especially when it comes to them relating with the rest of Africa. Where there is evidence of comparative approaches at all it is mostly about South Africa relating to the West. A situation they blame on the legacy of the apartheid system which basically related with the West in terms of knowledge production. Foreign African scholars are saying that for UKZN to pride itself as the premier university of African scholarship, there is an urgent need to nurture its students in other African belief systems. This would in turn equip these students towards comparative approaches to better study Africa and the world.

### **5.3.1.3 Pedagogic and curricular restructuring**

Pedagogy and curriculum are important factors that create a niche through which an institution like UKZN can be distinguished as the premier university of African scholarship. With current reconfiguration that is about to take place come 2012, the university is mobilising its academic staff towards the development of new curricula that are African-centered. Following this reconfiguration, the university has created the Centre for African Studies (CAS) which at the moment is housed in the College of Humanities. As reported by the dean of FHDSS:

The idea behind CAS is to have a hub whereby all African scholarship will be targeted. It is going to be a rich centre with the arts feeding into it, the humanities, social sciences, medical sciences, historians all of them focusing on the whole issue of African scholarship, bringing in their various voices. That centre is going to be based, according to the new reconfiguration, in the new School of Social Sciences. But that is just for a start up, in the long run it should be a university wide centre.

Judging from this excerpt it is clear that the university is moving towards a pedagogic culture that basically intends to transmit knowledge through African ways of constructing

reality. It is an amazing idea and if taken seriously UKZN would no doubt really get to hold the strings in pulling in new forms of knowledge for Africa on the continent. Already the DVC and head of the College of Humanities has asked various schools and departments to come up with templates that give new directions to the pedagogic and curricular needs of the institution. This attempt is meant to shift away from Eurocentric models which have overtime dominated the transmission of knowledge in the institution and the entire continent of Africa. As someone who has taught in different universities in Africa, the DVC is committed to seeing to it that not just the curriculum, but also the pedagogy is tailored to give the right competencies and skills that can meaningfully drive development in Africa. The new agenda of reconfiguration is viewed as a turning point to what I would qualify as „the dawn of a knowledge revolution“ at UKZN. It is a transition most welcome by foreign African academics as they are showing a lot of enthusiasm to re-dedicate their scholarship using African paradigms.

For some participants, the reconfiguration which is about to take stage come 2012 is viewed as a benign opportunity that these participants anticipate should be able to ignite new flames of academic performativity re-oriented and focused towards patronising and promoting the vision of the institution. A culture of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity is one major way that some foreign African scholars believe could help (re)enforce or (re)align the vision of engineering and pioneering the African scholarship agenda in research and curriculum. According to Kotter and Balsiger (1999:102) an interdisciplinary approach is “only used for those forms of supradisciplinary collaboration where various disciplines, keeping their own autonomy (i.e. without becoming a serving discipline), solve a given problem which cannot be solved by one discipline alone, in a joint way”. A transdisciplinary approach arises as soon as a problem is raised outside the scientific context and has to be unravelled in the form of a joint collaboration between scientists and practitioners (Kotter and Balsiger 1999). Through an interdisciplinary approach these scholars appear to have the conviction that an atmosphere of collaborative research and curriculum development among disciplines within the faculty of humanities and social science not only at UKZN (to begin with) would help translate the vision of African scholarship into a veritable scientific

knowledge matrix with the view of exporting this scholarship to other universities in Africa.

The supradisciplinary approaches of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity could become useful tools through which the African academe could provide intellectual spaces for systemic intervention for development and a meaningful advancement of the African philosophy in the global knowledge economy. The university is not just a breeding place for intellectual growth, but is also a significant space where developmental agendas of nation-states are being nurtured. It is the university that equips people with different specialised skills such as medical doctors, state nurses, environmental practitioners, historians, political analysts, lecturers, archaeologists, journalists etc working in various departments. With the new reconfiguration programme, some of the foreign African academics are readily looking forward to showing their best in the new pedagogic and curricular demands of the university. The newly created multidisciplinary Centre for African Studies, for example, is an area where some of the participants are gearing a vested interest in creating synergies with other colleagues on the continent. For many of them such a centre is a potential force towards the expansion of African scholarship across the continent. Using their multiple backgrounds, these transnational scholars are engaged with curriculum transformation at UKZN, and some of them are actively liaising with colleagues in the promotion of afrocentric approaches to research and curriculum across the continent.

#### **5.4 The experiences and perspectives of foreign African students in relation to the concept of African scholarship**

Foreign African students constitute a significant part of the international student body of UKZN. The University of KwaZulu-Natal has become a relevant institution for postgraduate scholarship for international students from across the different regions of Africa. In many of the departments within FHDSS, foreign African students constitute the highest number of students especially at the doctoral level. The number of students who apply for post-doctoral scholarship within the faculty are mostly those who come



from other parts of Africa. As part of my research sample, I limited my interviews to postgraduate students at the doctorate and post doctorate levels. This section attempts to problematise how foreign African students are renegotiating their academic life as aspirant scholars in the new transnational space of UKZN and South Africa.

Branding UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship, the university has envisioned an African-led agenda which is engendered to promote excellence in scholarship in curriculum transformation and pedagogic development. At the moment UKZN stands as one of the centres of excellence among South Africa's and Africa's institutions of higher learning. This position is made eloquent in the fact that UKZN has won the third position consecutively for three years of being among the top ten outstanding universities in Africa and ranking among the first 500 hundred universities in the world. In resonance with the vision of African scholarship, the faculty of humanities at UKZN is driven by a culture of excellence through an African-led scholarship, in the areas of teaching, research and community engagement in a global context (see UKZN's strategic plan 2011 – 2016 on [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)). Furthermore, one of the defining goals of the faculty and the university is student centeredness. By student centeredness, UKZN has made it a priority to become an institution of choice for learners. With this, the faculty wants to establish the university as an “institution of choice that values students in all their diversity and has a student-centred ethos, providing students with curricula, teachers, infrastructure and support services designed around their needs and producing well-educated, competent, sought-after graduates” (UKZN strategic plan 2011 – 2016).

The position that UKZN occupies in Africa and the globe in terms of knowledge production continues to play a tremendous role in attracting postgraduate scholarship especially from the rest of Africa. UKZN is among the top universities in South Africa with an outstanding Pan-African studentship profile in both the undergraduate and postgraduate studies, mostly from the College of Humanities, and particularly from the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (FHDSS). Notwithstanding some hiccups at the faculty, one major reason for the enrollment of international students in UKZN as cited by the various foreign African students interviewed for this study, is the aspect of opportunity structures. As reported by this group of research participants,

most foreign African students are motivated to apply to study at UKZN because of the availability of student support structures especially at a postgraduate level. Fee remission at the master's level and the complete fee waive at the doctoral level coupled with various research schemes and grants in the faculty are some of the motivating factors for increasing number of postgraduate applications to study at UKZN. All but one of the ten students interviewed confirmed that UKZN has offered them opportunities that their former institutions in their respective countries could not offer them. These opportunities have been very instrumental in facilitating their learnership process in the university and have provided an enabling environment in which they have been able to harness their intellectual capacities with a resilience to articulate their passion in the various kinds of scholarly research that they are pursuing.

Although the idea of support structures in the institution may not be a primary motivator for some foreign African students who apply to study at UKZN, the potential of these structures cannot be downplayed as the support they receive provides the kind of convenience that is needed for them to pursue their education. Interviewing Jonathan from Sierra Leone about his reasons for applying to study at UKZN he said:

We decided to come to South Africa following my father's appointment to the position of senior lectureship at UKZN. In fact while in the UK, my father had applied for two jobs – one back home in Sierra Leone and the other here at UKZN. Weighing the two options together with my father we decided to settle for UKZN. At that time I had finished my Master's programme in that university in the UK and in fact my application for doctoral studies had been accepted by my former university. The issue of support services for student was not really a problem because I could access funding from the institution because I was a bright student in my programme. It so happened that my father was getting tired of living in the UK and wanted to return home. I had the option to stay back and complete my studies, but I said I need to go with my father (laughing) you know I love my dad and I would always want to be around my younger siblings. (Asking why they decided to choose South Africa and not Sierra Leone) Jonathan said, I told my father I do not think the university back home would have the structures that UKZN has. Here the structures are more clearly defined. But what primarily motivated my applying

to study at UKZN is its African based approach to knowledge production.

As one would notice from the above excerpt, even the one whose motivation was not masterminded by the opportunity structures at UKZN, he, like the other nine students, could not also escape the temptation of student support structures at UKZN. This student was formerly studying at a university in the United Kingdom, which was ready to continue funding his studies. He claims that his choice of UKZN was not necessarily about the support structures, but he was rather fascinated by the curricular and pedagogic organisation of the university. He claims that his main reason for choosing UKZN was based on its alluring concept of African scholarship. Even though one gathers from the excerpt that this particular student could enjoy the luxury of adequate support services at his former university in the United Kingdom, his utterances insinuate that he aspired for something more than just the financial convenience provided for his studies. This student thus decided together with his father, to come to UKZN because of its relatively more viable institutional structures which in his perception, can produce a more conducive environment for study. Besides this, the vision, mission goals and core values are some of the issues, the student further mentioned, which had driven him to settle for UKZN; because he had always aspired as he put it “to view scholarship from a different angle.”

Critically looking at the above excerpt, I would like to propose a theory of „coincidence and convenience“ at work in the academic life of an African student. In pursuit of their education, many an African student is forever transcending different transnational spaces as a process of (re)negotiation to be established in the kind of scholarship they would want to pursue. The theory of coincidence and convenience I have postulated here, lies at the intersection of individually upheld principles versus the availability of resources. The theory sets out to explain the dilemmas and contradictions that confront upcoming African scholars as they attempt to position themselves within some ideological and philosophical paradigms that are in line with their visions. This postulated theory augurs well with Volery’s model of “mixed embeddedness” (Volery 2004). Using this model, Volery explains that opportunity structures are networked within individual preferences

and the values they uphold. Citing Schaper and Volery (2004) among other factors Volery underscores that “psychological characteristics such as the need for achievement, the belief in one’s life” networks and social relations play a decisive part in motivating one’s decision to move to a new place (Volery 2007:36).

Drawing from the example of Jonathan in the above interview, one would notice that a coincidence of convenience is an essential tool mitigating between the need to foreclose one’s ambitions on the one hand, and on the other hand finding the means through which such ambitions could be foreclosed. Jonathan’s experience justifies the positioning of UKZN within this theory. UKZN according to this excerpt could be seen as a convenient coincidence because Jonathan’s ambition “to view scholarship from a different angle” is conditioned by the opportunity structures that could help (re)enforce his passion of pursuing afrocentric epistemology. It must be noted that Jonathan had the options of either staying back in the UK or encouraging his father to move back to Sierra Leon. Both of these places are only capable of providing one thing and not the other. United Kingdom could provide Jonathan with the financial support he needed for his study, but not with an ideal space for his ideological standpoint. Sierra Leon is home, and therefore could be an ideal space, but lacks the resources to promote his ideology. The viability of UKZN both in material and epistemological orientations is a key driver in the growth of postgraduate applications from various African states.

While they happen to find themselves in this space, some of international student from Africa have begun to (re)position themselves within the politics of knowledge production at UKZN, especially in relation to the relevance of its vision of African scholarship. Just as the established foreign African scholars at UKZN, some of these foreign students see this vision as one worthy of meticulous attention. For a university that has branded itself as a premier university of African scholarship, UKZN appears to be a unique centre of knowledge for an African student who is inclined towards policies that would depict the relevancy of African experiences in the contexts of knowledge production and in development in a general sense. In defining UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship, foreign African postgraduate doctoral and post-doctoral students in their capacities as aspirant scholars, are also caught up in the very debates that question the

legitimacy of „premiership“ in the politics of African scholarship among different pockets of scholars at UKZN. Everyone who constituted the student sample in this study sees UKZN as a model institution where African students can be exposed to African forms of knowledge both at theoretical and practical levels. In trying to understand their perceptions about the maxim motto of UKZN, this group of participants just like the other group of established foreign African scholars, view the vision of African scholarship as a commendable effort, hailing UKZN for having come up with such a lofty idea. For an aspiring scholar, the students interviewed in this research see this vision as one which should be encouraged in other parts of Africa. Judging the need to (re)think Africa in the production and dissemination of knowledge on the continent, the various participants expressed their willingness to become agents of publicity about the utility value of the concept of African scholarship.

Drawing strength from the new transnational space of UKZN, most of these students have begun to take an interest in being nurtured in an epistemic culture that views reality from an African perspective. Ninety percent (90%) of the students confessed that prior to their decision to study at UKZN, the idea of African scholarship had never been an issue to consider while they were still studying at their former universities. Even as they now find themselves in UKZN, six out of the ten participants, said they throughout their studies have been involved in what Mary-Ann from Zimbabwe, described as “insensitive scholarship”. Elaborating further on this phrase this participant said that to the best of her knowledge, many students in institutions of higher learning in Africa are exposed to scholarship that does not give blessings to African orientations in the production of knowledge. Many other student participants resonated with this view and many of them came to the conclusion that, although many African postgraduate students carry out their research in African communities, their approaches in research and writing are circumscribed by the orthodox forms of scholarship which have established themselves as veritable scientific spaces in the knowledge economy. The vision of UKZN to work along African epistemology is commendable, even though the climate of epistemological certainty has not yet taken root in the university because of limited African-led conceptual paradigms.

Some students have always wanted to fight for a cause that would legitimise their identities wherever and whenever the opportunity would present itself. Interviews with various participants revealed that every African student would be happy to be exposed to new conceptual paradigms that would claim an authoritative place for the type of knowledge produced in and about Africa. They have not been able to exercise this agency because as students they are still in the process of negotiating what it takes for them to meaningfully engage with their passions. The academic space of UKZN is one which could be inspirational enough for African students to navigate through a system that is founded on academic principles that are meant to advance an African cause. In an interview with a post-doctoral student at the faculty, he said he has always longed to do his best to contribute meaningfully to his country and continent. He sees himself as a relevant instrument of African nationalism. At the moment he is involved in networks of programmes and projects that attempt to illuminate the significance and the relevance of African approaches to dissecting social phenomena. One of the major projects he is involved in is Southern African Development which is an outreach programme based in South Africa. This organisation is still at the perennial stage and at the moment they are using Mozambique and South Africa to pilot the programme. Their goal is to go global in Africa and to bring students from other universities in Africa and to initiate an exchange programme culture between African universities.

#### **5.4.1 Challenges faced by foreign African students at UKZN**

The concept of African scholarship is a mechanism through which UKZN attempts to distinguish itself as a knowledge space within the global geopolitical spaces of knowledge production. While the vision of African scholarship at UKZN is praiseworthy, its position as the premier university of African scholarship is riddled with dilemmas and contradictions. While it could be seen that the vision is already at work, scholars are still trying to grapple with the implications of this branding for UKZN and the African continent as a whole. There are a lot of dynamics embedded in this concept so much so that it has become difficult for scholars and the management of the university to provide cutting-edge articulations and principles that could justify the positionality of UKZN as

the premier university of African scholarship. The vision of African scholarship at UKZN is a huge and important project that needs to be provided with thorough analytical and critical frameworks that could be able to address the dynamisms of what constitute the concept. The common and rather unproblematised meaning that scholars often ascribe to the concept of African scholarship is rooted in the etymological confines of „Africanness“ which in most cases is limited to epistemological concerns. Even within a discourse of epistemology, the issue of African scholarship has not been clearly defined let alone established. In trying to interrogate the concept of African scholarship as understood by international postgraduate students of African origin, this section attempts to problematise the contradictions of this concept in relation to its application within the context of UKZN.

One of the major contradictions that I discovered as I interviewed these foreign African students lies with the issue of context boundedness. These students acknowledged that while a lot is being done in the faculty of humanities in response to this vision, a lot still needs to be done to have it take its root, and eventually position UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship. In terms of curriculum transformation, a majority of these students complained that too much emphasis is made on the South African context, and that there is limited exposure of students to other socio-cultural and political realities emanating from other African regions. This problem of limitation is made poignant in the following excerpt by one of the research participants a postgraduate student from Kenya who has been a student since 2005 and is now currently doing her post-doctoral fellowship in the faculty:

For me much of what I see here as African scholarship is actually South African scholarship. I find a lot of emphasis made on South African examples as one attempts to interrogate social issues for the purpose of scholarship. When this happens one would begin to question what African scholarship really is. Again the term is complex – I don’t understand the branding slogan – premier university of African scholarship. So engaging with that slogan it becomes somehow problematic for me because I don’t know if it encapsulates all of the African experience or the university has its own kind of knowledge it wants to

produce which we are not told. So it is basically like left up to you to define what should constitute African scholarship. It is like a „free for all“ so long as you are African. For me at this point the concept becomes more complex to promote. To me in this particular context then, African scholarship actually becomes South African scholarship, for the purposes of this context – because this is South Africans wanting to tell their own story – which is also part of Africa. This therefore brings to mind that African scholarship is context-specific. It depends on which part of Africa you are talking about.

In a separate interview with one other student from Cameroon who is currently doing his doctoral studies with the School of Politics, he said:

I did not come here to study South Africa. The experience I have had even while I was doing my masters programme in the School of Development Studies is that lecturers, especially the local ones, lay a lot of emphasis on South Africa. It is as if South Africa represents all that is happening in the rest of Africa. Even as a tutor, I notice that the dynamics of our Africanness are not played out during discussions. Even when you try to draw students' attention to what is happening in other regions of Africa, they seem not to be interested. The local students are so glued to the South African example. This makes it even harder for an international student from another African region...he or she has to sideline what they have acquired from their own countries and now focus on starting to learn about South Africa... because in this context it is actually the South African experience that counts.

This kind of understanding came up as I interviewed some other student participants on the question of how much Africanness is reflected in the teaching and learning environment of the institution. According to this participant and many others, students at UKZN are not adequately exposed to the socio-cultural diversities that exist in other parts of the African continent. For UKZN to be mandated as the premier university of African scholarship, it is imperative that the curricular and pedagogic structures be realigned to accommodate Africa's diversity by bringing to the fore the different African experiences



in the broader epistemological and ontological discourses about African scholarship across the various disciplines of the humanities faculty and the university.

Comparing themselves with their local counterparts, foreign African students bemoan the fact that it is easier for a local South African student to relate much more with Euro-American history than the history of their continent. Moreover, these students were unanimous in their opinion that the local South African students both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels present the South African experience to mean the African experience. As much as a local South African student may be able to correctly identify, interpret and articulate a specific social problem, their examples are mostly located within the South African context. They further expressed that some of their local colleagues have the tendency of marginalising knowledge which is coming from elsewhere in Africa. They sometimes refer to other African students as “you people from Africa” in a derogatory manner which suggests standards of backwardness. These foreign African students find such a phrase offensive coupled with a lack of willingness from their local colleagues to learn about different African cultures – a tendency they largely blame on the university for failing to provide stringent policies that could create a compelling teaching and learning culture cultivated within the realm of the vision. For an institution which has branded itself as a premier university of African scholarship, there is a need for it to create an amicable atmosphere that would be cognisant of Africa’s diversity and give voice to other social institutions in the various African cosmologies. The nonchalant attitude displayed by the local South African students towards other African experiences corroborate with Cross’ and Rouhani’s findings that in spite of the emphasis made on the process of „Africanisation“ in South African political discourses, there are some South Africans who certainly believe that South Africa is not part of Africa ( Cross and Rouhani 2004:235).

Another challenge that some foreign African international students face pertains to the issue of international marginality. One area of such marginality has to do with the poor reception of foreign African students into the university. Even though the present University of KwaZulu-Natal is trying to promote South-South cooperation (a tendency

that was completely ignored by its predecessors) there is indeed a lack of regard to international students who are coming from other regions of Africa. As students registered to study at UKZN, foreign African students feel that they are not given a fair treatment as compared to their counterparts from the western hemisphere. Some students in this study noted that the university would always do what is needed to be done to ensure that an international student from the west feels at home while pursuing their studies at UKZN. Hospitality of foreign students from the west is extended to pickups at the airport and pre-arranged accommodation for those students. International students of the African origin, on their part, have to individually find ways of sorting themselves out in terms of such services. Some of them have to rely on networks of friends and relatives to find their feet in the university. What could be drawn from this discussion is that the legacy of colonialism is still living on in African institutions of higher learning. The doctrines of African renaissance and the spirit of *ubuntu* are yet to collapse the spatial walls of discrimination set up by colonialism. The internationalisation of African university is still skewed in favour of the west (Adekanmbi 2004, Cross and Rouhani 2004, Robinson and Cohen 2004).

Furthermore, some African students feel discriminated upon in terms of financial responsibilities to the university. Many foreign African students find it discriminatory that the current policy privileging SADC students to study in South African institutions through subsidisation by the South African government (Cross and Rouhani 2004) is not extended to them. Being students from other regions of Africa, they are made to pay international levy as part of their fees. This kind of treatment the students mentioned is contradictory for a university that purports to represent the continent. The following comment made by a post-doctoral fellow at the university elucidates this kind of contradiction:

As the premier university of African scholarship my question will be what is the university doing to students of other African countries? That is still a problem because, students I don't know whether things have changed. From my experience as an international student from another African country, I was made to pay international levies

while doing my honours, masters and even halfway into my PhD programme I paid an international levy, so where is the African scholarship? If the university wants to be what it purports to be, then it should be able to accommodate other African students and give them a treatment where they should feel at home – that’s the only way that it can claim the name „premier university of African scholarship“.

By saying this, this group of students is not saying that the university should not charge fee to foreign students. Instead, they are arguing that the same rules and fee structures should apply to SADC and non-SADC students if the university is to make any headway towards realising its maxim motto. According to these students, this kind of discrimination attempts to privilege some students to be „more African“ than others. What could be highlighted here is that the mandate of UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship should not only be limited to an epistemological culture, but should also be extended to incorporate the existential material resources that would be able to locate African conditions – such as the one of African students in this case.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The concept of African scholarship is one of the major strides taken by UKZN as part of their involvement in the transformation process which has remained a key area of newly informed developmental agendas in the South African post-apartheid era. The fluid nature of understanding African scholarship has necessitated the use of „context“ as an analytical tool for a more nuanced and critical gauge. Liaising with existing literature on African scholarship, this chapter has shown that African scholars in the transnational site have always played an important role in trying to promote Africa as an intellectual and ideological space within the knowledge economy. Using the transnational space as an analytical context, this chapter has shown the role played by both the established and upcoming academics from other parts of Africa in relation to advancement of African scholarship within and outside UKZN. Through research, postgraduate supervision and curricular and pedagogic transformation, the foreign academic staff of African origin are striving towards the inculcation of Afrocentric approaches towards the acquisition and production of knowledge at UKZN.

The term African scholarship has been defined in various contexts. Drawing on relevant literatures this chapter has been able to provide the philosophical and epistemological frameworks that underpin the concept of African scholarship as understood by both the established and upcoming foreign African scholars of FHDSS at UKZN. In discussing their different perspectives, this chapter has critically looked at the role that the university is playing in keeping with its vision. While it is fundamentally acknowledging that the vision is a salutary effort, there is still much left for UKZN to earn the mandate of being truly the premier university of African scholarship. Even though the chapter to a large extent presents intersecting and overlapping perspectives towards the „merits“ and „expectations“ of the concept of African scholarship, their experiences as upcoming and established scholars engage them differently as they respond to the issue of African scholarship. For example as students, they see African scholarship at UKZN as something more than just an epistemological problem. In effect they are saying that for UKZN, in its mandate of premiership in African scholarship, must be ready to adequately accommodate the needs of students from other African regions.

# CHAPTER SIX

## AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP AT THE INTERFACE OF GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

### 6.1 Introduction

The notion that „African scholarship should be part of the global context“ was a recurrent theme that ran through the various interviews conducted with African academics and upcoming scholars who participated in this study. Being part of the global is not a new phenomenon in the geopolitical debates on knowledge production in and on Africa. Even before formal globalisation could come into play, African scholarship has always been negotiated within the global geometrics of power relations. The route of globalisation is an inevitable path to traverse and the process is riddled with multiple paradigms appropriated to suit different analytical frameworks.

In today’s world, globalisation has become a central issue through which many of our human activities are defined. Virtually all aspects of our modern world– our jobs, culture, educational systems, ideologies, identities and even relationships with one another are highly negotiated and inadvertently transformed by the profound forces of globalisation. This chapter posits to critically analyse the reflections of the different participants based on the influence that „global thinking“ may have on the conceptualisation of African scholarship at UKZN. Through their multiple experiences the chapter demonstrates the need for African scholars to engage „the global“ in trying to intellectualise and contextualise „things Africa“. With the view that African scholarship is „work in progress“, the chapter provides critical insights to the trajectory of transforming knowledge(s) located within the African context, while at the same time, African scholars are preoccupied with the need to utilise models that can more readily take advantage of the challenges and opportunities offered by globalisation. This chapter is built around the following key questions:

- What does it mean for African scholarship to go global?

- What does it take for African scholarship to go global?
- How much of the African scholarship is global and how much of the global scholarship is African at UKZN?
- What are the implications of global thinking on the concept of African scholarship at UKZN?
- With UKZN positioning herself as an African-led institution, how is the global reflected in the kind of knowledge that is produced and disseminated within the university?

Before delving into answering these questions, I would first of all like to position this chapter within an anthropological appraisal in connection with the politics of power relations in the knowledge economy. The relevance of an anthropological approach here is to provide some critical understanding on how knowledge has continued to play out in this era of increased globalisation and how the process of globalisation is being engaged in relation to the production of knowledge in and on Africa. Moreover the significance of this anthropological engagement as it attempts to problematise the complex interrelations between the local and the global and how the phenomenon of globalisation has impacted the thought process of the African intelligentsia is brought to the fore of this chapter. Anthropological studies have been noted for providing rich empirical data upon which social phenomena are practically explained and better understood. An anthropological lens is therefore of significance to the various pointers that explain the positionality of African scholarship at UKZN within a discourse of globalisation.

## **6.2 An anthropological understanding of African scholarship within a process of globalization**

Positioning this debate within the ambit of anthropological analysis, this section attempts to interrogate the character and purpose of African scholarship at the dusk of the twentieth and the dawn of the twenty first centuries. Looking both extensively and intensively at the literature on African scholarship, the chapter aims at providing a critical

understanding of the current trends that serve to animate this concept at the interface of global knowledge production.

Anthropology has been one of the disciplines in the social sciences that have resiliently emphasised the need to make the „local“ part of the „global“ reality (Long, Moore, Karim, Quinlan). These anthropologists have raised discursive debates predicated on the geopolitics of resource allocation in the knowledge economy. Using different approaches these writers have shown the implications of the interaction between western scholarship which is viewed as global and scientific and southern scholarship whose „scientific validity“ has always been subjected to scientific questioning and scrutiny. One of the major preoccupations of these anthropologists has been a depiction of the dilemmas and contradictions that confront non western scholars as they straddle the new imperial world order by seeking to establish themselves as bona fide epistemological spaces within the mainstream scientific knowledge economy (Quinlan 2000, Mafeje 1998, Nkwi 1998). The University of KwaZulu-Natal as an envisioned space for African scholarship is struggling against the orthodox paradigms through which knowledge has continued to be transmitted. First and foremost the vision of UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship was founded against the backdrop of trying to redress the inequities and imbalances that hallmarked the South African educational systems in the days of apartheid. In the present world of hyper globalisation, UKZN with its mission of African-led globalisation is caught up in these dilemmas and contradictions as it seeks to localise scholarship while at the same time trying to utilise models that are in resonance with global thinking. As an institution of international stature, UKZN has connected itself with the rest of the globe as part of her agenda to be celebrated as a major actor within the global knowledge economy.

In seeking to become part of the global, the local has perpetually been fighting from a position of denigration and marginalisation. African scholarship from the outset has been one of the fundamental efforts that have been registered in both the historical and contemporary repertoires as part of the attempts made to liberate Africa from colonial and neo-colonial mentalities. Much of what constitutes African scholarship in the social

sciences is couched on the anti-imperial discourses that attempt to dislodge Africa from northern hegemonic paradigms. Contemporary anthropologists from all corners of the South are actively involved in the deconstruction of dominant paradigms that have continued to parade the corridors of knowledge acquired systems in the South (Moore 1996 Nkwi 1998, Mafeje 1998, Quinlan 2000, Mingming 2002, Sithole 2009). In trying to unseat their scholarship from the deeply rooted northern informed epistemic tendencies, these anthropologists are concerned with how knowledge emanating from their different contexts could be measured without bias as legitimate spaces of scholarship.

Some contemporary anthropologists of the South or Africa, such as Mafeje and Sithole, have noted in their works that the practice of southern anthropology in particular and social sciences as a whole are basically an “imperial privilege, rooted in Enlightenment and positivism” (Sithole 2009:8). Archie Mafeje (1976) in his paper titled “*The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective: An inquiry into the growth of social sciences*” explicitly makes it clear that it is almost impossible to fight against imperial entrenchment from within the discipline of anthropology. His paper was a reaction against western imperialism and it is evidence of what Pearl Sithole qualifies as protest existentialism (Sithole 2009). By protest existentialism, Sithole (2009) is challenging the marriage between positivism and existentialism. She argues that the two are actually mutually exclusive as they appear not to work in tandem with the different ways through which reality could be constructed. She further argues that positivism has no regard for perception and also ignores feelings. Therefore the use of positivism to favour existentialism is not legitimate because while it may appear important to engage positivism with existentialism, the very fact that it is used to favour the existentialism of a particular kind over the other defeats the purpose. This is the challenge that African scholarship has faced in its continual efforts to get its various forms of constructing reality legitimised and established as an authoritative knowledge space within the globe. For an institution which is operating under the umbrella of African scholarship, one would begin to become curious about what UKZN is doing to have this vision translated into reality.



### **6.3 The debate of African scholarship versus the concept of globalization**

One major concern in line with the preceding arguments arises from two important questions:

- What is informing scholarship at UKZN?
- Is UKZN doing enough in terms of its sensitisation towards translating the vision of African scholarship into a veritable knowledge matrix?

As crucial as these questions appear, there are unfortunately no clear-cut answers to them. As UKZN is still trying to find her feet as the premier university of African scholarship, the university appears to be in a state of imbroglio; as there are currently no prescribed principles that should be guiding the generation and dissemination of knowledge in line with the vision. This state of imbroglio is further accentuated by dual dealership embedded in the university's scholarship mandate of African-led globalisation. In attempting to position itself as an African institution, UKZN is staggering between two forces of unequal strength. These forces are played out in what constitutes the local versus what constitutes the global. Merging this dualism to a point of UKZN emerging in its own right as a knowledge space is smeared with contradictions. The need for UKZN to go global constitutes a major challenge to social scientists who are still trying to grapple with the state of African scholarship at the interface of globalisation. Utterances such as, „*it is important for African scholarship to go global*“, „*African scholarship should not ignore other forms of scholarship*“, „*African scholarship must not work in isolation*“ were some of the common remarks I got from various people who participated in this study.

These utterances are justified given that we are living in a world of rapid globalisation, where many of the world's economies are being affected by global transformations at various levels. The world of academia is a major area in which global transformation is taking its toll. Institutions of higher learning in Africa are increasingly being transformed and in turn becoming transformers of global thinking. The current situation of the world

today is becoming exceedingly complex and we are experiencing a rapidly changing world in the production, circulation and consumption of scholarly knowledge (Zezeza 2008). UKZN is an epitome of an African university of the twenty-first century where global transformations are being played out in the different areas of knowledge production and acquisition. Being known for its motto as the premier university of African scholarship, as some participants in this study are not saying that African scholarship should ignore other forms of scholarship. Rather, some of these scholars are claiming that even while attempting to promote and maintain our Africanness in the intellectual sphere, it is important for African scholars to be exposed to different forms of scholarship. The essence of this being that Africa is part of humanity, therefore it is legitimate for scholars in Africa to make a contribution towards what is going on in the world in terms of knowledge production. Commenting on this approach, a senior lecturer from the school of politics said:

To say it is the premier university of African scholarship does not mean that we do not have to study other parts of the world. In this department I see a lot of my colleagues concentrating on the global South. Historically it is very important to situate Africa within the global south – Latin America, Middle East, Gulf States, North Africa and Asian countries. We are all in category between developing and emerging economies. We don't want to study Africa in isolation from the global south. Even in relation with North America and Europe. Africa is equally contributing as other parts of the world. We do not want essentialism, we want to study Africa as part and parcel of humanity. Our contributions also have to be valorised as part and parcel of human history. African scholars and people should not be treated as if there is something peculiar about us. We run a number of modules that reflect our reality, we have module on gender, Latin American. All we need to do is to get more lecturers to teach and make our students to be more rounded. We look at what is happening not just in the capitalist countries but also the non-imperialist countries like China, Japan to borrow their models for empowerment.

The above excerpt sits with the opinions of a good number of other participants interviewed for this project. These participants are saying that there is a need for Africa to go global. Looking at this excerpt one would notice that there are two factors mentioned,

which point out some of the reasons why African scholarship should become part of the global world. The first one is the need to position Africa within the global South. As emerging economies with the same history of marginalisation, some of the southern countries have really broken the record of subservience to imperial scholarship by creating autonomous scholarships which are relevant to their contexts. The participant from the School of Politics has cited the examples of China and Japan as an emancipatory model for African scholarship to embrace an originary approach. In corroboration with the above excerpt another senior lecturer from the school of architecture and a Kenyan national made the following emphasis:

First of all you recognise that other regions have so much pride in their scholarship. You go for example to the Asian continent and you find scholarship there written in none of the international languages, and yet it forms the basis for learning in those types of contexts, because they are not about ... oh does the use of our language make us sort of look inferior to the global context? I think these are people who are generating knowledge and spreading knowledge. If you look at the way the world is going currently some of the emerging markets and economies are the Asian continent – what we call the Asian tigers, India, China - which has become a global player – places where knowledge is generated with a lot of pride and a total disregard of what you might think about their geographical location, they don't care, they know their strength. I feel we need to get there, we don't need you to affirm us. After all as I say there are uniquenesses about this continent and there are even uniquenesses in the way we have addressed and resolved our issues through our traditions and culture. We need to bear on our knowledge generation and even on our interactions. Therefore we need to claim that space and learn from others to take pride of our own – e.g. we see how the Europeans are extremely passionate about Europeans, why do we want to be passionate being European or having a European experience when we could be passionate about what we are about?

The one major thing that stands out for both excerpts is the issue of inspirational exposure. Being exposed to scholarship from elsewhere is not just gaining knowledge for knowledge sake, but it should be much more about the relevance that such knowledge

spaces could serve in the empowerment of those scholarly spaces which are still struggling for a contour on the map of knowledge production. As one of the commentators has pointed out, the Chinese and the Japanese have become major powers in the world through indigenous approaches to nation-building. A Chinese anthropologist Wang Mingming in his article *“Towards a Critique of Nativist Anthropology”* (Mingming 2002) has raised issues concerning the development of a “natives” own scholarship and has shown how people in other parts of the world have extricated themselves from western orientalism in the production of knowledge. He points out how China throughout the twentieth century has been attempting to de-hegemonise the interference of western scholarship in Chinese anthropology. The advocacy of *you zhongguo lese de renleixue* meaning “anthropology with Chinese characteristics” was the order of the day in the process of gaining autonomous scholarship within this discipline (Mingming 2002:151). In a similar vein, many scholars in Africa are struggling for Africa’s existence as an autonomous and recognisable knowledge system within the globe.

The second reason in support of African scholarship, as evident from the above excerpts, is that African scholarship is supposed to have the legitimacy to study humanity in its own right. Up until now African scholarship has not been able to move out of a position of marginalisation that it has been subjected to since the days of colonialism. This position of marginalisation has, in fact, remained endemic in the works of various scholars who are engaging with the discourse of African scholarship. Social knowledge in Africa and about Africa has continually been constructed around its subjectification to western paradigms. The autonomy of African scholarship as a scientific matrix has always been contended based on the inferiorised position that it has been made to occupy within the geopolitical space of knowledge production. Even in this era of the „posts“<sup>8</sup> and neoliberal discourses, African scholarship has hardly been respected for its scientific „know how“ let alone accepted into the ranks of social scientism. Moore (1996), in her examination of the politics of anthropology in the post-modern era, argues that the new

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<sup>8</sup> The politics of knowledge construction in the present world of neoliberal politicking is based on deconstructionist paradigms of postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism. These paradigms unfortunately do not necessarily serve the purpose for which they have been formulated.

paradigms of local/global relationships do not practically represent what they stand for. She observes that even though anthropologists have always acknowledged the legitimacy of local knowledge as natural spaces, such knowledge(s) has hardly been valorised outside the context in which it is generated.

The preceding arguments resonate with some of the concerns that some African scholars both from within and outside South Africa are raising in connection with the global validity of African scholarship. Some of the African scholars at UKZN are arguing that the advancement of African philosophies in studying humanity remains one of the crucial things that social science scholars in the faculty should be preoccupied with. In an interview with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) for the College of Humanities, of Ghanaian origin he said:

As an institution founded on a very important vision such as African scholarship, I think that we are mandated to contribute to humanity. Not only should we contribute to, for example the areas of medicine for example looking at local medical cures to diseases and agricultural experimentations on food, but we should also begin to look at different ways through which our voices can be counted in understanding social issues in Africa. We should have African perspectives, philosophies, conceptual frameworks, theories that reveal African typologies. As the premier university of African scholarship, I think the humanities faculty has a big role to play in positioning UKZN as part of the globe, where we as social scientists from Africa can also tell our part of the humanity story.

The peculiarities of African experiences should be able to, in their own right, be validated as part of understanding humanity. UKZN is making continued efforts to contribute to the establishment of the „African thought“ in providing understanding to the different domains of human existence. These efforts are promoted within individual as well as disciplinary capacities. Looking at the templates of some of the programmes that have been developed by the various disciplines within the faculty, one would notice an ethos of Africanism being illuminated in some of these programmes to the extent that one can for example boast of African psychology, African political science, African ethics and

African anthropology. Foreign African scholars are becoming key players in developing Afrocentric approaches to studying humanity. Many of them are busy coming up with new templates and developing modules that attempt to highlight the role and relevancy of African scholarship within global paradigms. The concept of African scholarship is not just streamlined to respond to the issue of identity but also for broadening the knowledge arena at the interface of globalisation. The following excerpt taken from an interview conducted with the dean of the faculty elucidates the strides that UKZN is taking towards the study of humanity:

In 2004 I gave a keynote address in Santiago in an informational ethic conference where I was highlighting or foregrounding the importance of indigenous approaches to ethics. Because the research that is being done in Africa needs to take into consideration African approaches to ethics. We are talking here about research in behavioural sciences, clinical and basic medicine etc. from a social science perspective, what are the ethical issues? So we are making a voice in ethics in indigenous systems e.g. we've got collaboration with a number of African countries on HIV and ethics where we also foreground African approaches to ethics. In the faculty we've also got the African Centre for Childhood which is looking at childhood from an African perspective, psychosocial problems of childhood. That particular programme is running in 10 different African countries and at the moment it is based at UKZN. Last year in the faculty we organised a conference on the indigenous approaches to counselling, including the integration of psychological counselling, and indigenous approaches to counselling. That was a major success, it was an international conference hosted by the faculty. By way of curriculum transformation, we are also trying because we've got courses that now in African psychology, I think we are the first in the country to have a course on African ethics.

The above excerpt has shown that UKZN is vigorously striving towards the integration of afrocentric approaches towards the understanding of human and social phenomena in their diversity. One key issue that could be evoked from the excerpt is the issue of ethics. Not only must African scholarship be reflected in epistemology, it must also be reflected in the axiological paradigm. While epistemology refers to means through which

we know what we know, (Asante 1987) axiology is a branch of social science that deals with ethical issues (see Mazama 2001). For research to be relevant, it must be able to address the needs of Africa. The ethical functional dimension is vital in highlighting the relevancy of Afrocentric research. This is so, because western ethics may not be well suited to guide the conduct of research around an African social phenomenon. The example of the African Centre for Childhood mentioned in the excerpt, could not run any better without African approaches being dedicated to ensure that psychosocial childhood problems are studied from African perspectives.

#### **6.4 The global/local dualism**

The preoccupation of African centeredness by the University of KwaZulu-Natal remains a major concern for an international institution which aims at foregrounding excellence front stage within the global knowledge polity. This section attempts to look at the global/local dialectic as UKZN strives to position itself as an Afro-driven intellectual space, while at the same time subjecting itself to global tenets that are meant to earn her the mandate of excellence in the production of knowledge within the globe. The position that UKZN currently occupies as one among the outstanding universities in the world, and particularly in Africa, is predicated on a combination of things which are reflected in both the local and global makings of what it takes for UKZN to qualify as a centre for excellence in the world.

As has been mentioned earlier, UKZN for three consecutive years has been ranked as the 500<sup>th</sup> university in the world and the fifth in Africa in academic research output. The ranking of universities is a worldwide mission that is part of a globalising agenda, a mechanism by which scientific truism is validated through the assessment of universities in their individual roles as producers of scientific knowledge. The culture of scientific validation mediated by this worldwide ranking system has the potential of inducing universities to develop inclinations towards principles of globality that may in turn muffle their individual visions – orchestrated by the conniving disorientational manipulations baptised in the name of globalisation. In trying to unpack the process of globalisation in

relation to the intellectual space of UKZN, this agenda is positioned within three schools of thought that emerged in this research: the *idealists*, the *moderates* and the *extremists*.

Globalisation is understood as a process in tandem with the principles of neoliberalism. Globalisation has constituted one of the significant changes and challenges in the African educational systems since independence (Olukoshi and Zeleza 2004). Zeleza (2004: 42) has argued that “globalisation as a project and process of neoliberalism in Africa has accelerated the corporatisation of university management, commercialisation of learning and commodification of knowledge”. Some of the goals<sup>9</sup> enshrined in the vision of UKZN are positioned within the politics of globalisation, the corollary of which is established by the elements of the triple „C“ mission of corporatisation, commercialisation and commodification outlined above (Zeleza *ibid*). Principled on a motive to promote the culture of context and relevance, these goals<sup>10</sup> are punctuated within a discourse of globalisation with the aim of maximising the potentiality of UKZN as an African university of the twenty-first century.

The first group of individuals in this research whom I have qualified as *the idealists* share the opinion that for UKZN to become relevant as an international university, it has to partake and insert itself in global discourses that are meaningful and could therefore contribute to consolidating its status of its internationalism. Many of these participants believe globalisation is a fundamental process by which the university can be marketed to attract international learnership and be promoted in its own right as a scholarly space within the global knowledge economy. In doing so, some African academics both the local and foreigners are saying that in the midst of valorising African scholarship, UKZN needs to fit into the global frameworks of scholarship in research and pedagogy that would give the university the reputation and recognition that it deserves in the globe. This implies that in the commodification of its brand of African scholarship, UKZN has to stay connected with the global scientific enterprise with the aim that it remains an

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<sup>9</sup> These goals include; African-led globalisation, pre-eminence in research, excellence in teaching and learning, institution of choice for learners, institution of Choice for staff, efficient and effective management. See chapter three for a detail explanation of these goals.

<sup>10</sup> See chapter three for an outline of the mission, goals and core values of the university.



attracting space to a worldwide clientele of students and academics seeking to study and work in the university.

This kind of positionality is in resonance with the phrase „think local and act global“ that was used by Thebe Ikalafeng<sup>11</sup> during my research period. This understanding has become a common cliché among different categories of users who are interested in the conversation of the intersection between the local and the global. In thinking local and acting global, Ikalafeng and some of the research participants who fall within this group of idealists, have a common understanding that there is a need to start re-imagining and re-imagining Africa within the global transformations that are taking place in the world. Quoting one of America’s celebrities in the world of music Tupaq, Ikalafeng said *“changing the face can change nothing but facing the change can change everything”*. By this he was referring to the state of African history and its impact on the possibility of creating a negative mindset of Africans in the face of globalisation. He asserted that while Africans may undeniably revisit Africa’s colonial history, they need not repeat the history. What is implied here is that African scholars and different stakeholders have to start changing their perspectives and attitudes towards global thinking which of course he said must be sensitive to the African context. In this regard Africans are called to be proactive to global knowledge(s) that should be appropriated to serve the needs of the African continent.

In my interview with the Vice Chancellor, he emphatically declared that scholarship and academia remain the primary objectives which are central to the university. By saying this he urged that the university be conducted in manners which cooperate with trends on the transformation of higher education in the twentieth-first century. Higher education in general has been transforming to effect liberated scholarship in Africa; and in fact many African universities are rapidly being globalised because of their increasing international status.

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<sup>11</sup> In his presentation on “Africa – New global inspiration for design, branding and culture: Repositioning the University of KwaZulu-Natal as the premier university of African scholarship”. Public lecture presented on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 at the Westville campus of UKZN.

The second school of thought that emerged from this study is a group of scholars who share the opinion that while it may be important to think local and act global, there is the danger of the university selling itself short in its foundational vision of African scholarship. Thinking local and acting global, in itself, according to these academics, is a way of suffocating a scholarship (African scholarship) that is still struggling to take roots in the institution, in Africa and in the world at large. In saying this, these scholars are not claiming that it is unimportant for UKZN to be involved in global patterns of scholarship. This group of scholars whom I have termed as *the moderates* stand in opposition to the stance of the groups of idealists and extremists. The moderates are claiming that globalisation is neither inevitable nor is it considered an unimportant aspect of development in the academic life of an African higher institution. According to these scholars, instead of engaging with the slogan „thinking local and acting global“ espoused by the idealists, they would rather prefer to work with the reverse which is „thinking global and acting local“. The latter slogan appears to align with the vision of Chinese and Japanese examples highlighted earlier on. By engaging with the slogan of thinking local and acting global, these foreign African academics are challenging the African academic intelligentsia to get from the „globe“ what works for Africa and appropriate such knowledge to suit the different socio-cultural and political contexts of the continent. By doing this they claim the university would be able to maintain its status quo as the premier university of African scholarship while at the same time engaging with the globe for competitive scholarship.

These scholars argue that while globalisation is a highly contended and resisted issue in African discourses, it has however become an inevitable path to cross. Anti-globalisation feelings are promoted by an imperial outlook which views globalisation as another brand meant to reactivate western monopoly and hegemony over the rest of the geopolitical economies of the world. While there is a lot of controversy surrounding this process, some participants acknowledge that in a neoliberal and „democratic“ world of today, African scholars should be ready to take advantage of the composite sites orchestrated by the process of globalisation to claim an intellectual space among other forms of scholarship in the global knowledge economy. Peter Crossman claims that although there

is “an unmistakable resurgence in many quarters of national identities and perceptions”, these need not “always be interpreted as the rejection of globalisation but an integral part of it” (Crossman 2004:323). He further states (quoting the example of cultural anthropology) that the plurality of knowledge(s) in a postmodern era has “left the intellectual field with a void regarding legitimising and meaning-giving narratives that many scholars are anxious to recover or reinvent” (Crossman 2004:323). In line with these arguments, proponents of the slogan „think global and act local“ in this research are claiming that because of the fact that the world has become one composite site in the context of globalisation, African scholars“ resistance to globalisation should work in the light of relativising their scholarship to the point where they could claim an authoritative space on the global map of knowledge production. To buttress this standpoint, one of the research participants, an anthropologist and a senior lecturer in the faculty commented:

I have and at the same time do not have a problem with globalisation. I do very well understand its political undertones. Africa and African scholarship are part of the globe, because we are unavoidably interconnected to other societies in the world.

As I was saying scholarship for me even science is what humanity is striving for. All of us are striving for science. That is why the notion of science, regardless of the fact that it might have emanated and shaped by western philosophies and concepts, it should be left free for everyone to make contributions to scientific knowledge. Because we all have the propensity to be objective, subjective, we are departing from our indigenous space through scholarship to reach science and so there is no way we can disregard how we see each other and mutually be galvanising concepts as around what science is. So even in my most radical kind of stance in support of African scholarship, I actually support the other forms of scholarship and I am quite confident that one learns a few things from the other scholarships. The only issue I have is that African scholarship has been blocked from also depositing material in that same pot.

One of the major issues emanating from this excerpt is the idea against the propensity to de-link from global processes as the extremist category in this particular subject area would want it happen. Judging from the above excerpt, it could be inferred that the

interconnection of African scholarship with others in the globe could play better in the process of knowledge contextualisation and relevancy to the developmental needs of the African continent. What this excerpt explains is that there should be equal treatment when it comes to contributing to the world of science - as the participant claims, African scholarship should not be “*blocked from depositing material in that same pot*”. While depositing this material some other participants said that the material deposited should be sensitive and foregrounded within African knowledge paradigms – a phenomenon many referred to as Africanising global knowledge. In saying this, Africanisation does not mean the preclusion of other forms of scholarship but rather as Crossman argues, it implies “more control over the range of conditions and resources for academic life that make autonomous intellectual pursuit possible” (Crossman 2004:324). In thinking global and acting local, some of these scholars in this research are advocating that global phenomena should be able to fit into the various social paradigms of the African context in ways that are not stifling to the African mind.

The last school of thought dubbed in this research as the *extremist* category is working in total opposition and resistance to the process of globalisation. According to this school of thought, the idea of African-led globalisation serving as one of the goals of the faculty of humanities and social sciences at UKZN is a quasi representation of what should really be an Afrocentric university. For a university which is still struggling to turn the tides of history, these individuals believe that African-led globalisation is an overly ambitious agenda whose purpose is yet to be defined, and intentions yet to be understood.

The reaction of this group of scholars against globalisation stems from the ongoing politics of marginality that African scholarship has continuously been subjected to. They therefore see globalisation as what Nyamnjoh describes as the “last label” for the “same basic process or mission” previously described as “modernisation” (Nyamnjoh 2000:5). These individuals strongly advocate that for UKZN to be fully grounded in its maxim motto of being the premier university of African scholarship, it needs to in the first place adequately position itself locally as an (South) African university before it should ever think of embracing a global character in the running and functionality of its systems. As

one of the participants from the department of history in a rhetorical manner put it, “*how can you lead global education when you cannot develop simple domestic education?*”

In saying this, this participant in conjunction with similar views shared by others within the extremist category, is claiming that the positionality of African scholarship at UKZN, as insinuated by its slogan, can only be strengthened if the university engages in-depth with principles that attempt to domesticate scholarship. This domestication should go beyond the confines of essentialism, which, as argued by some of these scholars, is what has so far defined the functioning of the motto of the institution as being the premier university of African scholarship. Some of the scholars are bemoaning the ad hoc manner in which such an historic vision such as African scholarship is being handled in the university. As mentioned earlier on in the study, there are no formal structures made available to oversee that this vision is meaningfully integrated and articulated in the production and dissemination of knowledge across the university.

Some of the participants claimed that what one sees as knowledge production at UKZN is operating in whatever blueprints were left by the historical, in the context of UKZN and its pre-merger predecessors – a situation which is reproduced through processes such as globalisation. Nyamnjoh (2005:5) further lays claim that the mission of globalisation attempts to “free [sic] African of his natural and cultural Africanness”, and invite him or her to partake of the “standardised, routinised, streamlined and global consumer culture”. Moreover in terms of domestication, the university is still striving to forge links with other universities in Africa. In this regard this category of scholars does not appear to see the sanity in UKZN going global when its vision has not yet left the drawing board of the South African and African domestic spaces.

However it should be noted that UKZN as an institution of higher learning is operating within the broader political context of South Africa which has implications on the way policies are defined and how they can be implemented. This broader political context has the potential to reinforce or constrain the policies that are proposed by the university. Although a university is autonomous in nature, it is part of a broader community.

Consequently the different policy frameworks are most often circumscribed by the community in which the university finds itself. The mission of UKZN reads: *“A truly South African University that is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past”* (see [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)). This mission is built around the policy of redress which is a major roadmap to the transformations that are supposed to be taking place in post-apartheid South Africa. In explaining the responsibility of UKZN as an academic institution to the state, the Vice Chancellor of the university commented:

Yeah, the mission is a life to lead; it is about quality assurance – about excellence, redressing the past. What are you redressing? What is there to redress in South Africa today? It is to bring back all that was African that was lost through colonialism. And so you can’t ask for more of that. That is a big redress in the mission that tallies very well with the vision of the institution. And the core values are really taken from the constitution of the country. So those are the values of South African constitution translated into the university environment. There is nothing unusual about that.

This commentary is a testimonial to the umbilical relationship that universities as autonomous institutions share with their states. The essence of knowledge and education is not about selfhood, but it is about serving to meet the needs of the society within which these educational institutions operate.

## **6.5 Is the concept of African-led globalisation within “global Africa” or within the “global world?”**

The issue of managing diversity remains crucial in the development of a twenty-first century African university. The University of KwaZulu-Natal branded as the premier university of African scholarship is confronted with the rhetoric of pluralism and multiculturalism in this present world of unprecedented changes. This branding is denominational of an institution specialised to look at issues from a particular angle

principled along certain policy paradigms that are meant to safeguard the uniqueness of this vision. Policies that recognise the importance of African scholarship are useful in this post-colonial and post-modern era of freedom which has been extended to the academia. In attempting to understand the *raison d'être* of the goal of “African-led globalisation”, participants in this research reflected on how much of Africa is actually represented in the global outlook of knowledge generation, production and dissemination at UKZN. The question that arises here is that when one uses the word „global-led“ does it have to do with global as in South Africa in relation to the rest of Africa? Or is one talking about South Africa in relation to the global world? Bearing these two questions in mind, what really does African-led globalisation mean?

One of the questions I usually asked my different interviewees was: how is UKZN an African university? The common response I got was, „of course it is an African institution, it is an institution that is located in Africa. According to a number of participants, by virtue of the geographical disposition of the institution, UKZN automatically qualifies as an African university. The geographical parameter is an important component that cannot be ignored when looking at scholarship in Africa. As much as this component is quintessential in contextualising scholarship within an African physical space, it does not form the primordial basis upon which UKZN can be understood as an African university; for there exist many other universities on the continent. Being a university located within the continent of Africa would not necessarily make UKZN an African university. Mthembu (2004) asserts that the difference between a university in Africa and an African university is salient and people need to be upfront with establishing the difference. As long as a university in Africa is far from embracing Africa as an institutionalised content material in the transmission of knowledge (Lansink 2004) it would only remain as a university in Africa and not an African university. Quoting the words of one of the influential African leaders, Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana, Makgoba and Seepe (2004:13) note:

*“we must in the development of our universities bear in mind that once it has been planted in the African soil it must take root amidst African traditions and cultures”* (Makgoba and Seepe 2004).

There are two things worth noting in this statement – there is the issue of geography as well as sociality (culturality) being highlighted here. One qualifies the other and therefore the two are mutually inclusive of what would constitute an African university. By being rooted in African traditions and cultures calls for an epistemology that would be able to foreground the experiences of African people based on their different cultural and traditional backgrounds.

The concept of African-led globalisation as one of the defining goals in the college of humanities at UKZN remains puzzling in its practice. This is so because there are no clear-cut defined principles accompanying such an agenda. The fundamental issue here is about globalisation. The term globalisation itself, even at its very basic definition is problematic. Theoretically speaking globalisation simply refers to the “intensification of interconnectedness, suggesting a world full of movement and mixture, contact and linkages, and persistent cultural interaction and exchange” (Rosaldo and Inda 2002:2). Truly people and social institutions of today’s world of globalisation find themselves in flux with these global inter-linkages of every kind. Positioning UKZN within the framework of African-led globalisation actually means connecting UKZN with various societies in the world in respect to promoting global scholarship. With this, UKZN has been able to establish itself within global scholarship given that it is an international institution of reputable academic standards. However, this has not still resolved the question of African-led globalisation. For in this concept the word “globalisation” could apply to both the „global world“ and „global Africa“.

One of the major problems that have been identified by some of the participants in this study is about the integration of African scholarship in the global knowledge economy. As an intellectual space that has espoused the vision of African scholarship, one would begin to interrogate how the university manages to have this vision played out as UKZN attempts to position its scholarship within global Africa and the world at large. Some of the participants noted that as much as UKZN is doing well in global scholarship in the world, much is still desired in relation to its responsiveness towards the establishment of



its vision of being “the premier university of African scholarship”. Gathering from the interviews conducted with the various participants, it was noted that there is what the university is doing and there is also what it is supposed to be doing. These two positions provide an angle upon which I have anchored the debates of UKZN’s positionality in the globe in relation to its agenda of „African-led globalisation“.

As I have mentioned elsewhere in the work, the faculty of humanities and social sciences of UKZN has a number of centres and programmes that could be seen focusing on African studies, using afrocentric approaches to them. Centres such as Centre for Creative Arts (CCA), African Centre for Childhood (ACC) and the newly formed Centre for African Studies (CAS) are multidisciplinary centres which are foundational of African paradigms in the production and dissemination of knowledge. In addition to these centres, participants reported that there are efforts made here and there in the faculty and the university in transforming the curriculum to meet local and global imperatives of academia in the institution. The existence of these structures is a testimony in themselves and their existence indicates that something is being done at the university in line with the vision. Despite the fact that these structures exist, the university still has a long way to go in its commitment of realising its vision in keeping with its African-centeredness. The curricular transformations that are taking place across the various disciplines in the faculty are done in an ad hoc manner with no formal kind of supervision as to whether the vision is effectively streamlined in the courses offered by those disciplines. However some pockets of individual scholars who are showing a passion for African scholarship are striving in their individual capacities to make sure that what they teach and research are working in tandem with the vision of the university. It must be noted that most of what I problematise is obtained from the interviews I conducted with research participants and also through a skim and scan of course readers organised for some modules both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Therefore my arguments are based on what the participants said and what I observed as material being taught to students.

In trying to understand whether UKZN is doing enough in this mission of African-led globalisation, some participants commended UKZN for being brave at least to have envisioned the concept of African scholarship; which for many, is a niche area that has to be taken seriously. Asking whether UKZN is really positioned to engineer African scholarship across the continent, a senior professor from department of Community Development commented:

I believe that UKZN can make a contribution towards that. I also believe that once a particular institution establishes its niche, even if they are not Jack of all trades, even if they are good at one thing, at a specific area such as humanity, or economics and management, they are known for something, they can engineer links with other institutions which also have other niches in Africa; and be able to capitalise on mutual rapport between institutions. And so if specific centres within UKZN such as the research office were vibrant enough to engineer these linkages, if we were not suffocating other cooperatism, and we were actually, like in the good old days we were able to host other centres and share the knowledge with them, we could galvanise a fair amount of African knowledge between ourselves, and these centres. So even if an institution like UKZN can't be jack of all trades but becomes a node that sources and interlinks with others it would be good.

As noted by this participant, the vision in itself is a good point of departure and must be appreciated at that level. The idea is for people to take it from there and ensure that the university lives up its dream of championing its form of scholarship by forging links with other universities in the world. In this case, as the participant points out if some centres like the research office could be „vibrant enough to engineer linkages“ then UKZN could be sure of moving forward with its vision of African scholarship.

Much of what was reported by participants is not about what UKZN has done or is doing, but what it is supposed to be doing in respect to the concept of African-led globalisation. Participants reported that much of what is being pursued at UKZN is still patterned along dominant orthodox paradigms, which, politically speaking, appear as global and scientific. In an interview with one of the school heads, he commented that *“you would*

*be surprised that even now and especially here at UKZN colleagues are more interested in valorising things that are externally-driven while demonising things that are internally-driven*". Western paradigms as many intimated are still at work in the research and teaching/learning environments of an institution which is supposed to be the mantle of Afrocentric scholarship. While efforts are being made to promote UKZN as the leader of African scholarship, these efforts, many decried, are made in an ad hoc manner – and are therefore compromising its typological stance of Africanising knowledge in both the global and the local arenas. To have this situation bailed out some participants strongly suggested that the concept of African scholarship should not only be engaged at the tertiary level, but it should start as far back as secondary school level. These participants recommend that African scholarship should start from a basic level where people need to start developing a curiosity and interest in issues that are pertinent to them. This could have the potential of exposing students at a very early stage to understand and be proud of their uniqueness of being African children and to see African problems from their local perspectives.

African perspectives, as reported by many participants, are what it would take for UKZN to have its mandate of African-led globalisation fulfilled. Viewing UKZN as an African university, some academics believe that the authenticity of its global inclination can only be achieved through an originary approach which is deeply rooted in African knowledge paradigms. By saying this, many foreign African scholars are claiming that it is important in the first place for African scholarship to give voice to the various knowledge systems operating within the African continent; for Africa is a heterogeneous continent with diverse socio-cultural and political experiences which in and by themselves can be studied as natural scientific knowledge sites. In this regard African scholars at UKZN are encouraging the advancement of endogenous scholarship especially in tertiary education with new orientations both in curriculum and pedagogy meant to guide and safeguard the intellectual autonomy of African universities. This however does not suggest that these structures should work in isolation from global forms of education. The need to work with other global systems is highlighted by a senior lecturer in the faculty, as she claims:

I think African scholarship does not exclude an international knowledge of issues, I think we need to recognise that Africa is itself a global context that it has become increasingly clear that we couldn't forge our way ahead without reflecting on what happens elsewhere and how this affect us. So we do need to know what is happening elsewhere, we need to know what is happening internationally because there are lessons to be learnt in terms of how to do things and even how not to do them. When we take that and we don't take it as the God-given truth, we apply to our own context, our own hybrid context then decide what kind of knowledges are coming out of that, and then we could describe those knowledges as ways of resolving our problems as a form of African scholarship.

With such an understanding, most of these scholars maintain that while it is important for African scholarship to connect with the global world knowledge systems, it should take cognisance of the relevance of such forms of knowledge (not to be taken as God-given truth) in the African context. When scholarly models borrowed from elsewhere have significantly been appropriated and localised to address the social and intellectual needs of the continent, one would have the reason to then boast of the legitimacy of African scholarship being part of the broader knowledge economy. We live in a world of proliferated and unprecedented interconnections. Kraak (2000:6) observes that "the capacity for intellectual creativity and scientific innovation has been more widely distributed than ever before across different social institutions". This is so true of the knowledge economy in the world and Africa in particular where many institutions of higher learning are increasingly becoming more responsive to new developmental problems by offering relevant courses that directly address the needs of their societies.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has been able to problematise the state of African scholarship at the interface of globalisation. African-led globalisation is one of the key goals set out by the College of Humanities as a guiding objective for the production and dissemination of knowledge at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. By African-led globalisation the university is challenged to position African scholarship at the centre of knowledge production while at

the same time does not attempt to work in isolation with other global knowledge systems. Through the lenses of those considered as idealists, moderates and extremists, the chapter has shown a tri-divergent positionality of African scholars' interpretations of African scholarship at the interface of globalisation. Regardless of their different positions, these scholars are more interested in seeing how best UKZN could be celebrated as a centre of excellence without compromising its vision of African scholarship. In other words its vision of African-led globalisation is what should actually earn her the mandate of excellence within the global knowledge economy. The chapter has shown that amidst its ongoing efforts a lot still needs to be done to have the institution's vision take root in the globe.

# **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## **NETWORKING AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Educational institutions in general have always played a key role in the development of nation-state in the world. In Africa the university has for a long time continued to be regarded as a key player in the development process of the continent (Johnson 1985, Adekanye 1998, Crossman 2004, Gravenir 2004). As agents of development, the African university from its inception has been defined along certain parameters within which it should function. The issue of development has always been a strong motivation guiding the operations of an African university. Robert Johnson (1985: 129-130) for example has outlined the functions of African universities following the African Universities' workshop that was held in Ghana in 1972. During this workshop the functions of the university in Africa were highlighted as follows:

- Pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge
- Research
- Provision of intellectual leadership
- Manpower development
- Promotion of social and economic modernization
- Promotion of intercontinental unity and international understanding.

In fact the provisions of the Accra workshop have ever since remained significant as general principles guiding the running of the twenty-first century universities in Africa.

Subotzky and Cele (2004:343) have noted that the knowledge economy has increasingly become salient as "the central form of productive capital" within all spheres of life – including the economy, the polity and culture. In playing the critical role of fostering

innovation and economic development, and driven by the rise of accelerated information technologies, higher educational institutions are shifting towards a “networked knowledge-driven society”; (Subotzky and Cele 2004:341) with a proliferation of partnerships between academic institutions. These networked partnerships form an integral part of the marketisation process of higher education. Through these networks members of a university are in their individual and collective capacities forever forging relationships of interconnectedness as ways of accessing and being accessed of the market opportunities, information, technology which are usually viewed as a form of social capital (Castells 1999).

The concept of transnationalism has become a significant area for establishing networks of different types; for example business networks, individual social networks, professional networks and academic networks involving students and institutional networks. From the time when the concept of transnationalism originated, networking has become a common denominator of transnational activities. The originators of, this concept – Basch Schiller and Blanc 1994 (1994), among others, define transnationalism as a “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, et al 1994:6). Portes argues that, transnationalism allows people to pursue political, economic and social “dual lives” through the creation of “dense” cross-border networks” (Portes 1997:812). Transnationalism is a dynamic concept with multiple interpretations, and new analytical paradigms have developed to study different migrant categories and different kinds of transnational activities. Although this concept has multi-layered definitions, generally speaking, transnationalism is articulated within the parameters of exchanges, connections and practices across borders, “thus transcending the national space as the primary reference point for activities and identities (International Dialogue on Migration 2010: 1).

For an international institution such as UKZN, networking has become one of the crucial ways through which policies are advanced and standards of scholarship sustained. The University of KwaZulu-Natal is anchored on a knowledge-driven culture that attempts to position the institution at competitive levels of research and innovations with other higher

education institutions in South Africa, Africa and the world at large. Over and above this, UKZN seeks to prioritise and reposition the African experience at the centre of global scholarship. The slogan “premier university of African scholarship” puts UKZN on spotlight as a referral space where the advancement of an African course in terms of scholarship and development could be addressed. For UKZN to forge her way ahead as a premier university of African scholarship there is a need for the university to create collaborative links with other universities and agencies on the African continent in line with its vision. As earlier mentioned UKZN attracts African academics from different regions of Africa with diverse social, professional and cultural experiences. These diversities provide a stage upon which the various African experiences could be articulated to encapsulate an all encompassing sense of dissecting African identities in knowledge seeking approaches.

In this period of heightened global activities, networking has become an important promotional tool for the growth of various social institutions. In the world of academia, most universities are international in status. Due to their international stature such universities are encumbered with the need to generate rich scholarship that would put them at meaningful competitive levels with other universities within the globe. Networking is considered as an important component for UKZN’s drive towards establishing itself and maintaining its status quo as the premier university of African scholarship. This chapter attempts to delve into an elaborate discussion on the various networks that UKZN has established or is seeking to establish, with other universities on the African continent. It also sets out to critically examine the views expressed by established foreign academics and students of African origin who participated in this research about the role that „networking“ could play in the expansion of the vision of African scholarship across higher institutions in Africa. These views are articulated within a discourse of transnationalism.



## **7.2 The role of transnational networks**

We are living in a world of skyrocketed transnational activities and the concept of transnationalism has become a defining trope and one of the major determinants of social and institutional transformation in the different geopolitical spaces of the world. Transnational communities are on the rise everywhere in the world. These communities are involved in various forms of activities which basically create “multi-stranded social relations” between migrants and others across transnational borders (Basch et al 1994:6). UKZN as an international institution is enmeshed in a web of multicultural politics which is accentuated by the presence of international scholars mostly from the rest of Africa. Positioning UKZN within the contexts of internationalism and multiculturalism, the concept of transnationalism attempts to highlight how foreign African scholars in the institution are (re)negotiating the vision of African scholarship at UKZN with the need to expand the vision throughout Africa. Although coming from heterogeneous backgrounds, for technical and methodological convenience, and especially for the sake of this study I would like to consider all foreign African scholars at UKZN as constituent of a migrant community.

Michael Kearney’s articulatory migrant network (AMN) positions migrants into different migrant categories (Kearney 1986), with the idea of immersing migrants within a culture of network creation and sustenance in their new migrant spaces, with the aim of promoting such networks across transnational borders. Kearney’s AMN attempts to plot migrant into various kinds of spaces which are not only limited to geographical spaces, but also to “labour markets and other economic and social niches and corresponding social change.” My presentation of foreign African academics at UKZN as representative of a migrant community is justified on the basis of Kearney’s approach which also sees migrant communities emerging out of socially unrelated geographical spaces.

As a migrant community, various foreign African scholars who speak along the lines of africanising scholarship have come to the conclusion that networks of mutual benefits are a potential way forward if UKZN wants to thrive in its mission as a leading university of African scholarship. Engaging with the vision of UKZN is becoming a mechanism

through which some foreign Africans are attempting to create research agendas with colleagues within and outside the institution. Think tank communities of afrocentric research based initiatives are being imagined and formulated here and there across the faculty as one of the ways forward in valorising this concept of African scholarship. Some of these scholars are also affiliated to broader intellectual and ideological bodies that are focused on problematising African identity using their different disciplinary expertise.

Considering the instrumentality of the university as a key player in the nation-building process, the university in Africa has become a pivotal area of response to the external forces, such as globalisation and transnationalism, whose agendas continue to be part of the discourses that inform the developmental concerns of national institutions. The University of KwaZulu-Natal, being an international institution and coupled with the fact that it functions within certain parameters predicated on the designs of the South African state is also affected by these global forces. This section however is not out to delve into the „blame game“ politics of globalisation, but it rather seeks to provide a sense of proactive understanding on how the concept of transnationalism could be meaningfully utilised in producing networks of mutual benefit between UKZN and other universities in Africa.

Transnational movements provide an enabling environment for emerging diasporas whose members are ever trying to create links with people back in their home countries (Kearney, 1995). Foreign African academics in the faculty of humanities and social sciences at UKZN are agents of transnationalism who are forever processing their thoughts and forging links of collaborative scholarship with colleagues in what they consider as their homelands. As transnational academics, the idea of advancing collaborative links with colleagues does not necessarily limit these scholars to home as a place of origin, but such collaboration is also extended to other universities in the world that they have previously worked in or otherwise have existing connections with friends and colleagues from elsewhere. With respect to promoting the vision of African scholarship, foreign African migrants believe that their transnational experiences expose

them to a position where they believe they are better placed to assist UKZN in embarking on a crusade of spreading the gospel of African scholarship to the different parts of the continent. The following commentary by a senior academic in the faculty illustrates how the transnational experiences of African academics at UKZN could contribute to the expansion of African scholarship to other African universities:

I believe that as Africans from other countries, our presence here is significant. I think we've got a contribution to make... and indeed if one has to look at the overarching agenda of the institution – the premier university of African scholarship, I think our role as brothers from other parts cannot be ignored. I say this because coming from different backgrounds, there is something that we have to learn from one another. UKZN is representative of what I should call a pan-African institution. So if we claim to be the premier university of African scholarship, it is important to give voice to the experiences of people from other African countries. I believe it is a blessing that we are here, so we can be used as crusaders to carry this vision to our respective home universities. Wherever in Africa that UKZN has established memoranda of understanding, academics from those countries and others should be used. For the purpose of agency, I strongly support this vision and I would recommend that it doesn't just stay here at UKZN, but be taken to other African universities – after all it is the premier university of African scholarship.

Due to the heterogeneous backgrounds (in terms of nationalities) of African academics, UKZN can be seen as a pan-African institution as highlighted in the above excerpt. As a pan-African institution it is imperative that the experiences of other African countries should be highlighted in the transformations that are taking place in the institution. The curricular and pedagogic activities should not only focus on the South African experience but as some foreigners say should be able to incorporate a global African experience with multiple voices contributing to it. Coming from other parts of Africa, these scholars believe that they are an added advantage to the institution as their presence could readily be utilised in pursuance of the vision across the continent. Knowledge of what is happening in other African universities is a necessary engagement that UKZN has to be concerned about. As one of the interviewees claims, *“until UKZN exposes itself to what*

*is happening in other African universities, and learns to engage with their models or knowledge systems, it cannot really claim to be what it is supposed to be.”* What is insinuated here is that knowledge of what is happening in other African universities is a prerequisite to understanding broader issues concerning knowledge generation in Africa. Having this knowledge would better place UKZN in deciding what kind of collaborative links it should form with a particular university.

This however does not mean that scholars do not make use of other African identities in problematising social issues. The problem is that even though African issues are evoked in what these scholars teach, it is almost left at their discretion to decide what they teach. If UKZN has to live up its dream of becoming the premier university of African scholarship, it has to up its game by creating compelling schemes that would allow lecturers to develop curriculum and research projects that would give room for Africa centeredness. The vision of African scholarship is a lofty and laudable venture which should be taken seriously. While UKZN has a multiplicity of partnership with different African universities in the areas of research and student exchange programmes, the various people who participated in this study doubted if the vision is emphasised in these programmes. Foreign African scholars believe that their presence in this institution should facilitate the forging of collaborative links with various African universities illuminated by the burning mantle of African scholarship.

The preceding statement however does not attempt to dismiss the fact that those whose research outputs are remarkable are rewarded. Those whose research articles are published in the reputable SAPSE accredited journals are given substantial incentives that enable them to carry on with further research. One of the major challenges that African scholars face in the knowledge economy lies with the publication enterprise. Most people who have succeeded in establishing themselves as scholars from Africa are those who have been able to find spaces in the already orthodox spaces which are indeed western dominated. The idea of African relevance which some may attempt to highlight in such spaces is often suffocated by broader circumstances. For African scholars to avoid this tragedy of suffocation, it is important that African institutions and governments should

embark on the creation and standardisation of publishing houses on the continent. The academic space at UKZN is one which is spurring anticipated growth in afrocentric scholarship. Some of the participants did acknowledge that their taking up employment at UKZN has tremendously shifted their perspectives as they go about generating knowledge to the point that they are now able to form scholarly docketts that are meant to streamline the African experience and knowledge paradigms in their research and what they ought to teach. Many of these endeavours are however at a perennial stage, hoping to take off as soon as the university makes provision for that. Some have already started to act, for example, the introduction of a journal named *Afrika – Journal of Politics, Economics and Society* – which has a special focus on African issues and African knowledge paradigms in articulating those issues. One of the chief editors, a member of the faculty and a foreign African national, talking about the journal, commented:

We do not have enough outlets for the African agenda. Most journals are not run by Africans. The journal Afrika is supposed to be the mouthpiece of a group of scholars who see themselves as African scholars. The journal hasn't yet established itself well to get a broader base. We have a mélange of African scholars being members of the editorial board with two of our members living abroad. The journal focuses on anything that has to do with the form of African descent. We are struggling to get contributions from all over Africa to give the journal a broader African base; hoping to succeed in the long run.

This journal, *Afrika* which has been formed out of the initiative of the chief editor is an illustrative channel contributing to the growth of scholarship in and about Africa. As evident in the excerpt, it is a journal that attempts to bring in scholars from various African geopolitical spaces to partake in the production of knowledge that highlights the different African experiences. Through the initiative of this senior academic, a journal has been formed at UKZN with the window flung wide open to scholarly publications from all over Africa which detail in African experiences and knowledge(s).

### **7.3 Individual networks and broader affiliations**

As scholars in a transnational context, some foreign African migrants are involved or are becoming involved in scholarly projects that attempt to connect them to other places in Africa, for developmental and intellectual purposes. Some of them are members of broader knowledge centres which attempt to advance the development of Africa through scholarship. In an interview with a senior foreign African scholar from the School of Language, Literature and Linguistics, it was noticed that the participation of scholars in community outreach programmes is crucial to a university such as UKZN which is mandated to advance an African course in the area of knowledge production. Being a member of AFRILEX (Association for Lexicography), ALASA (African Language Association of Southern African and CASAS (Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society), this participant highlighted, in the following comment the significance of networking in a broader context:

Whatever we teach at the department is academic oriented. We are trying to sow a seed that would develop into a tree branching off to other areas of developmental discourses. Our hands are on the deck working with centres out of the university, advancing research in Africa's development using African languages. African scholarship is a good initiative a lot has been done and a lot is planned to be done in advancing the status of African languages. The expertise of linguists and language practitioners is needed to break through hegemonic barriers placed on us by our colonial masters. This can mostly be achieved if we promote our own languages to articulate our own socio-economic and cultural issues. Language is a powerful developmental tool. We have been in Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Uganda to advance this course using the expertise of UKZN.

This excerpt presents the role of individual network through broader affiliation. The role here is to seek talent and harness ideas to advance African scholarship in the area of language. The issues highlighted in the excerpt are in corroboration with the community outreach pedagogic agenda of the school. Drawing inspiration from an African identity,

this agenda is meant to contribute meaningfully to Africa's development by critically engaging "with society through research advance social development in ways that foster a communicatively competent, multi-lingual, economically secure, well-informed and tolerant citizenry"<sup>12</sup>. Commenting further this participant claimed language and linguistic issues would play a critical role in the advancement of African scholarship. He further said for Africa to achieve this, the African intelligentsia together with the state has to start looking for ways of indigenising knowledge by using an African language (Chumbow 2005, Ngugi wa Thiongo'o 1986). As it can be noticed from the excerpt, there have been ongoing attempts to advance the course of indigenous African languages in different countries such as Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Uganda mentioned in the excerpt.

The promotion of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) is part and parcel of the ongoing transformations that are taking place; and the use of African language(s) remains crucial in the ongoing debates about African scholarship at UKZN. As has been mentioned in the earlier chapter, besides IsiZulu, Kiswahili has been introduced as another African language programme in the faculty of humanities and social sciences. Kiswahili, as for now, is the only codified indigenous African language spoken in more than one African country. This language is mainly spoken in the Eastern and part of the central regions of Africa. The introduction of Kiswahili at UKZN could be viewed as a giant step towards strengthening the vision of African scholarship. Especially at this time when the minister of higher education Dr Blade Nzimande is calling for the introduction of African languages as part of higher education curriculum, the introduction of another African language entirely out of South Africa could be hailed as a major trend towards bridging gaps, in terms of identity and collaboration, between African universities as the case may be. For Africa to be a major power in the world, UKZN is seeing the need for Africa-to-Africa exchanges and is making every effort to have such exchanges strengthened.

Research and publishing are common areas in which networks of collaborative scholarship are fostered in a university environment. Research and publishing have

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<sup>12</sup> See the document on College of Humanities under the patronage of the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Head of College Professor Fikile NM Mazibuko, produced by Corporate Relations in 2006. Document can be viewed on [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

remained critical as key drivers in advancing individual and institutional visions. With reference to various scholars, Alois Mlambo in his work “The Case for Publishing African Scholarship in Africa” has highlighted the important role that research and publishing continues to play in the nation-building rhetoric. Historically speaking, Mlambo presents the dearth of publishing in African universities that took its toll just a decade after independence and has continued to experience a downward trend up until now. In his narrative Mlambo makes a retrospection of the buoyancy that African scholarship enjoyed at the dawn of independence as many African governments invested heavily in education and respected the university as an important vehicle for promoting national development. This downward trend, as he notes alongside many other scholars, was blamed on the economic problems that African states started experiencing at that time coupled with the effects of the austere Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Mlambo 2007).

However the situation is no longer the same. Increasingly African scholars of today are striving against all odds to resuscitate the situation by producing high quality research. Interviews with some key scholars in this study revealed that despite the economic and political hiccups that they might be experiencing, they have cultivated a tenacious character of increased productivity in knowledge production in the area of research and publishing. Some of these individuals are long established scholars who are claiming that before they got to the level where they are (as associate professors and professors) the area of publishing had played an instrumental role in earning them those qualifications. Some of these well established scholars intimated that their continuous efforts to remain in the publishing enterprise are factored primarily in their commitment to continue to make a contribution to the progress of scholarship in Africa and secondly to assist younger academics in the process of them becoming established scholars. Some of the ways through which the latter is exercised is done through research collaboration, publishing in journals where the veteran scholars are gatekeepers, and also motivating these young scholars (especially those with doctoral qualifications) to become members of editorial boards. These factors are buttressed in an interview with a longtime established scholar in the faculty of humanities from Zimbabwe as he says the following:



As an old man, what else do I desire? I have been a professor for over ten years. I have been to every part of the world, studying, lecturing, researching and publishing. My publications are innumerable. I think the good thing with academia is that it keeps your thoughts, philosophies and ideologies alive. As long as I am not tired I would continue to publish to advance my thought process. My desire is to continue to make an impact in development, policy advocacy... to contribute to the development of social science in Africa. I am a member of CODESRIA and OSSREA<sup>13</sup>. I have run methodological courses for both organisations. My other concern is to mentor and encourage younger colleagues and students to publish. Networks are an important tool to put you on the map of publishing. I think collaboration with younger scholars is important for maintaining these ideological spaces.

This example here shows us the crucial role that an already established African scholar could play as a key player in development. Drawing from this excerpt, there are three important levels that the services of an established scholar could be utilised to bring about development. These three are at the level of the state/continent, at the level of the institution and at the level of the individual. Commenting further on their utility value at UKZN another professor from Nigeria claimed their presence in the institution should be able to assist in amplifying the vision of African scholarship beyond the frontiers of UKZN and South Africa. In a separate interview with this professor he said:

The way forward to position Africa on the map of knowledge production is to make sure that as already established scholars our mandate should be to encourage upcoming scholars to start publishing. We need to nurture students and encourage them towards home-groomed research. That for example is one of the ways that UKZN can achieve its goal of African sensitive scholarship – which I suppose it should be pursuing.

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<sup>13</sup> CODESRIA - The Council for the Development of Social Science Research is continental and among other objectives CODESRIA seeks to “encourage and support the development of African comparative research with a continental perspective and a sensitivity to the specificity of the development process in Africa” (see [www.codesria.org](http://www.codesria.org)).

OSSREA – Organisation of Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa is not continental but has a continental outreach approach in development and policy related research in Africa.

The major highlights contained in these two excerpts evoke the centrality of scholarship and development; as established scholars they are charged with the responsibilities of developing the individual, so that an institution could be able to establish its niche and also contribute to the development process of the continent. Many of the participants confirmed that they are establishing links with their younger colleagues and postgraduate students (especially the ones they supervise) and the end product of these links has been research and publishing. Some of the participants acknowledged having played a role in influencing their students, particularly those doing post-doctoral programmes, to become editorial board members of a journal.

The affiliation of some academics to various knowledge-driven organisations outside the university could be seen as a blessing to staff and students of UKZN. Some foreign African members of staff are affiliates of renowned research organisations in Africa such as CODESRIA and OSSREA, as mentioned before. These centres have been instrumental in providing postgraduate-level training, in running research competitions for young scholars, in offering research grants for senior scholars and in networking and participation in a number of collaborative research (Mlambo 2007). Membership to these organisations by some staff of UKZN interviewed for this study is playing a critical role of sensitisation and providing current information on what is happening in those organisations. For example, in the course of collecting data for this study I was told by one of my participants that there is a call for application from Master's and PhD students to apply for small grant scholarship advertised by CODESRIA. As soon as I left his office, I went to the CODESRIA website to confirm the information. Upon confirming this information, I told my colleagues and a few friends about it, and we all applied for the grant. The significance of this is that these academics are acting as conveyers of information from the organisations to staff and students in the institutions that they are working. Even though this information is made available online, not many students would take the time to go onto the internet in order to be abreast of what new things are happening in these organisations. As members, they are more privileged than non members to have updated information about their organisations.

Besides networks of research collaboration and individual affiliation to various academic organisations, networking is also perpetuated by individual social ties such as friendship and colleagues based networks. In the world of academia, networking is an effective referral method connecting colleagues and friends to vital spaces of intellectual engagements. Most skilled migrants have always relied on networks of colleagues (Shah and Menon 1999) and friends to have their different agendas driven through. Through personal networks some foreign African individuals at UKZN have been able to contribute to advancing certain agendas that are pertinent to the life of the university. In an interview with the DVC of the College of Humanities, he said:

My extensive networks with colleagues and friends both within and outside the academia, is a very useful tool. Whatever place I have been to, I have used my personal contacts to run agendas that are critical to the development of that institution. For example of recent I extended an invitation to a colleague of mine – an editorial board member for the journal of Modern African Studies which I am also part of, to come and give a public lecture to us. This was orchestrated by a thought provoking article that he wrote around African education and scholarship. I found the paper critically relevant, in fact it came at a very opportune moment when the university is currently going through a transition of reconfiguration. I am sure those who would attend the lecture will have very interesting engagements with the speaker. I would advise you to attend especially as you are trying to work around this issue of African scholarship. The paper has been circulated on the university website so that both students and staff can read and understand the issues at stake with regard to knowledge generation in Africa. What is happening and what is not happening? I think the paper would help us reconsider what we are doing as the premier university of African scholarship.

The organisation of public lectures plays a significant role with regard to academic engagement of a university community. Public lectures are usually organised on subjects of special interest and they are used to convey critical information that engages with pragmatic or visionary issues in the world of academia. These lectures are delivered by members as well as non members of a particular university community. A public lecture

is an oral discourse on a special topic presented before an audience for the purposes of bringing intellectual enlightenment and guidance towards the understanding of a particular issue at stake. As exemplified by the above excerpt, a public lecture plays the critical role of igniting an intellectual discourse that could assist a university in addressing key issues that it faces at a given time. The networked invitation extended to the DVC's colleague in the above excerpt was a timely intervention in which the DVC further acknowledged that his colleague's paper actually gave him new insights and presented him with an opportunity to rethink the process of the college's reorganisation. These insights he said propelled his desires to have the concept of African scholarship meaningfully engaged within the college and its relationship with other universities in Africa.

#### **7.4 Student Networking**

Networks of student migrants are increasingly becoming a crucial area of transnational migration (Li, Jowett and Skeldon 1996, Hugo 2002). The networks that are developed by foreign students often result in providing opportunities for their fellow colleagues and friends from their home countries (Vertovec 2002). Networking is part of the activities that define the academic life of international students of African origin at UKZN. Coincidentally, interviews with all eight students who participated in this study mentioned networks as a contributory channel to their presence at UKZN. Familial and friendship networks, the students acknowledged, facilitated their application, admission and their eventual migration to South Africa. While studying in this institution many of them said they have been playing the role of encouraging their relatives, friends, colleagues and even the children of their neighbours back home to apply for different degree programmes, both at the undergraduate and the postgraduate levels. The incentives for postgraduate studies (especially at the doctoral level) at UKZN is an inducing factor propelling international students of African origin to encourage their friends and relatives to come and study in the institution. Most often the prospective newcomers are encouraged to apply for programmes that are taken by their fellow migrants who preceded them. This tendency has created student migrant niches as you

find a good number of students from the same country or community studying in the same programmes. These student networks play an important role in increasing the enrollment of international students in the institution. This is much more eloquent at postgraduate level where one notices that a lot of students who graduate especially with doctoral degrees, are foreign students from the rest of Africa.

Networking is a survival strategy and foreign African students are generally entering into ad hoc networks with their local colleagues and established scholars in the university and beyond to assist them to better manage their academic and social lives. As postgraduate students, there are some meritorious privileges that are accorded to them by virtue of their status as full time students of the university. These privileges include appointment into positions such as tutorship, graduate assistanceship, lectureship and research assistanceship. It is part of the agenda of the university to provide such support services to postgraduate scholarship in the institution. Notwithstanding the much appreciated support that the university provides to assist postgraduate scholarship, this support for many international students is not enough to sustain them meaningfully in their academic and social lives. Interviews with the student sample revealed that many postgraduate students from Africa do not only rely on the provisions disbursed to postgraduate scholars by the university, but have to go the extra mile making connections with their lecturers and supervisors to supplement their earnings for a more fulfilling life.

Studying out of home countries, could be very challenging in terms of making a life and pursuing a career as a student. One of the critical challenges that foreign students may face is the lack of adequate financial assistance. Eighty percent of the foreign African students interviewed for this study cited that one of the major factors that push students to negotiate personal networks with their supervisors, lecturers and others is orchestrated by the will to earn a supplementary income for a better life. Partnership of research collaboration, where the students serve as research assistants, is a common practice that is going on at UKZN between students and their supervisors or lecturers in their departments.

Although initially foreign students are more concerned about making some extra income, it turns out that these networks are much more than just providing financial assistance to foreign students. One of the long term benefits is in the area of publication. Peer publishing has become the order of the day at UKZN. As a means of increasing research output and maintaining standards of excellence in the institution, the university at the moment is encouraging a culture of peer publishing between postgraduate students and their supervisors. The stringency towards publications has laid a burden to doctoral scholarship as PhD students are required to have at least one publication with a SAPSE accredited journal as a partial requirement towards their doctorate qualifications.

The ad hoc networks that some of the foreign African students create for themselves is also earned through their participation in conferences. Local and international conferences, some of the participants confirmed give students the opportunity to interact with people from other parts of the world. One of the participants from the Democratic Republic of Congo confirmed, that part of his study is funded by one lecturer from the United States whom he happened to meet at an international conference he attended in the United States. In my interview with him, he mentioned that the money he gets from his external funder does not necessarily count towards his study, but helps him to achieve other things that are crucial in his life, such as providing for his family and his children's education. At the time of this interview, this student had not found any meaningful employment and according to him such a network is fundamental in assisting one with attending to other social demands while at the same time enjoying the financial privileges that are accorded to doctoral scholarship at the university. Being a PhD full time student in the institution, qualifies him to study for free. In addition to studying for free, this student, just as many other PhD students across the faculty, is also involved in tutorials and some research work (besides his PhD projects) with his supervisor. These various forms of assistance help to facilitate his academic and social life in South Africa.

Drawing from this example, and in resonance with what many other participants within this category said, ad hoc networks play a fundamental role of negotiating a better life for foreign students in a transnational context. Through ad hoc networks, foreign students are

able to balance out their social lives while at the same time pursuing their dreams as scholars. Comfort could be seen as an enhancement to performance – for academic productivity is better optimised in a situation where an individual's vision is not suffocated by the struggle for socio-economic needs.

## **7.5 Inter- institutional networks**

The internationalisation of higher education institutions is part of the mission and strategy embraced by African universities in the latter decades of the twentieth and the dawn of the twenty-first centuries as a way of becoming major players in international education worldwide (Cross and Rouhani 2004). Despite the fact that the internationalisation phenomenon is on an increase in many universities of the various African nation-states, Cross and Rouhani (2004:235) argue “the present reality is that generally internationalisation is not yet perceived as a strategic issue in higher education” and with the exceptions of a few cases, has been “dealt with through ad hoc measures”. The overall motive for the process of internationalisation is to forge and promote cooperative ties between universities in every area of knowledge production and dissemination. This section attempts to examine some of the networks through which the University of KwaZulu-Natal is utilizing in its international capacity in the advancement of its vision and policies in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (FHDSS). These networks will be examined within the three exchange collaborative endeavours of:

- Staff and students across geographical borders
- The exchange of pedagogic/curricular transformations
- The forging of co-operative agreements in respect to academic and cultural factors.

International exchange programmes between UKZN and other universities in the world is an ongoing phenomenon. Exchange programmes involving the mobility of both staff and students connect UKZN with universities from both the South and the North. Partnership building between UKZN with universities worldwide is a response to the global character

that the university has adopted in its role as a global actor in the knowledge economy. With African-led globalisation being one of the major goals, the university attempts to enter the global knowledge production system in its own right by bringing other knowledge production systems relating to its local context into the global arena. To achieve this goal UKZN has adopted a character of internationalisation and the forging of strategic partnerships with other universities in the world with the view of optimising excellence in a broader knowledge spectrum. In its attempt to compete globally, UKZN is striving to advance the concept of “internationalisation at home” (see [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za) – under the International Relations rubric). By internationalisation at home, the university is striving to establish ongoing connections between local experiences and global debates, fostering an intellectual ethos that values and respects a range of cultural experiences and perspectives. Such a strategy is meant to equip students with knowledge, expertise and confidence to participate in international contexts.

Exchange programmes of students and staff is one of the avenues through which UKZN strives to insert itself competitively among the different knowledge production systems in the global knowledge economy. In order for UKZN to be meaningfully integrated into the global knowledge economy, the institution is forging ongoing links with potential universities worldwide for exchange programmes of mutual scholarly benefits. Student exchange programmes are considered to be an important capacity-building tool in which selected students at UKZN are given opportunities to study for a semester (or whatever time a programme may take) in other universities, exposing them to global development and trends. Interviews with the management of the university – from the deanery and chancellery revealed that exchange programmes of both students and staff are one of the key scholarly traditions that UKZN is keen on forging so as to maintain networks of collaboration in teaching and research with other universities in the world. An exchange programme involves a memorandum of agreement between two universities. While some students at UKZN are selected to study outside UKZN on the one hand, on the other hand the university supports selected exchange programmes that bring students from other countries, thereby providing them with international opportunities that are meant to



expose these students to Africa and to enrich their learning experience about the continent.

Besides the student exchange programmes, there is also the provision for staff members to benefit from the culture of exchange programmes. Though not as crucial as those for students, exchange programmes for staff are meant to encourage, especially young academic staff with clearly defined study or research projects, to access novel opportunities from other universities that UKZN is partnering with, with respect to staff exchanges. UKZN has about 66 exchange agreements (among which we have staff exchanges) with other institutions in about 26 different countries in the world. Commenting on the international stature of the university one of the participants from the chancellery said:

I think UKZN has what it takes to be a university of the twenty-first century. We have exchange programmes of projects, we have exchange programmes of students, I think we have the usual sort of things that a university does. We have developed and are developing links with universities in Africa, Europe, the United States and the United Kingdom, we have memoranda of agreement, some are active, and others are being developed. So these agreements are almost used for exchange programmes for staff and students around teaching and research projects that are adding value to, and are advancing the vision of, the institution.

In line with the vision of being the premier university of African scholarship, UKZN is establishing links with several universities across the African continent. These links are built against the backdrop of promoting collaborative ties in research, exchange programmes for postgraduate scholarship, and pedagogic and curricular transformations. Although a multiplicity of partnerships is made evidence by a higher inclination towards N-S cooperation at UKZN, there are ongoing attempts in the institution to tilt the axis towards the South, specifically within the African continent. Out of the established partnerships that UKZN had finalised (with a number of universities in the world) by 2009 only two African countries, namely Tanzania and Ghana, are cited among these

partnerships (see [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za) – the International Relations column). Commenting on the question for the need for African cooperation in scholarship and knowledge production the Vice Chancellor, asserted:

Well there is a very strong relationship with many parts of the world. We've got relationship with DRC, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and we can go on. Remember the predecessor of this university did not have that kind of relationships. Their most important relationships were in Cambridge, London and they didn't care whether there was Beijing or not. Before the merger we didn't have such things as Africa to Africa collaboration. No one cared about what was happening elsewhere in Africa. They cared about Europe there was this linear relationship, North-South that was very Eurocentric in fact it was Anglo-Saxon to put it in that light. So the difference between UKZN and its predecessors is that we have now prioritised Africa and the African university, and scholars as the areas that shape and improve these identities.

This information corroborates the ongoing efforts made by the DVC of humanities to establish collaborative links with different universities on the African continent. He mentioned that especially with this reconfiguration the university is going through a transition that is willing to embark on a revolutionary approach to indeed position UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship. This to him entails establishing links of research collaborations, curricula transformation and postgraduate exchange programmes with various universities in Africa. The crusade which supposedly started in September 2011, began with the visit of deans to some universities in the southern and eastern regions of Africa. These links are significantly important to the vision and goals of the university. Aiming to become the champion of African scholarship, coupled with its mandate of being a research-led institution, the DVC stressed the importance of intra-Africa cooperation in the academic life of UKZN as an African institution. He mentioned that as long as he remains part of this institution, he would see to it that the vision of African scholarship is "*made alive across Africa*", as he put it.

While the legacy of colonialism in terms of South-North (S-N) exchanges still lives on at UKZN, there are ongoing efforts to promote south-bound; specifically Africa to Africa exchanges. Interviews with various participants especially with those in charge of management (the chancellery and the deanery), reveal that it is almost becoming an urgent need with regard to the imperativeness for UKZN to forge sustained links of knowledge collaboration with universities in all the nooks and crannies of the African continent. While it was generally acknowledged by various research participants that UKZN still has a long way to go in achieving its legitimacy as the premier university of African scholarship, the university is however making uncompromised efforts to have the gospel of its vision extended to other universities in Africa. Commenting on the predicament of surmounting the colonial legacy the Dean of FHDSS commented:

From a historical perspective sometimes we forget South Africa is a very young country, democracy. For many it was shut off from the rest of the continent, that was during the days of apartheid, even prior to that, when the English were pretty much running the country. South Africa was modeled after Europe for many, many years. That was deliberately so. Now 17 years after democracy we still have to battle with that. How do we integrate the South African experience into the rest of the continent? That is why it is important to be sending our students even for a semester to the University of Dar Es Salaam, The University of Ghana, and Ibadan in Nigeria etc. so that they get the African experience. The exchanges that we were getting in the past were from South Africa to United States, South Africa to Europe, there were no South Africa to the rest of Africa exchanges. We need really to do more of that.

In comparison to northern cooperation, even though UKZN has not yet established such extensive collaborative links with universities on the continent, the importance of its branding is a worthwhile effort to be appreciated. The university at the moment is striving to create academic and cultural ties with many universities in Africa. While some have already gone operational, some are yet to start. Interviews with the management and the administrative staff of the institution revealed that UKZN has concluded memoranda of agreement with universities in Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of

Congo and Nigeria for research and exchange programmes. There is for example a memorandum of agreement signed between UKZN and the University of Ibadan for the exchange of postgraduate scholarship specifically at the doctoral level. As the DVC for the College of Humanities intimated, this partnership was mainly motivated by the fact that the University of Ibadan has a track record of graduating about 200 PhD students every year. Such a partnership is important as it is envisaged that students at UKZN would be encouraged by the fact that a fellow African university has the potential of producing such a number of students qualifying with a doctorate degree.

Participation in international conferences, symposia, workshops and seminars that are taking place in universities within Africa is part of the efforts that UKZN is making to forge cooperative ties with these universities. In my interview with the DVC, he also pointed out that the forums enlisted in the preceding sentence have the potential of producing meaningful and workable networks. To this effect, he mentioned the significant role that the Makerere workshop on “Contemporary Debates in Social Sciences and Humanities” could play in the expansion of the vision of UKZN. In fact, this workshop which grouped African scholars from Europe, the United States and Africa was significant to the institution. This workshop which was jointly organised by the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) in Kampala Uganda and the Centre for Humanities Research, at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in South Africa, was a multi-disciplinary workshop about advancing intellectual vibrancy by bringing in new methods of formulating research problems which would take cognisance of the context in which one lives.

The UKZN delegation that attended was composed of people from the department of gender and the school of politics. Some of the feedback from the workshop he said revealed a desire to create collaborative links between certain departments of the University of Makerere and UKZN. For example, one of the participants at the workshop, I was told by the DVC, mentioned in her report that Professor Mahmood Mamdani expressed a desire to build a relationship with key scholars at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the collaborative initiative of an interdisciplinary doctoral programme. And the

dean of women and gender studies also expressed an interest in having exchanges between the Makerere Women and Gender Studies department and the UKZN Gender Studies department. This, and many more links that the DVC intends to create, would indeed go a long way to put UKZN on map as a place where Afrocentric approaches to knowledge generation are given relevance and prominence. Especially now that the College of Humanities has adopted interdisciplinary and trans-discipline approaches to unpacking and repackaging knowledge in Africa, it has become an urgent matter of forging collaborative links between UKZN and the rest of Africa.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Networks are one of the major areas through which universities advance their visions and have their innovations driven. UKZN as an international university is forging networks of research collaboration and student and staff exchange programmes with universities worldwide as part of her efforts of becoming an actor among the global knowledge systems. However a lot still has to be done with regard to forging intra-African collaboration in curriculum development and research. While the chapter has shown strength of collaboration between UKZN and other universities worldwide, Africa on Africa collaboration still needs to be strengthened; especially if the university has to live up to the expectations of its vision.

While the concept has not yet taken significant roots in the institution, various scholars are mobilising in their individual capacities by starting to look into issues that are African-centred and by producing scholarship that is free of Eurocentric influence. While many of these initiatives have not yet left the drawing board, some have already been put into action; even though they are still in the stages of infancy. Better still, the various forms of research partnerships in the faculty have not been able to come to a position of pronouncement as afrocentric knowledge sites, because, at the moment, there exist no official structures at the university that specifically reward such knowledge orientations. Various African academics of the foreign category are increasingly forging ad hoc networks with colleagues and students of the faculty within and outside UKZN. These

networks, which in many cases, are not officially defined or backed up are formed between individual scholars collaborating especially in the area of research and publication.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# INTERROGATING AFRICANITY WITHIN THE AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP DISCOURSE: CONSENSUS AND CONTESTATIONS

### 8. 1. Introduction

As scholarly interests around the concept of African scholarship continue to grow, social identities are proving to be of crucial importance for understanding the contemporary debates that are advancing the epistemic culture of knowledge production in and about Africa. Until recently, the discourse of African scholarship has hardly taken cognisance of the various social identity markers such as gender, race, language, class, ethnicity and geography (see Mama 2005, Chumbow 2005) as important and sought after variables, dealing with the nuances that are embedded in the very definition of the concept. In attempting to (re)claim representations of Africa and its people, many African scholars (especially those of the earlier generations) have most often based their scholarly legitimacy on the idealisation of advancing oneness and unitarianism to redress the backwardness of African scholarship in the global knowledge circuit. This unitarian stance largely emerges from a history of marginalisation which the entire continent of Africa and its people have overtime been subjected to. The impact of the colonial legacy on Africa no doubt still forms the rudimentary basis upon which knowledge in and about Africa continues to be dissected, epistemised, sanitised and fought for legitimacy.

From a historical perspective, some scholars have argued that the notions of cosmopolitanism and universalism have perpetually ignored any attempt made to ground scholarship in complex and shifting identities (Mama 2005, Nyamnjoh 2007, Anyidoho 2008). In defense of Africa's inclusivity as a knowledge space in the global knowledge economy, mainstream African scholarship is yet to factor in the contradictions, contestations and possibilities with the nuanced attention that they deserve (Nyamnjoh 2007 also see Mama 2005). The historical experience, coupled with the perpetual politics

of marginality against the African continent, has continually produced unilinear approaches to African scholarship that have engendered disembedded, depoliticised and de-emphasised (Nyamnjoh 2007) tendencies leading to the disenfranchisement of gender, race, class ethnicity and language as fundamental and constituent variables which should be animating the ongoing debates around the conceptualisation and articulation of African scholarship. The „universal“ approach, upon which the concept of African scholarship has continuously been anchored, has almost exclusively been focused on the „collective“ with little or no attention to the hierarchical and dichotomous relationships of inclusion and exclusion informed by these social identities.

In trying to understand the nuances of African scholarship, this chapter presents an empirical evidence of the different levels of contestations towards African scholarship as viewed by scholars from the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science (FHDSS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). These nuances are factored in around the issues of gender, language, race and nationality. These social identities are evoked to guard against the popular, and the often misconstrued African cultural subjectivities and the homogenising discourse of African nationalism which have most often overridden or cloaked identities such as gender, class or ethnicity as core concepts in social analysis (Mkandawire 2005).

## **8.2 Gender as a contested terrain for African scholarship**

This section sets out to discuss the role that gender could play as a transformative agent in the ongoing intellectual and institutional discourse on African scholarship in the contemporary context of the African continent. It attempts to underscore the fact that gender is an instrumental social category that could make salient contributions to the advancement of African scholarship in its own right.

In many parts of the world, and some parts of Africa, gender sensitivity remains one of the key areas within which human, capital and intellectual development is driven and social equality perpetuated.



Gender activism all over the world has been involved in a liberation struggle advocating the equal participation of women in every sphere of social life. Mama (2005: 96) notes that in Africa gender activism dates as far back as the days of colonialism when African women were actively involved in the early and mid twentieth century “anti-colonial and nationalist struggles that led up to independence and the establishment of modern nation-states”. In spite of increased gender activism, social injustice and gender inequality against women is still at work in various African political, social and intellectual institutions. Gender has been a key area within which post-apartheid transformative debates of social inequities and inequalities are being redressed. The South African academe has been targeted as a critical and stimulating site with the capacity to advance neoliberal philosophies that are capable of spurring and animating counter hegemonic intellectual activities. As an institution functioning within the democratic and transformative principles of the political and social reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa, the University of KwaZulu-Natal is open to all sorts of critical intellectual activism that are geared towards social and academic recognisability. The responses elicited, from various people who participated in this research on the issue of gender-relatedness (to the discourse of African scholarship), have produced two kinds of approaches. There are, first of all, those who view gender as an insignificant instrument in the broader and grave business of legitimising African scholarship, and there are those who believe that gender should form an integral part of the efforts that seek to legitimise and advance the agenda of African scholarship at UKZN.

The disembeddedness, depoliticisation and disenfranchisement of gendered roles in the articulation of African scholarship by some scholars at UKZN is working in consonance with patriarchal theories which have often asphyxiated the sensitivity of dichotomous categorisation of social identities shared between men and women of a particular society or social community. Those who regard the role of gender in the whole discourse of African scholarship as infinitesimal are encouraged by the collective, universal and unproblematised clarion call made to the African intelligentsia to advance African philosophies and epistemologies in the global knowledge circuit. Asking participants how their genders influence their views about African scholarship, some of the common

responses I got (from those who do not see gender as a worthwhile mission for the interrogation of African scholarship) included:

- As crucial as gender issues may appear, I do not see their relevance in this context
- whether you are a female or a male scholar, I think the experiences and issues pertaining to African scholarship are the same
- there is more to African scholarship than gender issues, the colonial legacy of domination is the same for the African female academics just as their male counterparts.
- I do not think my gender has any bearing on the way African scholarship should be understood – the influences and constraints are the same for everyone, whether man or woman
- Yes I agree there are issues about gender that need to be dealt with, but I do not see how significant these issues are to your study.

These remarks came from a group of both the male and female scholars who participated in this research. Gendering the vision of African scholarship at UKZN is seen by some scholars as a non-event, because, as some of them explain, there are problems which are more crucial, and gender sensitivity is far from being a problem in the context of African scholarship. One of the major problems facing African scholarship at UKZN as elsewhere in Africa is made poignant in the following comments from a senior lecturer in the faculty:

Gender is not the basis of anything. We still have the remnants of the past which are more crucial than issues of gender. These are highly contested areas which have been challenged or resolved somehow. I don't (laughing) think there is any nation in our times which deprives women of their basic entitlements. Our cry in respect to African scholarship is not critically a gender issue – ours is the inheritance of a legacy which continues to undermine African productivity in the area of knowledge. There are more critical issues to be dealt with. I am not saying that issues of gender sensitivity are not important, but with regard to the focus of your study, it is not so much of a gender issue – it is about working towards a common goal whether you are man or woman.

Gender advocacy is increasingly becoming a topical issue for many African nation states. The gender enterprise is an avenue through which power relations between men and women are being negotiated for equitable representation and social recognition in both the public and private spaces. Despite the significant growth of gender sensitivity in many areas of life, there are times when such sensitivity is kept in abeyance so that notional or normative problems can adequately be interrogated. As evidenced in the excerpt above, gender dynamics are eclipsed by the pursuit of a broader agenda which is patronised by a united effort to fight against colonial influence and domination over African productivity in the area of knowledge production.

While UKZN may be developing various policies and strategies directed at Africanising knowledge, and overcoming western domination in knowledge production, certain sensitivities such as gender (in this case) are most often deferred. The collective history of marginalisation of Africa and African people has helped to construct a worldview of Afrocentric paradigms which tend to preclude inherent social identities such as gender, class, race, ethnicity or religion. Feminist scholars like Philomina Okeke and Amina Mama have argued that despite heightened advocacy towards an improvement in the conditions of women's lives in Africa, such a stance has continued to label women as „victims“ of development rather than partners with men in nation-building (Okeke 2004, Mama 2005). The comments made in the above excerpt insinuate that gender is still far from becoming an important epistemic sphere in this whole attempt towards the establishment of an African knowledge system(s). The excerpt shows a total disinclination to the role of gender as a tool of the intellectual reconstruction and the development of an African mindset. For an institution with a mission statement reading: *A truly South African university which is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past*, it is expected that social dynamics such as those of gender be considered as important theoretical and epistemological tools in the development of African scholarship at UKZN.

The second group of scholars argue that gender forms an integral analytical framework and that gender should be given voice as an important paradigm in the valorisation of African scholarship at UKZN. These scholars argue that gender contestations should not only be connected to the issues of discourse and text but also to the broader political economy (Brewer 2000) – which in this case is the academy. The experiences of men and women as scholars operating within a patriarchal context cannot be the same. In this regard some of the women and men scholars in support of gender sensitive scholarship claim that feminised approaches are essential in response to the political rhetoric of African scholarship at UKZN. These scholars are claiming that while UKZN is making an effort to have its vision promoted globally and competitively, it is important for it to roll alongside whatever layers of challenges the vision may be confronted with. What is implied here is that gender constraints for example should be embodied as UKZN attempts to forge ahead with its vision of African scholarship. Some of the female participants claim that although women are increasingly becoming visible in the world in their different privileges and capacities, the politics of marginalisation against a black woman scholar is still very active in the corridors of knowledge production. Commenting about gender constraints and prejudice against an African woman, a female associate professor had the following to say:

Constraint, I am definitely constrained right now because not only would I see a marginalisation of the African intellect globally, but that is taking root by the traditional forms of marginalisation, you know gender, skin colour marginalises you even further in line with the other forms of marginalisation. The black woman is the last species to be considered whatsoever. So even in the little space that there is to do work as an African woman you struggle. There is something that we haven't found a way of analysing carefully. You have no idea how once one realises who they are dealing with influences the outcome of their action. Even if it is a blind review if you cite yourself in an article, and it is obvious you are A or B, you must be careful even how you cite yourself in the article which is still to be peer-reviewed, lest you betray your identity because you are going to find prejudice as a black person and an African woman ... So there are all sorts of demeaning things that go along to say who you are in the spaces we operate in. You really have to manoeuvre and be assertive before you get to

where you want to go; especially as a black woman. You really have to know your story to make yourself an absolute expert at what you know, so that you can be reckoned with seriously based on that – otherwise no one is going to invite you, be kind, or helpful to you necessarily. There is just an abundance prejudice against these spaces, and do not expect that by being an expert in your field you would then be respected, you will be avoided – because you become a liability in the sense that you might be preferred in certain competitive spaces. So people do not want to invite you lineally and show you up because you might eventually overtake them in the spaces that they are in. It is a very tricky balance of engagement, manoeuvring and still being vocal at the same time.

The above excerpt explains how African female scholars face „double marginalisation“ as they attempt to pursue knowledge. As African women scholars, their marginalisation is further worsened by the very fact that African scholarship still occupies an inferior place in the global knowledge economy. Sidetracking gendered dynamics in the struggle of African scholarship against de-legitimation would only be a problem deferred. Gender, as a number of participants argued, constitutes a crucial conceptual framework with discreet epistemological stances and niches that cannot be ignored in the political rhetoric of African scholarship. Gendering scholarship in Africa remains an important factor because we are living in an ever changing world where social identities, such as gender, are in constant flux in response to adjusting to these changes. Besides, African scholarship, like any other scholarship is multilayered and should allow for all sorts of diversities within the African intellectual space. Again, the various attempts made by the mainstream African scholarship to adjust to global patterns should be rolling alongside the multifaceted epistemological paradigms that are encapsulated within the broader discourse of African scholarship. As one of the participants explained “*as long as African scholarship keeps moving towards the globe, so too would gender continue to shift to keep with the pace of global development*”. Generally when policies are pursued, policy activists tend to be what Yeatman (1998:12-14) describes as “visionary opportunists” engrossed in displaying “an ethics of pragmatism” which in most cases compromises the positionality of inherent and discreet epistemological paradigms.

The transnational space constitutes yet another important dimension through which gender articulations could be reified in the intellectual discourse of African scholarship. The transnational space it must be noted was the main site for this research. Gender, although a recent phenomenon (see Pessar and Mahler 2001, Fouron and Schiller 2001) in transnational migration, plays an important role in the way transnational spaces are constituted and constructed. Social practices, activities and experiences of men and women in a transnational context cannot be gender neutral; in fact gender is one of the key factors influencing power relations between men and women in both their home country and their new transnational space. This study reveals that the transnational space of UKZN and South Africa is gendered and has different effects for the foreign African women and men scholars working or studying in the institution.

Although, for methodological reasons, I have considered all foreign African scholars as constituting a migrant community, I would like in this instance to de-homogenise them. This approach stems from the fact that even though these scholars find themselves in the same intellectual environment, their responses to whatever is taking place in the university are to a large extent circumscribed by the way they have been gendered. Their diverse socio-cultural orientations have an impact on the way that these migrants relate to issues of intellectualism and scholarship in the institution. Some of the foreign African women scholars in this study are claiming that their role as female African scholars in a transnational space is crucial in the (re)definition of African scholarship. Positioning themselves within an intellectual political rhetoric, these women are emphatically claiming that their presence at UKZN should be seen as a paradigmatic development offering new insights in the discourse of African scholarship. They strongly believe that couching African scholarship along their transnational roles and experiences as women scholars, could provide new epistemological, theoretical and conceptual angles which could be useful to the furtherance of African scholarship within the global knowledge polity.

### **8.3 Nationality as contested terrain in African scholarship**

The Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1992) defines the term *nationality* as the “status of belonging to a particular nation” and a second definition sees *nationality* as “condition of being national, distinctive national qualities”. What these two definitions have offered is a sense of belonging as attributes that are linked to the word *nation*, without explaining what nation is. This however does not mean that the word nation with its meaning explained does not exist in that same dictionary. Besides, there are a number of words among which are nationalism, naturalisation, nationalisation and national which are collegiate of the word *nation*. Even though all of these words are associated with the word nation, they have different levels of collocation. This analogy is couched on a thesis that seeks to explain African scholarship as a rudimentary concept with multiple sites of interpretations. The concept of nationality is riddled with interpretations that cannot be simply confined to its etymology. Interrogating the concept of African scholarship through the lens of nationality, has generated some consensus and contestations on how a discourse of nationality is fundamental in explaining the intricacies that have most often been disembedded from the mainstream discourse of African scholarship. This section therefore attempts to delineate the different forms of contestations in relation to nationality and African scholarship at UKZN. These contestations would be examined within the issues of collective nationalism, citizenship and xenophobia. The section illuminates discussions on the extent to which foreign African academics are influenced or constrained by their status as *migrants* in their response to African scholarship.

#### **8.3.1 Collective nationalism and citizenry**

As mentioned before, foreign African academics in this study constitutes a migrant community. Migrant communities are not only constituted along ethnic or national backgrounds, but can also emerge out of socially unrelated geographical spaces (Kearney 1986). Collective nationalism in this context relates to a phenomenon where national geographical boundaries are collapsed to accommodate migrants’ shared experiences in relation to a social structure. In this regard, collective nationalism here attempts to

unpack the various challenges faced by foreign African scholars at UKZN as they engage their ideological underpinnings with respect to African scholarship in a South African transnational space. Working around the concept of otherness, this section attempts to show the extent to which the issue of nationality affects foreign African scholars' conceptualisation of African scholarship.

Nationalism and nationalistic projects have, since the days of colonialism, set the intellectual agendas of nation-building in Africa (see Mkandawire 2005, Mazrui 2005, Ki-zerbo 2005 and Zeleza 2005). African scholarship as a project of nationalism has in successive generations embraced a colonial historiography as the basis for its instrumentality as a knowledge space. In quest for unity, this nationalism has most often resulted in tendencies that cloak other social identities such as nationality or gender which could, in their own right, be incorporated to strengthen the discourse of African scholarship. Nationality and citizenry are a growing area in the political discourses of nation-building in the postmodernist era. In Africa nationalism has often been used to the detriment of social pluralism as a way of promoting African agency in development and nation-building. African scholarship has overtime been a project of African intellectual nationalism aiming at positioning African ways of philosophising at competitive levels with other knowledge systems in the world. In pursuit of African scholarship at UKZN, some scholars, as this study reveals, have developed collective tendencies based on the political rhetoric of redressing past injustices of marginalisation, glossing over the social categorisation of nationality, class or gender usually used in social analysis.

Collective nationalism at UKZN espoused by foreign African migrants is in line with most of the literature that views African scholarship as a nationalistic project in the area of knowledge production. As foreigners in this context, much of what they make of African scholarship is anchored on their interactions with the systems that are in place at UKZN and in their experiences in the new transnational space of South Africa. While it has been generally acknowledged in this study that African scholarship is complex and needs much more nuanced approaches to its dissection, these complexities are sometimes constrained, if not downplayed, by the context in which the concept is defined. Foreign



African scholars irrespective of their national backgrounds, collectively view themselves as constituting the „other“ in their involvement with debates surrounding the concept of African scholarship. Collective nationalism is what they use to justify certain claims over African scholarship based on their collective experiences as foreigners in this space. The use of certain pronouns such as „we“ and „us“ versus „they“ and „them“, emerging from the various interviews with participants, highlights the identity of „otherness“ which differentiates local and foreign nationals at UKZN. Such a tendency has the potential of foreclosing multicultural crevices (based on national identities) which could play a role in providing other theoretical or epistemological frameworks which could be critical for the articulation of African scholarship within and beyond the institution.

The politics of otherness is manifested not only in the way these foreign scholars view themselves, but also in the way they are viewed by their local counterparts. The perceptions of local South African scholars about foreign Africans, whether negative or positive, are seen through a collective lens. As one of the foreign interviewees noted:

Nationally we face the same prejudice crisis as foreigners. Our foreignness is seen in terms of where we come from. Students, colleagues and the outside world don't see you for who you really are and what you really do, but where you come from. You are seen not for the lecturer that you are but a foreigner. Whether you are from Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Nigeria or Kenya, or better still whether naturalised as South African, your national identity is always compromised. No one is interested to understand that you are coming from this particular country, so your experiences are unique even as an individual; and that your background actually has a strong influence in the way you relate to present life situations.

This kind of understanding surfaced in every interview conducted with the various participants constituting the migrant sample in this study. This kind of perception could be inimical to the progress of African scholarship which is still trying to claim authoritativeness in the midst of its elusive nature. National and individual identities highlighted in this excerpt are important instruments, which, when considered, could

provide a wealth of experiences upon which new knowledge paradigms can be generated; thus taking African scholarship to another level of social analysis.

### **8.3.2 Citizenship and Xenophobia**

The concept of citizenship is one of the familiar themes in the politics of identity which have continued to be animated in scholarly and public debates. The concept of citizenship is a highly controversial area in the politics of belonging and nationness. From a very liberal standpoint, citizenship could be defined as a shared national identity to individual's sense of belonging to a political community over which they can exercise democratic agency (Williams 2007). Citizenship is acquired either by birth or through naturalisation in a specific territorial space. In the age of rapid globalisation and accelerated mobility, the subject of citizenship has become a complex phenomenon of social analysis. In emerging economies such as South Africa, the concept of citizenship is yet to be grappled with in the immigration policies of the country.

In what appears to be a highly xenophobic country, the issue of citizenship in contemporary South Africa is a contentious terrain marked with politics of inclusion and exclusion (Neocosmos 2006, Nyamnjoh 2007, Neocosmos 2007). Citizenship rights in post-apartheid South Africa, just like in many parts of Africa, are organised around "political indigeneity" (Neocosmos 2008). The tendency towards indigeneity implies that there are those who are „more citizens than others“ and therefore are „naturally“ more entitled to resource access than other citizens living in the country. Racial and national stereotypes are entrenched through the categorisation of people into specific groups. This categorisation has produced hierarchical and inegalitarian citizenry within South Africa; „affecting individuals and communities as informed by race, ethnicity, class, gender and geography“ (Nyamnjoh 2007:1). This hierarchical and inegalitarian citizenry coupled with xenophobic attitudes are working in conflict with to the status and role of migrants living in the country. Mamdani (1991) in fact advises that rather than indigeneity, labour should constitute the basis for rights to Africa citizenship. It is only through such an approach that migrants, who change their place of residence to seek employment

elsewhere, can have equal rights to everyone else. This study reveals the problematic of citizenship as a stumbling block in the articulation and expansion of African scholarship at UKZN.

As migrants living in South Africa, some foreign academics of African origin have had to suffer from various forms of limitations because of their foreign status. In an earlier study I have shown how „foreigner status“ of African scholars at UKZN often undercut their entitlements to certain privileges (see Otu 2011). Attending seminars organised by the different disciplines within FHDSS and the various interviews conducted for this study reveal that the issue of citizenship is a fundamental factor affecting the development of African scholarship at UKZN. As scholars working or studying in the institution, foreign African academics face a number of challenges that stand in the way of them making meaningful contributions to what they envision as relevant scholarship for UKZN and the entire African continent.

The discriminatory politics of citizenship often silences the contributions that these scholars should be making towards the expansion of the vision within and outside UKZN. Interviews reveal that these scholars, irrespective of their migrant statuses, are confronted with similar, if not the same, challenges. Interviews with these scholars reveal three categories of migrants namely: permanent residents, naturalised citizens and non-permanent residents. The study revealed that even with their different immigration statuses, foreign African scholars at UKZN are confronted with the same politics of marginalisation. This marginalisation is earned either through „natural“ elimination processes or through individual perceptions and attitudes. Natural elimination here implies the fundamental principles based on citizenship that under-privilege non South African nationals of equal rights to resource access; while individual perceptions denotes the often manifested xenophobic attitudes from some local colleagues towards foreign African scholars in the institution. As scholars they find that their status as permanent residents or „have become citizens“ does not to a large extent put them at the same level of competition with their local colleagues. Commenting on how one’s status still confines

one to a non-autochthonous position, one senior professor originally from Nigeria but now a South African citizen commented:

Even though I consider myself a South African citizen, my colleagues still see me as a Nigerian. Whatever I say, whatever proposals and propositions I come up with for my department, what they see is my „Nigerianess“ and not the ideas I put forth. Let’s say I come up with a proposal that has to do with providing funding for African students to go study for a semester, a year in other African universities, or do research there ... you know as a way of engineering our so called African scholarship, do you know that my proposal no matter how rich it may appear can be rejected based on the simple reason that it is coming from me, because of my Nigerian background. They would say he wants to empower his Nigerian or foreign students who are studying here. But if local colleagues come up with their proposal, the university or the South African government quickly gets them granted. I am not saying things which I have not experienced and seen happening in this university. I think if we have to go by our brand as the premier university of African scholarship, then the mindset has to change. Individuals should be seen for who they are and what they are capable of doing, we need to transcend our biases about people’s culture or backgrounds and work for what is best for our institution.

The above excerpt encourages a culture of openness that should be transcendent of all sorts of biases and prejudices. The excerpt illuminates the contradictions that are embedded in the politics of citizenship in the contemporary South African context. Analytical discourse around South African citizenry has exclusively been focused on institutional and constitutional arrangements without practical sensitivity to the hierarchies and relationships of inclusion and exclusion that are informed by the elements of race, ethnicity, class, gender and geography (Nyamnjoh 2007). In the excerpt the rights of inclusion as naturalised citizens are constrained by one’s „Nigerianess“ in the South African profile of citizenship. As important as nationalism would appear, Neocosmos (2008) observes this should not however ignore the role played by individuals and their states both contemporarily and historically. The reason behind the combination of these two – the individual and the state (representing the contemporary and the historical) is about a culture of conscientisation which has to identify the efforts made by African

individuals in the reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa, and also the contributions made by other African states in the liberation of the country. As individuals working in an intellectual environment such as UKZN with its lofty motto, the basis for education should be something more than being about the self. It should be about how individuals can work in the service of others in a community that needs development. Proactive engagements of inclusivity as opposed to fundamental nationalism would be able to take African scholarship to another level of intra-cultural dialogues, through a thorough and unbiased evaluation of initiatives put forth by different individuals in conjunction with the vision.

In a formal space such as UKZN where an ethos of professionalism is expected to prevail, it is not really obvious to discern and establish a case of xenophobia. In what is known as a highly xenophobic context, xenophobia in South Africa has produced a myriad of discourses around the state of foreign migrants living in the country. Xenophobia has become so prevalent among all groups of people in contemporary South Africa to the extent that it has actually become impossible to identify any kind of “xenophobia profile” (Crush and Pendleton 2004:2). This indiscriminate xenophobia is mostly targeted towards African migrants. Crush and McDonald (2002:7) note that “most African migrants from panhandlers to professors are feeling the verbal and sometimes physical sting of rampant anti-foreign sentiments.” Even though in formal settings such as an academic environment, xenophobia may not be physical or obviously verbal, migrants are still perceived with attitudes from the local that create a level of uneasiness in their lives.

During my interviews with various participants, some of the issues raised around xenophobia included; discrimination, blackmailing, stigmatisation and intolerance. I would like to present these issues through scenarios.

**Scenario one - discrimination: Excerpt from a doctoral student:**

Being a foreigner in this place really limits one. Can you imagine that M.A and honours students are preferred over

me to do tutorials in my department? I had indicated to our academic coordinator that I would like to tutor ... to my greatest surprise when the list came out I was not among those recruited. I really felt bad. Again you know what? When it so happened that one of the tutors (a local) found employment out of the university, that is when I was then contacted to come and tutor. I turned it down, because I felt insulted in the first place. I am one of the most qualified students in the department, why should I be treated like an underdog?

**Scenario two – blackmailing: Excerpt from a post-doctoral fellow:**

You know I have been a student in this institution since 2005. Personally I haven't had any cruel experience not until the beginning of this year. This year has been challenging for me, I now really have seen what it means to be a foreign student. To be honest I have really enjoyed the privileges of being a graduate student at UKZN, I have had fee remissions and also my post-doctoral proposal was approved, I think I must credit the university for these provisions. What destroys this institution is something more than just the policies, people are malicious, and I mean senior academics can be so mean. I have had this drama at my department with the academic coordinator, who is using crooked means to bring down students. She is using her overseas connections to get students on her side. She is promising everyone to attend funded conferences abroad. She got me to attend one conference overseas, just so that she could take me over for supervision. It is a long story... she had me investigated about my post-doc progress and it was such a huge issue had it been that I wasn't productive.

**Scenario three – stigmatisation and intolerance: Excerpt from a doctoral student**

In fact this space has taught me to develop „thick skin“. I think I have seen more than enough. This place (shaking her head in disapproval) is something else. The word xenophobia was never part of my vocabulary. I have been tutoring and doing some other work at the department no doubt, but I think some individuals have problems with that. I have been a victim of lies telling and corridor gossips at the department. I am not saying I am the best, but I do the best that I am supposed to do, I get my work done. I was surprised to be told that I was not going to tutor a certain course at the department because it was reported from my

colleagues that I do not take time to mark and besides I ask colleagues to get my work done while they claim I spend time doing my personal work. I found these allegations not true because it is a culture in me to take things seriously. I need these jobs to get life going for me in this space, tell me how I can dare play around? If I were not a hardworking student, I don't think I would be offered anything at the department.

Kanjo (2011) and Muthuki (2010) in their studies have highlighted that xenophobia remains a topical challenge to foreign African students' integration into the UKZN academic space. They underline the fact that despite the period of duration, many foreign Africans, as long as they are students, are exposed to all sorts of shabby treatment emanating from a context of xenophobia. This xenophobia is masterminded by academic competition and the clamour over limited support resources for postgraduate scholarship.

One of the central issues that the above three scenarios establish is the position of the university in the midst of xenophobia. From the three excerpts above one would notice that foreign students are not in condemnation of the system in which they are studying. The policies and structures in the university are those that give equal opportunities to postgraduate students especially at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels. The complete fee waiver at the doctoral level for example does not discriminate between local and international students; once one is registered as a full time student, they become entitled to this support facility. In what appears to be a xenophobic context, it is actually individuals and not necessarily systems that are hostile to foreigners. UKZN, being the premier university of African scholarship, is striving through its mission statement, core values and goals in promoting a culture of fraternity and inter-group relations as fundamental bases for the development of the institution and the African continent as a whole. During the May 2008 xenophobic outbreak, the university was very active in organising debates on various campuses to discuss the state and impact of xenophobia in the country and to assure the university community that the university was doing everything in its power to ensure the safety of international students. Despite the anti-foreign sentiments from local individual students and lecturers, some student participants in this research reported positively on the efforts made by the university towards a

conducive learning environment for all. While some foreign students cannot stand the shabby treatment they get from the local students, some of them have actually developed a „thick skin“ (anti-shock) and are not ready to get perturbed by the ill-treatment.

#### **8.4 Understanding the concept of Africanity within racial paradigms**

The demise of formal apartheid towards the end of the twentieth century led to the political and ideological transformation of the South African state. South Africa's ascendency to a democratic state triggered a general restructuring that has tremendously affected demographic orientations built on an agenda that seeks to redress social gaps of inequality and inequity that characterised the previous apartheid system. The concept of race is among the topical and most debatable issues in the identity discourse of post-apartheid South Africa. Racial consciousness has become an important marker and hence it has been used to redefine social relationships in present day South Africa (Puttergrill 2006). Popularly referred to as a rainbow nation, contemporary South Africa is entwined within the dilemmas and contradictions posed by the issue of multiculturalism. Given its history, and considering its present day democratic approach to multiculturalism, South Africa is confronted with a major challenge of what should entail the concept of „Africanness“ in a country which once upon a time was colonised and for long deprived of its autochthonous identity through political manipulations. In this „posts“ (post-apartheid, post-colonialism post-structuralism, post-modernism) era of multicultural politics, the discourse of African scholarship cannot be understood outside the context of social identities. This section attempts to look at how the concept of race is negotiated to expand our understanding of African scholarship at UKZN.

The concept of race just as the other identity markers discussed in the preceding sections is one of the contentious areas in the conceptualisation of African scholarship at UKZN. UKZN is an institution operating within the broader context of the South African democracy, with its institutional policies being directed and unified to contribute to the overall political agenda of the state. In defining what African scholarship is, the issue of race was either explicitly or implicitly reified in the interviews conducted with various



participants in this research. Defining who an African is, is a puzzle that is riddled with contradictions and dilemmas. Race is part of the entities through which the concept of *Africanness* is dissected. Part of the African identity, as the interviews revealed, is defined by socialisation. The following excerpt by one of the top managers in the institution elucidates the multiple ways through which African identity is negotiated in terms of race:

There are people in the world that are known and identified as Africans. Just like there are Europeans, Asians, I think these are sort of defined identities of various peoples throughout the world. I think within each identity definition, there are a number of components: there is geography, history, socialisation, traditions and there are cultures that are embedded within those identifications. So once you use the word African to anybody it conjures a certain image of a people that look a particular way, that sometimes conduct themselves in particular ways, and maybe speak in a particular way. That is the first thing I would like people to understand. The word scholarship, I suppose, is a universal definition of anything that ends with the word „ship“ – learnership, apprenticeship, it is almost like a trade, something that you do as a trade. They all end up with the word „ship“ because there is a learning process that is almost an apprentice. So African scholarship, it is really an identity that defines a knowledge system that is scholarly that is rooted in the identity of Africa and Africans. The reason why it is there it is not simply about identity but also about bringing a new form of scholarship that has been denied through history to become part of global knowledge. Because as you know we have the European knowledge system – western scholarship, Confucian knowledge systems that is knowledge systems that are often from the orient and there is the Latin knowledge system that comes from South America, and that originated in Europe, and African scholarship is also a form of scholarship that forms part of the global knowledge systems. So it is for identity but also for broadening the knowledge arena.

This excerpt explains the different ways through which African identity and scholarship are understood. As the excerpt highlights, *Africanness* is a fluid concept with multiple identities intersecting to constitute the various forms by which the term Africa has come to be understood in the present-day discourses on identity and the politics of belonging.

In trying to provide a nuanced understanding of African scholarship, the most often disembodied socialised categories such as race, class and gender are of paramount importance. In the context of this section I would like to focus on the issue of race. While dealing with the advancement of African scholarship for the purpose of agency, much of the discourse is often centered on the history and geography of the continent; almost in validation of the colonial tendency of viewing Africa through homogenous lenses. In the present context of multiracialism and „deracialisation“ of Africanity, it has become an important issue of concern in understanding „race politics“ in the different socio-political articulations within the current South African state. Transcending biological barriers the politics of race as a social category attempts to problematise the dichotomies of inclusion and exclusion which may be pervasive to democratic principles. The above excerpt takes cognisance of a „socialised“ form of African identity that could open up to different racial categories. Many of those interviewed for this study agreed that in the world of today, the concept of Africanness cannot be simply rooted in the geographical and historical contexts. They claim that anyone could become an African provided the person is ready to display a character that orchestrates them to view and construct reality based on African experiences. These scholars claim that African identity is about consciousness and not necessarily defined by history, geography or colour. This kind of approach is epitomised in following excerpt by the Vice Chancellor of the university:

There are many definitions of African identity, just as there are with who is a European or an American. I don't think the definitions so much matter, but what defines people is often first of all their own consciousness of who they are. It doesn't matter what you look like, it is what you are. I think that is a very important point. Second one that defines African identity of a people is the history and the civilisation they pursue in their everyday activities. Obviously the people who are Africans are not necessarily living in Africa; they are diverse of what they look like and who their parents are. It is the consciousness and the history that they carry and the civilisation that they pursue that define them as Africans.

This position sits very well with Chinua Achebe conception of African identity. Achebe sees African as an identity still in the making (see Makgoba 2004) and therefore being

confined to particular contexts.

Even though many of the participants attempted to deracialise African identity, there are however those who are still glued to defining African identity within particular contexts including; the historical, geographical and racial contexts. In an interview with one of the senior professors, he claimed:

I am yet to develop an open mindset about African identity. For me it is not an ambiguous issue. The ambivalence exists for those who I do not know what they are trying to protect. I am biased in favour of African mindset. Before the colonialists came to Africa, there were people living in Africa, of particular cultures, traditions and of a particular pigmentation. And even when they came we had not stopped existing as Africans, in fact they viewed us as the inferior „other“, granted. We were enslaved to them, we covered that whole journey of colonialism ... we are now independent ... we should be able to claim back that which rightly belongs to us. Anyway, we are living a neoliberal world that embraces diversity, so they say. But I don't have a problem with policies of reconciliation and the nationness that are pursued in post-apartheid South Africa. I think everyone is expected to enjoy their political entitlements as spelt out in the constitution. But seriously thinking and to be honest with you, I see a lot of hypocrisy going on especially with whites. The game of superiority is far from being over. For me there is no way a white person can become an African. Same way as me and my children born in Canada cannot become Canadians. Skin colour is political and its time people understood it as such.

A few of the participants who have this kind of understanding about African identity linked to the above excerpt, argue that identity is woven in the fabric of one's history and a transition of „being“ and „becoming“ that a group of people make of themselves. For this group of participants, the issue of black consciousness and sensitivity is a major way of overcoming the ironies and inconsistencies that the advancement of an African course is overburdened with. In this regard the non-indigenous populations of the white race who may be supporting an African cause should be called Africanists and not Africans as one of the participants suggested. According to her definition, an Africanist can be

anyone who is interested in African ways of life without necessarily being an African. She cited the example of her supervisor at a university in Britain who was a British Africanist who has written much about the continent.

## **8.5 Language as a contested terrain**

Language plays the role of communication and thus could be considered an important tool for development. The emphasis made on the use of African indigenous languages for the sake of development is not a novel issue among African scholars. There is abounding literature challenging the use of colonial languages and the need to empower the use of indigenous languages in Africa (see for example; Thiong'o 2005, Chumbow 2005, Bodomu 1996, Adegaju 2008, Chakava 2010). The promotion of African languages has been emphasised for socio-economic, cultural and political development of African communities. Language is an important identity marker and therefore central to the expression of the lived experiences of people in a particular community. Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his work "Decolonising the Mind" expresses the need for African literature to resist imperialism through the use of indigenous languages as a way to decolonisation and self-determination. Commenting about the importance of language and the disempowered state of African languages, he says:

the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to the social and natural environments, indeed in relation to the entire universe ... writers who should have been mapping paths out of that linguistic encirclement also came to be defined and define themselves in terms of the language of imperialist imposition. Even at their most radical and pro-African position in their sentiments and articulation of problems they still took it as axiomatic that the renaissance of African cultures lay in the languages of Europe (4-5).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's lamentation on the subjugation of African thoughts and philosophies to colonial languages is a major area of concern for an increasing number of

African scholars who are striving towards the promotion of African languages for identity and development. The use of African languages as a medium of instruction has been one of the prevailing issues in the present day South African political discourse. The minister of Higher Education (HE) Dr Blade Nzimande has of recent been emphasising the introduction of African indigenous languages in the curriculum of tertiary education. This emphasis is even more challenging for UKZN because by virtue of its maxim motto, this kind of provision should be imminent.

For an institution that claims to be the premier university of African scholarship, the inclusion of African languages in the curriculum and pedagogy is not only important but mandatory. Amidst contestations, some interviewees in this study strongly opined that African scholarship can make meaningful inroads only if indigenous languages, not just from South Africa but the rest of Africa, are given curricular and pedagogic privileges. In the light of this, these scholars are saying that an African language should be empowered to the level where it can be seen not just as a discipline but as a medium of instruction across other disciplines at UKZN. So far the only African indigenous language existing in the faculty and the entire university is IsiZulu. A participant lamented on the fact that so many non-African languages (especially European) besides the mainstream language (English) of instruction have been taught in the university for this long, and it is only now that the university has considered introducing Swahili as another African language in the programme. African scholars interviewed for this study are hoping that the introduction of Swahili would be the beginning of the building and expansion of an African linguistic empire that will eventually claim its legitimate place in the world.

Some scholars however do not see the possibility of African languages making major breakthroughs to play the role that the orthodox colonial languages are already playing in Africa. These skeptics are basing their argument on the fact that due to the linguistic heterogeneity of the African communities it is hard to have a unified voice towards the promotion of particular African language. This group of scholars also claims that language constitutes little or no problem in the pursuit of African scholarship. They claim that the African identity is much more than a linguistic problem. According to these scholars whatever language is used, the most important thing is for African problems to

be dissected and portrayed using African paradigms. As long as knowledge about Africa is not romanticised, and as long as such knowledge is rooted in African epistemologies and ontology, and contextualised to meet the socio-cultural, economic and political development of the continent, then the problem of language should be considered less critical in trying to have African scholarship established among other forms of scholarship in the world.

This kind of perception corroborates Bodo's thesis that when linguistic issues are addressed, the fact that there exist so many languages in Africa is often seen as a hindrance to the development of the continent (Bodo 1996). A few of the participants seem to agree as important as African languages may appear, it is rather a late project for them to be empowered to a level where they can meaningfully articulate the developmental needs of the continent. They think that starting up an ambitious programme for the pronouncement of African languages to compete alongside the already established international languages could halt the developmental machinery of the different nation states.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the various contestations to the concept of African scholarship. An overview of the literature dealing with African scholarship shows a high inclination towards the deconstruction of western paradigms which have overtime prided themselves as veritable scientific and universal paradigms. Fighting against a history of marginalisation, most African writers are absorbed by the broader political rhetoric of de-hegemonising western domination in global knowledge systems by trying to bring to the fore African epistemological and philosophical paradigms in the study of African people and their social institutions. This position has often marred the texture of African scholarship as it fails to address the nuances that are encapsulated in the concept. African scholarship is a fluid concept that cannot be compartmentalised and contained within specific analytical segments.

This chapter has shown that issues such as gender, class, race, nationality and language

have often been occulted in the discourse of African scholarship. With some ethnographic evidence, the chapter has discussed the varying positionalities of respondents towards their understanding of the role played by the different identity markers in the conceptualisation and articulation of African scholarship. The chapter reveals that social identities such as gender, nationality or race are very crucial in establishing a more nuanced understanding of African scholarship. Operating within a multicultural space, the concept of African scholarship at UKZN must work in tandem with the social dynamics that are at work in the institution and in the broader context of (South) Africa and even the world at large.

## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSION

#### 9.1 Introduction

This study has analysed the role played by foreign African migrants in the advancement of African scholarship within the Faculty of Humanities Development and Social Sciences (FHDSS) at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN). UKZN is a multicultural institution composed of both students and staff members from different parts of the world. Most of the foreign membership of the institution consists of Africans, especially those from the rest of the sub-Saharan region of the continent. FHDSS which is part of the College of Humanities is the largest faculty in the university consisting of thirteen schools<sup>14</sup> which are based on two out of the five campuses which make up the university. Being the largest faculty, it was envisaged that this faculty would obviously have the highest number of foreign staff and students of African origin. This reason partly motivated for the sample choice of this study. However the primary motivation was informed by my identity as a foreign African student and an aspirant scholar who have been keen on getting to understand what sets one apart as a student or scholar at UKZN. Over and above this, the elusiveness and fluidity of the concept of African scholarship demands a compartmentalised approach towards a more thorough understanding of knowledge production in Africa. Consequently the choice of this sample was a deliberate decision undertaken to have this concept interrogated from within a particular population sample.

This topic emerged out of a project I conducted towards the qualification for a Master's degree between 2007 and 2008. This project was conducted on a similar group of

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<sup>14</sup> Prior to the reconfiguration the College of Humanities consisted of two faculties: FHDSS and the Faculty of Education: With reconfiguration, these two faculties have been collapsed into 6 mega schools operating within the College of Humanities. Since this study was conducted before the reconfiguration process, the number 13 therefore is justified.



scholars at UKZN. Although the study was based on something else, it turned out that the concept of African scholarship in the institution is a critical issue among foreign African migrants working or studying in the institution. This feeling was noted and I decided to probe further into this subject area at the doctoral level. The vision of the university branded as “The Premier University of African Scholarship” is an ambitious agenda which is riddled with intersecting and contradictory discourses providing no definitive angle from which these complexities can be unravelled. Due to the elusive nature of this concept it is important to have it compartmentalised within specific contexts. This contextual approach has the potential of foregrounding this concept within specific conceptual and philosophical frameworks that can be capable of producing more nuanced understandings of this concept within the institution.

Largely built against the backdrop of migration and transnationalism, this study made an attempt to investigate how foreign African migrants at UKZN are engaging with this concept of African scholarship to provide the meaning and purpose of the vision of UKZN being the premier university of African scholarship. In trying to balance out the points and arguments advanced by these foreigners, local South Africans in positions of authority within the university were also interviewed for this study.

The study comprised of twenty five participants. Twenty research participants constituted the core sample which was further split into twelve qualified foreign staff and eight doctoral and post-doctoral students. The secondary sample consisted of five research participants. Being a qualitative research, the study employed an interpretivist framework within which the worldview of the researched were to be presented in intersection with my role as a researcher and therefore a co-creator of meaning. The process of interviews revealed how my positionality as an aspirant scholar in this area actively got me involved in the co-performance of interrogating the utility value of African scholarship within UKZN for a wider African interest. This self-reflexive process enabled me to generate critical insights into the utterances advanced by my research participants and my role as researcher and co-creator of meaning greatly assisted me in addressing the nitty-gritty of the emerging arguments. Thus the analyses presented in this study emerge out of a combination of participants’ worldview and my worldview as a researcher. As noted

earlier in this study, all research is inherently subjective.

Working in conjunction with relevant literature, this study has attempted to reveal the state of African scholarship at UKZN. The study begins by critically engaging with a discourse on positioning UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship. The views expressed by the various research participants are webbed in the mission, goals and core values contained in the College of Humanities' Strategic Plan targeted for the years between 2007 and 2016. In trying to provide some understanding of the theoretical and pragmatic approaches within which this concept is engaged, the study has depicted different shades of meaning with convoluting and contradictory interpretations concerning the process of this whole vision of UKZN becoming "The premier university of African scholarship." Principally emanating from a history of marginalisation and racialisation, the vision of UKZN was founded on a mission that has been focused on addressing the inequities and imbalances that existed in the apartheid past. Working in consonance with the democratic and constitutional principles that now govern the new South African state, UKZN as an intellectual site has envisioned producing scholarship that is cognisant of the African mind in the production of knowledge. Projecting the African mind within the knowledge space means constructing and understanding reality within African philosophical and epistemological frameworks.

In trying to provide some understanding to what the concept of African scholarship is all about, the findings of this study proceed from a popular discourse, advancing through some specific definitions. Popular definitions have attempted to locate this concept within a historical context of marginality. Coming out of a history of colonialism and apartheid, the study has revealed that the colonial legacy is still playing a role in influencing the way African scholarship is being defined by contemporary African scholars at UKZN. Much of what has been viewed as African scholarship across the different generations of African scholars is rooted in anti-colonial and anti-imperial discourses. Built against the backdrop of colonialism and imperialism, these popular definitions are therefore trying to challenge African scholarship to surmount colonial legacy, and attempt to have African knowledge(s) conceptualised and articulated through African ontological and epistemological frameworks, and to instill African scholars and of people with a sense of

pride that is rooted in love and the conviction that the continent has all it takes to offer the kind of lifestyle that exists elsewhere in the world. For it is only with such a pride that the African intellectual will be able to defend the „Africanness“ or the uniqueness of the continent. These popular definitions, in a nutshell, reveal that contemporary African scholars have not much departed from the way their historical counterparts had handled the issue of African scholarship in the advent of independence. As much as it is important for the African intellectual to revisit the historical past, it is also important to understand contemporary Africa as an intellectual actor within the globe.

Looking at specific articulations, the study has outlined various frameworks within which the concept of African scholarship at UKZN is being engaged within the faculty and the institution. The specific paradigm identified in this study engages with structures that are in place within the faculty to highlight the extent of the role they are playing with respect to the expansion of the vision within the university and their engagement with other universities. Interviews with participants revealed that the existence of certain structures such as the Centre for Creative Arts (CCA) and the African Centre for Childhood (ACC), in a way, indicate a move towards the right direction. These structures have been created with sensitivity towards the promotion of the African „art“ and the dissection of the African child problem grounded in the context of African psychosocial experiences and cultural beliefs. The existence of these centres, as some scholars commented, could be seen as an eloquent testimony that UKZN is striving to have the vision of African scholarship set in progress.

Besides these centres, the findings also reveal that many disciplines within the faculty are engaging either in an overt or covert form with the slogan of the university in their own right. Interviews with participants, and a scan through a number of programmes in the faculty, revealed that for every department there is a module that addresses the position of Africa within a discourse that advances the knowledge identity of Africa within the global knowledge economy. Templates are being developed here and there by various scholars reflecting the foregrounding of knowledge that is relevant to African socio-cultural, economic and political contexts. Notwithstanding the progress, curricular transformation is still not aggressive enough towards the incorporation of the vision

which should remain paramount in the kind of scholarship taught and produced in the institution. Findings revealed that although some individual scholars are making vigorous efforts to align with the vision of the university, most of these efforts are much more reflected in their research agendas than in much less in the curriculum. This tendency limits students' exposure as learners of an institution that aims at distinguishing itself as a model intellectual space for African-led knowledge.

The vision of African scholarship at UKZN is a salutary effort the creation and purpose of which cannot be ignored. At the moment the university is still faced with the challenge of defining the term African scholarship. The main challenge with regard to its definition emerges out of the multiple and complex nature through which the term „Africa“ itself has been defined. With the dawn of independence and the emergence of democratic and neoliberal policies, it has become even more complicated to deal with the issues of identity and belonging in Africa and the world at large. Defining the term Africa and being an African is no longer an issue that is essentialised either by history, biology or geography. Some renowned African scholars such as Chinua Achebe and mentioned earlier on in the study have noted that there is no definitive marker that ascribes Africanness to some people and not the other. According to Achebe the African identity is still in the making. The very fact that the African identity is still in the making has rendered the issue of what is Africa and who is an African complex in the politics of positioning UKZN as a premier university of African scholarship.

As mentioned earlier, the dilemma posed by the fluid nature of this concept could better be addressed if it is engaged within particular contexts of analysis. This study engaging with foreign African migrants brings in the transnational context as an angle of interrogation and analysis of African scholarship within UKZN. Interrogating this concept through a transnational space, has thrown light on the role that foreign African migrants at UKZN are playing in the expansion of this scholarship beyond the borders of UKZN and South Africa. Looking at the study from a transnational perspective, findings have revealed that as African scholars caught up in a transnational space, these scholars are in a position where they could act as crusaders in the promotion of this scholarship to better serve the needs of the continent. Some of the key areas where foreign African

academics are making contributions include: pedagogic and curricular transformation, exchange programmes and the introduction of new research agendas.

The concept of African scholarship has been a longstanding concern for the intellectual as well as the political leadership of the continent. The emerging African elite at the dawn of independence were trained through repressive systems of colonialism that could not stop at anything to silence the voice of African legitimacy in all walks of life. Not only were these intellectuals trained through colonial systems, many of them while receiving training on colonial education did so on the geographical terrains of their colonial masters. This situation together with the emergence of repressive governments in many parts of the continent, resulted in an increased émigré status of many an African intellectual living in the former colonial northern states including the United States. This situation persists today with even greater proportions of African intellectuals living and working abroad. The state of constant African emigration to the outside world has accentuated the brain drain problem surrounded by its attendant controversies of brain loss, brain gain, brain circulation and brain exchange. This study has been able to point out that the diminishing presence of African intellectual populations on the continent does not necessarily translate into a loss of human capital – which is very critical to national or societal development. As the study has indicated, in terms of the ideological vision for the development of African scholarship, the African elite in the diaspora, just as their internal counterparts in both historical and contemporary periods, have always strived towards the promotion of African scholarship as an agency.

The migration space has always played a significant role in articulating Africa's developmental problems. This study using, the concept of transnationalism, has highlighted the role that the external African elite have been playing or could be contributing to African affairs. The study has revealed that the African diaspora was very instrumental and could continue to be instrumental in the advancement of African scholarship on the map of knowledge production. Drawing on a number of scholarly publications by various African writers the study has underscored that African intellectuals of a transnational space, both historically and contemporarily, have made major contributions to the passions, ideologies and visions that are meant to shape the

African continent. A cursory look at the literature on the concept of African scholarship from its inception demonstrates that the African diaspora was, and in fact could remain, instrumental in mobilising for an African knowledge identity within the world of scientific production of knowledge.

In engaging with the concept of transnationalism this research has shown how the presence of foreign African migrants at UKZN constitutes an important medium that the university could use to channel its vision both within UKZN and across Africa. The multicultural and the pan-African environment of UKZN offers a vantage point through which the university could use in the acknowledgement of Africa's cultural diversity towards the development of African epistemic systems. Coming from heterogeneous national, social and cultural backgrounds coupled with their individual transnational experiences, findings in this study reveal that if these issues are factored in, the vision of UKZN as a premier university of African scholarship would go a mile in succeeding in its mission as mandated by its vision.

South Africa being an emerging economy is potentially ranking among the world's migrant destination areas for skilled immigration especially from the rest of Africa (Gwebu 2006, Matte, Crush and Richmond 2002). This has made South Africa an important transnational space for African skilled labour. As a key emerging transnational space for a growing number African elite, South Africa presents an important context where African visions and developmental affairs could be negotiated and advanced. The concept of transnationalism is a two-way process in which transnational activities tend to benefit both the sending and receiving country. As scholars caught up in a transnational space, foreign African migrants at UKZN are in a position where their experiences, both at UKZN and the other places they have been to are mutually reinforcing. The study has revealed that while these migrants are prepared to introduce new models of scholarship into their various areas of expertise, they are also ready to export the newly acquired models that their new transnational space has offered them. Interviews with some scholars revealed that prior to their becoming part of UKZN, the idea of African scholarship as good as it is had never been a serious area of their scholarship. The opportunity given to them to become members of this institution is a blessing for them to

partake in a vision which they see as a call for concern.

One of the goals amplifying the vision of UKZN is the goal of African-led globalisation. The university taking cognisance of the fact that the world is one global world of interconnected activities, has found it necessary to have the vision of African scholarship articulated within global approaches. It is a goal that seeks to have knowledge production at UKZN enter the global knowledge economy with sensitivity to African informed knowledge paradigms. The adoption of a global approach in (re)positioning African scholarship within the global knowledge identity is a controversial area in the ongoing debates about the implications that such a goal has on the vision of the institution. Findings in this study have identified three ideological stances relating to the utility value of this goal in the generation and production of scholarship at UKZN. These ideological underpinnings are subsumed under what I have qualified as the idealists, the moderates and the extremists. These categories, representing different pockets of scholars' worldviews concerning the goal of African-led globalisation, the study reveals, embrace a level of conflicting and intersecting opinions with no clear-cut agendas, showing the relevancy, or otherwise the insignificance, of adopting such an approach for knowledge production at UKZN.

While the idealists endorse this goal in defense to the international status of the university, the moderates have a mixed feeling about the goal. This mixed feeling comes from the uncertainties that the participation of UKZN as a natural and free knowledge enterprise within global knowledge systems could really be free from the suffocation of the already established and dominant knowledge systems. The extremists, as the word suggests, are a group of scholars who would have nothing to do with global approaches being (re)negotiated within African forms of knowledge generations. For the fear of the wheel always reinventing itself, the extremists are of the general opinion that the vision of African scholarship being such an illustrative example should be more concerned about it working by itself to have the vision entrenched in other African knowledge communities. Basing their argument on the Chinese and the Japanese examples, these scholars believe that it is not an impossibility for Africa to claim a knowledge space that could be appreciated in Africa and eventually progress towards global recognition.

Therefore an intellectual space such as UKZN should be preoccupied in doing just that.

With their increased internationalised status, many universities in Africa have become part of the global knowledge economy. Being part of the globe, these universities, whether consciously or unconsciously, are entwined in the global processes that drive the various developmental agendas of the different world economies. This study has shown that through global processes such as globalisation, advanced information technology and communication and the unprecedented flow of transnational activities across the world, the African university of the twenty-first century has adopted a global outlook in the generation of scholarship in and on the continent. While a university such as UKZN could be striving towards maintaining its status quo as an African knowledge-based centre, this however does not overrule its participation in the global scene as far as the production of knowledge is concerned.

One of key channels for the growth of an African university of the twenty-first century has been registered in the area of networks. Networking as discussed in this study is a potential area for institutional growth and transformation. For a university of international stature such as UKZN, networking remains a crucial medium through which the university envisions to maintain its status quo as an international institution of reputable intellectual standards. This study has presented the various kinds of networks that help in the expansion of a university at the level of curriculum development and research. Networks of research collaboration and curriculum expansion are characterised by individual networks and their affiliation to broader knowledge-based associations, students' networks and inter-institutional networks. This study has shown that these networks form crucial channels for information and knowledge transfer, and the growth of research collaboration both within and out of the institution.

However despite the existence of these networks, this study has shown limited academic collaborations between UKZN and other universities on the African continent. Much of the current academic networking at UKZN is mostly done with non-African universities. This study has underscored that for UKZN to be fortified in its vision of African scholarship it has to develop a propensity that inclines the university towards forging collaborative relationships with many more institutions of higher learning in Africa.



Interviews with various participants revealed that Africa-to-Africa collaboration is a fundamental issue for the growth and expansion of UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship. Although the study has highlighted ongoing collaborative initiatives undertaken by the faculty in research and student exchange programmes with other African universities, some of these initiatives have not yet left the drawing board. With the recent reconfiguration, it is believed that UKZN would make more meaningful inroads in view of promoting intra-continental collaborations in the production of knowledge that is sensitive to African socio-cultural realities.

While the vision of African scholarship is timidly making its way to becoming a popular trend in the kind of knowledge that is being generated and pursued in the institution, much of what is being promoted as African scholarship still leaves much to be desired. This study has established that at a definitional level the concept of African scholarship at UKZN, just as many other scholars have viewed it, is still glued to the understanding of Africa's historical encounter with the West. The prominence that has been given to our understanding of African scholarship through a history of colonialism has, to a large extent, limited the chances of other voices to make their way as embedded epistemic space within the discourse of African scholarship. The study has illustrated the various contestations that have often been disembedded in many scholarly works that are seen to be dealing with the issue of African scholarship as a knowledge identity. Social identities such as gender, class, race, ethnicity and language have hardly been considered as independent epistemological variables that could contribute to bringing nuanced understandings to unravel the complexities that are embodied in the concept of African scholarship.

This study has revealed that for UKZN to thrive in its vision, African scholarship must develop a holistic outlook on the production of knowledge in and on Africa. This holistic approach would be able to transcend the reactionary positionality through which much of this scholarship has been deciphered overtime. This holism therefore attempts to position African scholarship on a proactive stance with a more open character that makes room for this concept to be understood through multiple epistemic paradigms. Findings in this research reveals that due to the fact that African scholarship has most often overlooked

important conceptual frameworks such as social identity markers already cited in the preceding paragraphs, it has made it difficult for UKZN to develop cutting-edge policies that have to do with the effective implementation of this illustrious vision. This is partly constrained by the broader political South African context within which the institution finds itself. It should be noted that because the emphasis of transformation in post-apartheid era is laid on addressing social gaps of inequality and inequity, it is not surprising that some scholars at UKZN would not find issues that highlight the role of social markers as relevant and integral frameworks through which African scholarship could also be epistemised.

## **9.2 Contributions of the study**

This study has made the following significant contributions towards the development of African scholarship at UKZN:

- With special attention to the vision of the institution, this study has attempted to provide the various ways through which the concept of African scholarship is understood by different pockets of scholars in the Faculty of Humanities Development and Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The thesis has revealed that the conceptualisation of African scholarship at UKZN is still positioned within a form of scholarship that is largely built against the backdrop of anti-colonial and anti-imperial sentiments (Mkamdawire 2005, Ki-Zerbo 2005, Mazrui 2005). This position is therefore indicative of the fact that even at this crucial time of post-colonialism and neoliberal world, African scholarship is still largely reactionary rather than being proactive.
- The study has endeavoured to highlight an important channel through which the concept of African scholarship can be expanded beyond the confines of UKZN and South Africa. Through the use of the concept of transnationalism, this study has shown how the presence of both foreign students and lecturers of African origin can influence the promotion of African scholarship both within the

university and other institutions of higher learning in other parts of the African continent. Coming from heterogeneous backgrounds coupled with their transnational experiences, it is envisaged that such positions could provide the multicultural diversity which is critical in the understanding of African cosmology from multiple angles.

- As an institution that has espoused an African-led globalisation approach, this thesis has made a significant contribution by providing the different standpoints from which some scholars have come to assess the implications of this goal. The thesis has established that this goal while welcomed by a number of scholars as seen in this research, is far from being focused on addressing African scholarship from a natural angle. Some scholars, especially those I have branded in this study as extremists, are opposed to the goal for the simple reason that it only exists to further complicate the process of African scholarship becoming a legitimate knowledge space in its own right. This study through the views of some of the research participants has attempted to establish that the agenda of African-led globalisation is an unnecessary ambitious scheme, void of pragmatic approaches towards its implementation. This claim is made over the rhetorical question, how can African scholarship go global when it has not yet succeeded in articulating Africa's domestic problems?
- Being an international institution seeking to position itself at competitive intellectual levels with other universities in the world, UKZN is caught in a web of dilemmas and contradictions as it also seeks to maintain excellence alongside the mandate of its vision of being the premier university of African scholarship. This thesis has shown that for UKZN to maintain its status quo as an international university of the twenty-first century, it is imperative for it to collaborate with other forms of scholarship around the globe. While the preceding paragraph argues against global approaches towards the production of knowledge at UKZN, this study has also underscored the importance of such approaches to the development of the institution. We are living in a global world of interconnectedness; consequently African scholarship cannot be

isolated from other forms of scholarship which form a continuum of global knowledge production.

- The study has also made a contributory role with regard to the issue of networks and networking at UKZN. It has shown how the forging of networks for research collaboration and exchange programmes for both students and lecturers assists in the growth and recognition of an institution. Despite the growing networks of academic cooperation between UKZN and other universities in the world, this thesis reveals that intra-African academic collaboration between UKZN and other universities is far from measuring up with UKZN's collaboration with other institutions out of the African continent. Through the views of the participants, this study has established that for UKZN to register resounding success in its vision of being a premier university of African scholarship, collaborative networks with other universities on the continent need to be intensified.
- The study has equally highlighted the marginalisation of some crucial epistemic spaces in the articulation of African scholarship as a knowledge identity. The thesis argues in favour of the role that social identity markers such as gender, race, nationality and language can play in providing the nuances of African scholarship as an alternative scientific paradigm in the global knowledge economy. The thesis points out that with UKZN, being an intellectual space that has envisioned producing scholarship based on African oriented philosophical paradigms, these identities are considered to be of critical importance to the development of African scholarship as a holistic scientific knowledge system.
- Over and above all, this study has made a fundamental contribution by providing a philosophical angle in relation to the vision. Existing material surrounding the production of scholarship at UKZN has mostly dwelled on politics around the merger (See for example Khan 2010) offering very little attention to the philosophical underpinnings that define African scholarship especially from a social science perspective.

### **9.3 Policy recommendations**

It would be unrealistic to end a study of this nature without putting forth a number of recommendations which may contribute to a dialogue and ultimate policy review of issues that may be considered pertinent towards a better articulation of the vision. The vision of African scholarship at UKZN is a salutary effort that needs to be pursued at length. This thesis has depicted that much is still desired to make UKZN truly “the premier university of African scholarship”. In line with this, this study therefore makes the following suggestions for policy recommendation:

- That aggressive mechanisms be put in place to ensure that the concept of African scholarship is meticulously incorporated in research and teaching and learning scholarship. The study suggests that supervisory structures should exist that oversee that this vision is meaningfully integrated in the kind of scholarship that is produced in the university.
- That various programmes in the university be engaged in the pedagogic and curricular transformation with a sensitivity to African approaches to the production of scientific research. By this the study implies that African scholars should abstain from the objectified position through which Africa and its people have been studied overtime. Africa has always been treated as an object of scientific inquiry. The study recommends that scholars at UKZN should be working towards the development of conceptual frameworks, epistemologies and methodologies in the process of knowledge generation and dissemination about African situations. In this way the philosophical foundations behind the problematics that are raised about Africa should be embracing of African perspectives; so that African knowledge(s) can, in their own right, compete among the already established scientific knowledge matrixes. This approach would go a long way in salvaging African scholars from their servitude to the dominant western knowledge paradigms.

- That African scholarship at UKZN should be mindful of other African cosmologies while pursuing knowledge on African affairs. Interviews with various participants revealed a general disenchantment that there is too much emphasis made on the South African context. Since the university has envisioned becoming a premier university of African scholarship, it should be recommended that other African practices and experiences should equally be incorporated while trying to foreground knowledge based on African cultural ethos and perspectives.
- That intra-continental academic collaborations be intensified through research, curricula exchanges as well as students and staff exchanges.

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## **Appendix 1: consent form**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH**

Dear Participants,

This consent form explains my area of interest in the research, the aim and purpose of the study. Please feel free to ask as many questions as you can before, during and after your participation in the research.

### **INSTITUTION**

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Howard College

Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences

School of Anthropology, Cultural Heritage, Gender and Historical Studies

### **NAME OF RESEARCHER**

Monica Njanjokuma Otu

monicanja@yahoo.com

031 260 2387 (Office)

078 299 6223 (Cell)

### **NAME OF SUPERVISOR**

Dr. Vivian Bessem Ojong

ojong@ukzn.ac.za

031 260 2431 (Office)

083 696 1771 (Cell)

### **PROJECT TITLE**

The role played by foreign African migrants in the promotion of African scholarship in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

**PURPOSE**

The study attempts to address one of the topical issues that are prevalent in the academic discourses of (South) Africa in the area of knowledge production. It specifically investigates the role played by foreign African working in the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the promotion of African scholarship.

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any point you feel you cannot participate. This study will make use of unstructured in-depth interviews. Please be aware that because this is an unstructured in-depth study, a question posed may trigger a number of other questions, please feel free not to answer any question you are not comfortable with. During the interviews I will be taking down notes and I will also have the interviews tape-recorded. This will not be done without your permission. I will also like to be present in your lecture venues and attend seminars, workshop and conferences that you are taking part in within the institution

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

I assure you that your responses in the interviews will be strictly confidential. The data obtained from my interviews with you will be logged in my personal computer and passwords will be used to limit access to the information. Transcription of the data will be done in the most isolated places where no one would be around me. The findings of this study may be published or presented orally. However your identity will remain confidential

**AUTHORISATION**

I have read this form completely and I have been clarified of the general purpose and requirements of participation. I therefore have decided to participate in this study. My signature indicates my consent to participate in the study.

**NAME OF PARTICIPANT**

Signature

Date

**NAME OF RESEARCHER**

Signature

Date

**Motivation to participate in my study**

Dear Participant,

I am a Cameroonian student at the department of Anthropology of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This research is to enable me obtain Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Anthropology. My research topic reads: **The role played by foreign African migrants in the promotion of African scholarship in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.** This is a qualitative study that attempts to explore how foreign African academics at universities of KwaZulu-Natal are using the South African academic space to engage in the Africanisation of knowledge. Unstructured in-depth interviews will be used to elicit rich information from informants. Your contribution to this study is very important for it is a study that raises one of the major preoccupations of the African continent. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality, in case where results will be published or presented orally.



## **Appendix 2: Interview guide for the primary sample – foreign African academics**

1. Does the term “African Scholarship appeal to you?
2. How would you define African scholarship?
3. Why would you support an agenda militating for African scholarship?
4. What is the position of UKZN / South Africa towards the promotion of African scholarship?
5. How engaging is UKZN towards the promotion of African scholarship? What mechanisms are in place at UKZN meant to enforce African scholarship?
6. Do the pedagogic and curricular structures at UKZN align with the vision of the institution – as the premier university of African scholarship? Do you think this agenda is meaningfully integrated in research, teaching/learning material?
7. What kind of scholarship are your students exposed to – teaching/learning material? Which kind of research do you encourage your students to venture in?
8. As a foreign African academic, do you experience constraints in areas where you would want to recommend changes, especially those based on issues that have to do with advancing African scholarship?
9. How does your gender, national or linguistic background influence or constrain your definition and application of African scholarship?
10. How would you compare the South African world of academia with where you were previously working – in terms of curricular/pedagogic structures and policy advancement?
11. How do you use your office as HOD, HOS, Dean, VC, DVC to influence policy towards the establishment of African scholarship?
12. Are there interdisciplinary network structures in existence to drive the vision of UKZN across the faculty? How are these networks patronised?
13. Are there formal networks in existence at UKZN in support of African scholarship across the continent?

14. As an individual what kind of networks are you involved in pursuit of African scholarship?
15. Which other African countries have you been to besides South Africa?
16. How do you draw on your transnational experiences to contribute to the curricular and pedagogic restructuring that are taking place at UKZN
17. Do you intend to spend your entire career life at UKZN?
18. How should the course of African scholarship be channelled?
19. Do you think the course of African scholarship is realisable?
20. Do you think there is a possibility of African scholarship gaining an authoritative space on the map of global knowledge(s)?
21. In your opinion why do you think Africa is under-represented in the global knowledge economy?
22. Should legitimising African scholarship mean ignoring other forms of scholarship?
23. What would be your reaction if you discovered there is a movement from the North advocating the legitimisation of African scholarship?

### **Appendix 3: Interview guide for the secondary sample – local South African academics**

1. What is African scholarship?
2. What does it mean to brand UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship?
3. What is the history behind the branding of UKZN as the premier university of African scholarship? Whose idea was it, where did it originate?
4. Were there any challenges against the implementation of this vision?
5. What are the different contestations surrounding the concept of African scholarship? What does it mean to the different racial and demographic identities of academics at UKZN?
6. Are there existing structures to support the actualization of this vision? If yes, when were they created?
7. To what extent are the issues highlighted in the mission, goals and core values of UKZN reflected in what is happening at UKZN in terms of academic input and output of both academics and students?
8. Do the pedagogic and curricular structures at UKZN align with the vision of the institution – as the premier university of African scholarship? Do you think this agenda is meaningfully integrated in research, teaching/learning processes?
9. Are there interdisciplinary network structures in existence to drive the vision of UKZN across the faculty? How are these networks patronised?
10. What is the positionality of UKZN viz a viz other institutions in the politics of transforming higher education in South Africa?
11. How does UKZN collaborate with other African universities in transforming higher education in Africa in line with its vision?
12. Are there any formal structures existing between UKZN and other African universities in collaboration with this vision of African scholarship?

13. In what ways can foreign African academics be utilized in promoting this vision within the institution and across other institutions in Africa?
14. At the moment the university is being reconfigured, does this have implications on the vision?
15. What is the role of ranking? Does it have implication on the vision of UKZN?
16. Is UKZN the premier university of African scholarship or is it going to become premier university of African scholarship?