
Post-Colonial Developmental Epistemology and Border Thinking in the African Context

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Abstract

The decline and failures of developmental epistemology recorded across many countries in sub-Saharan Africa following the political independence is the focus of this paper. It seeks to interrogate the kind of epistemology upon which developmental efforts in some of these post-colonial African states have been predicated. It argues that the nature and structure of knowledge production and dissemination within such context are largely responsible for the slow pace in the achievement and quality of development (structural and human) in these countries. The assumption here is, most of these epistemologies of development seem at variance with the various African cultural contexts within which societal transformation and development were anticipated. As a consequence, the continuous failures with respect to development and the fact that the story of development in Africa compared to the significant developmental feats in other parts of the world with similar historical experiences. This observation necessitates the need to probe the nature and quality of epistemology of development that has served many of these post-colonial African states. In this paper I seek to explore the benefits of border thinking which reflects a critique of capitalist epistemology of development that recognizes, attentive to and inclusive of the cultural setting within which discourse on developmental epistemology is problematised. To achieve this goal the paper adopts and appropriates the analytical and evaluative tools of philosophy to examine the state of developmental epistemology in post-colonial Africa while drawing on the relevance of border thinking for this project. As an exercise in philosophy therefore, it prefers the inferential model of reasoning to the empirical data gathering model.

Key Words: Development, Colonialism, Post-Colonialism, Developmental Epistemology, Border Thinking, and Africa.

Introduction

The focus of this paper is an assessment of the state of development of postcolonial Africa as it relates to the epistemology of development. More than anything else, immediately following the formal end of politico-juridical colonialism in much of Africa in the early 60s, there were high hopes, lofty dreams, and outlandish aspirations which were hardly realised because of many contested reasons. Ever since about that time through the present moment the urgency and demands for development are as real and as pressing as ever for much of postcolonial Africa. That Africa is need of development is not in contention as much as why development has remained much of a huge challenge for many countries in Africa. Given the primacy of knowing what kind of development and knowing how to achieve and actualise such accordingly is within the province of epistemology, the paper seeks to interrogate the problematic of development and its challenge in its present context and explores the possibilities thereof.

Background to the Discourse

By developmental epistemology or knowledge for development, I mean the relevant and appropriate knowledge produced and deployed by which a people can transform their society for good. How the knowledge for development of Africa immediately following the apparent end of political colonialism is x-rayed in this work. The goal is to attempt to evaluate the state of knowledge producing resources and disseminating institutions whether or not they have adequately played the critical role in designing relevant developmental epistemological paradigms appropriate for the African situation. Developmental epistemology for sub-Saharan Africa (herein after simply referred to as Africa) has been of intellectual concern for several reasons such that it is not the lack of epistemological paradigm of development but that the several that have been experimented seem to have largely failed to change the story of development in Africa (Olukoshi&Nyamjoh 2007, Ndlovu-Gatseni 2013a; 2013b).

The challenges of development in Africa continue to deepen in the face of a fast-moving world characterized as a knowledge driven one. Thus, the relevance and concomitant respect any country enjoys in the comity of nations is based on the worth and quality of knowledge production that such a country can bring to the global market place among other things. Here, I am taking for granted the large volume of literature on the theorization of the linkages between knowledge and power; Foucault, M (1980), Said, E (2000), for instance. More importantly this entanglement has played and continues to play very important role in the progress or otherwise of development in many ways in Africa in what scholars describe as the colonial matrix of power, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a and 2013b). The space of relevance occupied by many African countries is a function of the quality of developmental knowledge and its competitive worth in a world driven by an aggressive capitalist epistemology of development. A panoramic review of the state of affairs across Africa therefore seems to suggest that the kind of epistemology that has been at the base of the production and dissemination of knowledge with respect to development across Africa have been unreflective of the African experience



and reality and so have not served the cultural context in many of these states. This is particularly evident in how Africa has consistently proved to be a site for the experimentation of various forms of ideas and theorisations championed by experts who typically are hardly locals because for some reasons the occupiers of the levers of power and political governance tend to defer more to the so-called expertise knowledge representative of the developed and advanced world and some multilateral organisations these experts represent. This scenario captures one of the fundamental missing link Olukoshi (2019) describes as the absence of the meeting of minds between a community of knowledge producers and a community of policy implementers on the continent of Africa. He captures more vividly thus, "... it is easier for our finance ministers to take ideas from the World Bank and come home to implement them than to take ideas from, say, the Department of Economics of a state university. In some instances, there is actually even outright hostility between the two communities". Gran (1986) argues that the dismal failure of development policy in Africa is basically the consequence of an externally imposed knowledge system (of course facilitated by the local elites hardly conversant with the dynamics of a deeply historicised process that reinforces the underlying entanglement at play in the global hierarchized play of power, that is, the forces of coloniality at play, see Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, 16) that ignored the legitimacy of local or grassroots knowledge. To that extent, Africa seems to have been unable to demand an identity as an end in itself - to borrow Kantian terminology within the global world affairs. For to be able to achieve that such a people must be able to produce, promote and deploy epistemological resources relevant to their particular contexts and yet critical to the globalization phenomenon driven by capitalist epistemology and logic dominated and controlled by non-African players and actors (Quijano 2000). Against this background, the nations in Africa are yet to occupy any significant place beyond been mere markets, test/experimental grounds, sites and sources of raw data and material (both material and human) where different epistemic regimes that have been applied seem largely inadequate to turn the tide of development positively and significantly. Thus, the unfinished project of the search for an appropriate epistemology relevant to the African developmental situation remains an ongoing project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013; Niang 2018). The overall objective is therefore not only to interrogate the prevailing post-colonial epistemology which to my mind has not served adequately the African developmental needs but to also explore a model of epistemology that is radically relevant to the context under review. This will be articulated by focal exploration and evaluation of the potentials of the proviso of border thinking as a paradigm of developmental epistemology offering us an alternative and a more appropriate route.

Post-colonial Development Epistemology and its Pretensions

The development of any society is dependent on a number of factors. Several normative considerations are raised by question of developmental needs of any society. Whichever way one may want to view this consideration, the role of knowledge to first and foremost ascertain what form and quality of transformation is desirous or otherwise cannot be ignored. Again, the



sustenance and continual advancement of such a society will put in place institutions charged with the cultivation and refinement of developmental values to guarantee the flourishing of that society from generations to generation. In a piece titled, 'Colonialism and its aftermath: the crisis of knowledge production', Taiwo (1993) analyses the fundamentally exclusive nature of colonialism in the light of the state of university as an epistemic site for the production and consumption of knowledge to show that the cultural nature often ignored in the socio-political emphasis are in fact evidences of distortions occasioned by the historical encounters Africa has had with the West. Such analysis is important and crucial in the appreciation of the place and role of institutions which emerged play in the quest for development across the African continent today. In fact, Taiwo goes ahead to argue that the roots of contemporary limited development of the mode of knowledge production in Nigeria can be traced to the impact of these processes. Writing along similar lines, Ndlovu-Gatsheni(2013, 21-22) relies on the distinction made (by R. Grosfoguel 2007) between the locus of enunciation and epistemic location to argue that “colonial interpellation and neo-colonial imperatives forced some Africans that were located on the oppressed side of the colonial difference, to think and speak epistemically like those on the dominant positions. Others fell into epistemic populism that was never translated into concrete emancipatory projects”. In other words, the point worth making is again the fundamental distinction same author makes between emancipatory-reformist outlook and liberation. While the former may be said to have partly happened and in fact does sync with much of the efforts to decolonise the postcolonial environment, the latter which is a much more radical outlook is yet to happen in and around various societies still struggling with the multifaceted problems of nation state building and its accompanying developmental needs. It is therefore not surprising that the various curriculum of scholarship across many universities in Africa are yet to key into the dynamism of the changing times and bridge the gap and needs of the times accordingly. In other words, there should be a deliberate effort to move away from the conventional and colonial template upon which many first generation universities legitimised their emergence. One outspoken scholar who kept echoing this call of reinventing the university to be able to meet the demands of the 21st century and beyond before his demise in 2019 was Professor of the practice of international development - Calestous Juma of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School. For example, amongst many other things, Juma 2005 states that “... the challenge facing Africa is to move away from relying on luck and tenacity, and to create an environment that helps to realise the developmental role of universities across the continent”. Such a task definitely demands openness and collaboration among all the various stakeholders concerned.

The extensive literature on development generally exhaustively teased out interesting matters about development suffice it to note that when the continent of Africa is mentioned issues and challenges of development in various forms emerge. They are as troubling as they are significantly serious. The phases of these developmental issues can be divided into several segments depending on one's interest. For the purpose of this work however while we might

not be particularly interested in outlining all the theories and theorisations about an on development, the focal interest is the evaluation of the epistemological undercurrent of development in post-colonial Africa. Thus, the phase under discourse roughly began in the 60's and 70's when the colonial rule began to fade out in many countries in Africa. Of significance in this historical phase is the extent to which the structures of knowledge and developmental initiatives across many of these countries fared with respect to the goals there were to achieve. It is the contention of this paper that not so much of positive results were achieved given the overwhelming prevalence of an epistemology of development that was never originally meant to transform these societies for good in the first place. As Olukoshi&Nyamjoh (2007,97) argue, much of the ideas and policies of development were external and foreign to the interest and priorities of many independent African countries. Given the lack of investment in developmental thinking following independence, aid and foreign assistance became a fundamental part of the processes of governance and these created a culture of dependence that basically eroded the capacity of governments to determine contextual and peculiar policies relevant to various contexts. In fact, the high hopes of 'independence' soon paled in the face of colonial entrenched structures, many of the indigenous initiatives with torrential force could not go far since for example the larger part of these societies were never schooled to bear responsibilities of development upon which positive societal change was/is largely dependent.

The quality of education and training put in place during the reign of colonial rule in several of these countries in Africa were meant to serve the colonial interest. For the reason that there was exclusion in terms of the kind of scholarship given to these people ensured that the colonial interests were protected with phenomenal consequences for the readiness with which the larger population welcomed and fitted into the new states across Africa. The fairly young, vibrant and overtly zealous independence champions that became leaders were mostly trained in the details of Western epistemic categories that left them with the burden of making appropriate context relevant decisions on the one hand and the exercise of restraint, self-control and discipline in the face of immense resources on the other hand. Colonial rule came to some abrupt end of direct control of the economic interests for which the system was in place in the first instance. Unhappily and grudgingly these former colonial systems paved way for the emergence of new leadership in many of these countries in Africa. For example, why did the newly emerged leaders in many post-colonial African states fail to recognize the deep interests in fostering some relationship even after the political end of colonialism raise enormous questions regarding the quality of the epistemic rigour with which the forebears of independence in Africa procured our independence and thought out the path way to develop post-colonial states. For as Falaiye (2012, 17) opines, the strategies and intellectual resources deployed to overthrow colonialism by championing decolonisation were less useful to sustain the emerging developmental trajectory that ensued in the various new independent states. That many of these new leaders quickly courted erstwhile colonial countries for the establishment of massive and outlandish technological projects with over bloated costs without thorough



assessment of available indigenous human resources, sustainability and advancement which eventually led to almost frittering away of these immense resources leave much to be desired. That the identity and reign as leaders in many of these African nations almost became synonymous with their various countries with ready and harmonious rapport with democratic governments of developed or First world countries is a source of wonder in terms of the real interests of these developed nations in Africa. That these erstwhile colonializing countries became haven for the starching away of the wealth arising from the extraction of raw materials of these newly African states in the post-colonial era raise a lot of question regarding the quality of epistemology within which these new leaders were trained. Perhaps, Baah (2003) was right in his analysis of the failure that the human-centred development initiatives by Africans failed partly as a result of the politics of the cold war which provided the pretext. With the collapse of the central role played by the state to transform the African society, the international institutions as economic hawks further weakened the prospects of the state and ever since then the state of development in Africa has continued to dwindle. This idea forms the central theme of an interview given by Noam Chomsky titled, 'Debt, drugs and democracy', in which the renown American thinker analyses the power relations between the powerful West and the Third world characterised by antics and politics of economic policies and practices that serve the greater interest of the powerful West at the expense of the people of the Third world. The interview was undertaken by Maria Luisa Mendonca as contained in the NACLA Report on the Americas (volume 33, No. 1, Jul\Aug, 1999).

In fact, as Baah suspects and rightly so, that if Africa in contemporary times is not wary of the sudden support from the West towards some so-called new developmental initiatives like the NEPAD, then Africa is indeed on a longer journey towards development than she thinks. Weinstein (2008) in a paper titled "The New Scramble for Africa", traced the historical phases of the pillaging of resources from Africa by Western interest and how these interests were furthered by the liberal capitalist ideologies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in weakening the already small and less sophisticated new states emerging from the ruins of colonial devastation. The West is yet to come to a sincere remorse as far as Africa is concerned. The vested interests in the raw materials and the readiness to defend the continuous exploitation of these interests will stop at nothing as "the priorities for Africa are set by the needs of global capital rather than the needs of ordinary Africans". It is against this backdrop that critics of the activities and works of the aid and philanthropy industry vis-à-vis the numerous issues and causes these Non-governmental bodies/organisations/agencies target are not only intractable but problematic. See more, Moyo D. (2010), "Dead Aid: Why Aid is not working and How there is another way for Africa"; Juliet Lyons' insightful piece with the title, "Foreign Aid is Hurting, not Helping Sub-Saharan Africa".

The challenges of the newly created states with all the structural disharmony coupled with the lack of forthrightness and purposeful leadership, the continent of Africa continue to wobble and fumble as far as development is concerned. The matter is made more complex where the force and consciousness of liberation was never an agenda in the inherited educational system

from the colonial system, Ekeh (1975). Interestingly, Ekeh (1975, 104) makes a poignant distinction between the attainment of requisite education as an avenue to success and as a guarantee of success as by-product of the subversive work of the African bourgeois. While the former invites the beneficiary of the requisite education regards such achievement as a baseline for advancement, the latter demands advancement as a result of such an attainment. This analysis tends to highlight and explain the contextual setting for the undue emphasis and inordinate drive to acquiring certification rather than impactful learning/creativity/relevant value in many societies in Africa today. The consequences have been enormous as the people have been poorly and not qualitatively educated in institutions of higher learning heavily starved of needed funds. The state of education remains significantly poor, while retaining the exclusivist epistemology coloured by curriculum inattentive to the African context and urgently in need of decolonisation, Falana (2018). Such have ensured that there has been pervasive failure to rise above being mere primary producers of raw materials and unprocessed extractive sites. In fact, the lack of synergy between producing and promoting developmental epistemologies and the lack of leadership vision with respect to this has continued to deny Africa its rightful place in the global world.

Alongside these concerns, there have been enormous attempts to convince African countries on the possibilities of going the way of others if they must develop, Oyeshile (2003). Thus, the history of development in Africa will not be complete without reference to the developmental initiatives external to Africa. It is the thinking of this paper that these developmental epistemologies embody capitalist interests that once was a fundament of the entire project of colonialism. This point becomes clearer when one takes seriously the distinction between 'complementary development' and 'competitive development' made in the interview of N. Chomsky referred to earlier in the foregoing. Baah (2003) makes the point poignantly that developmental initiatives in Africa are divided into two, those made by Africans and those made for Africans. While the former is people-oriented, the latter are blind and insensitive to the African context as they are based on free market epistemology.

Generally, three popular Western epistemologies with their capitalist/hegemonic pretensions come under review in this work. They are; the modernization epistemology, the dependency theory and the neo-liberalism epistemology of development. Nyamnjoh (2004, 162) understands this clearly thus that development for Africa is a theme fraught with a multiplicity of Western generated ideas, models and research programmes, all with the purported goal of alleviating poverty. This discourse is carried on mainly by economists and other social scientists who limit the question of development to the problematic of achieving economic growth within the context of neo-liberal economic principles. Of importance of any effort in view of economic growth and development is the development and investment in human capacity/human capital. This investment in education is not just the inculcation of facts as knowledge but a set of values that in turn appraise the knowledge being acquired. When the values are not appropriate for progress, the knowledge acquired is rendered irrelevant and becomes merely cosmetic.



On the part of Ajei (2007), two prominent features of these development paradigms are evident to include; A). Their exaggerated emphasis on measurable economic indexes, especially wealth creation founded on a competitive (or in the case of dependency theory, on a fair) market place, as sufficient categories for defining development and B). Their inspiration by categories and principles of Western epistemology and values. Ake (1982), Mazrui (2002), Nabudere (2002), NyuotYoh (2004) share the view that in an effort to be part of the global system of knowledge production, social science scholarship in its application to Africa is a central apparatus of expatriate intellectual domination of the continent, which agenda has been to ensure the realization of capitalist and imperialist interests across the world. Such economic theories affirm processes and relations that denigrate the values and knowledge systems that sustain indigenous African social organization. In this same regard, Grosfoguel (2008) refers to Mignolo and Quijano to underscore some of the several entangled global hierarchies orchestrated by the West. He notes the epistemic hierarchy that privileged Western knowledge over non-Western knowledge and cosmologies, and institutionalized in the global university system and the linguistic hierarchy between European languages and non-European languages that privileged communication and knowledge/theoretical production in the former and subalternized the latter as sole producers of folklore or culture but not knowledge/theory. This dominant epistemology according to Nyamnjoh (2004, 163) retains the hegemonic certainties of the 19th and 20th centuries that have continued to make waves and inform the social sciences attitudes, development theories, policies and relations in general, especially between the West and the rest – most especially Africa. This type of reductive epistemology views science as preoccupied with the theories of what the universe is, much to the detriment of theories of why the universe is. By rendering science too 'technical and mathematical', it makes it difficult for those interested in questions of why to keep pace with developments in scientific theories. Such view of science has tended to separate the universe into the physical and the metaphysical/religious, and to ignore the fact that people are ordinarily 'not content to see events as unconnected and inexplicable'.

When compared with more traditional epistemologies of the African continent, it tends to limit reality to appearances. It seeks to justify (without explaining) with meta-narratives claiming objectivity and more epistemologically secure truth status. Reality is presented as anything whose existence has, or can be, established in a rational, objective manner, with universal laws operating only in perceived space and time. The science inspired by such epistemology has tended to celebrate dichotomies, dualisms, and analogies, dismissing anything that does not make sense in Cartesian or behaviourist terms, confining to religion and metaphysics what it cannot explain and disqualifying as non-scientific more inclusive epistemologies, Nyamnjoh (2004, 164). Arowogbese (2008, 30) supports the idea that immanently ethnocentric and racist inclinations to create binary opposites between knowledge and ignorance on the one hand; as well as science and magic on the other. In this sense, while West is privileged as the source of scientific knowledge, ignorance and dubious magic are presented as the signifiers of non-Western other, needless to mention Africa. For example, speaking

recently in an interview documented and criticised by Noah Smith (2018), Professor Amy Wax stated that the US should be wary of immigrants from countries that show less respect for empiricism, science, and technology – citing Malaysia while adding that there is essentially no science being done in a place like Malaysia ... no technology... I consider that very closely related to the lack of commitment to empiricism, the lack of a cultural practice of attention to evidence, rigour, analysis, facts. While such a general image may not reflect the entirety of the state of affairs of the epistemological culture in Malaysia and in fact in many parts of Africa, the prevalence and dominance of a religious outlook and mind-set (enchanted religious imagination to borrow from Paul Gifford in the text, “Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa”, 2015) within much of the African context, one is tempted to think such a claim however outlandish quite captures one very critical problem in and across Africa, Oyeshile (2004). Little wonder then Ake (1982) construes it poignantly thus “Africa has been reduced to raw material production and Europe specializes in the production of capital goods and finished products, there is also the ideological reduction of the continent to a source from which data are generated and exported to Europe for advancing the frontiers of knowledge, so that theories are perpetually imported into Africa from the West in a global system dominated by Europe and the West”. The contribution of international organisations in this regard cannot be over emphasized. Weinstein (2008) avers that such systems have ensured that the enormous human and natural resources in Africa only ensure a handful excessively rich African rulers who are collaborators with the foreign capitalists to undo the African continent. To fully capture the entrenched and orchestrated scheme put in place by these Western institutions supported by Western powers to finally ensure that the continent of Africa remain eternally tied to the apron of the Western powers, an elaborate part of the words of Weinstein are instructive. His words;

... in the late 1970s, the dogma began to change; the World Bank and IMF mandated a shift away from industrialization toward economies based solely on the export of raw materials and agricultural products. Loans were now to be used as leverage to impose what were called Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)—programs that mandated slashing social spending, eliminating price subsidies and trade tariffs, and privatizing government-owned industries and services—all in order to pay down foreign debt. This approach flowed from a need to spur world trade and help restore profitability in the advanced capitalist countries following a series of recessions starting in the 1970s; industrializing nations would grow their economies by focusing on producing commodities that could be exported to the rich countries while importing the latter's finished goods. In practice, this had the effect, as under colonialism, of turning Africa back to a one-way conveyor belt of raw materials. Africa today exports the bulk of its natural resources [and sadly, human resources as well as evidenced in the brain drain phenomenon from across Africa to the Global North (no page).

The impact of this agenda has left Africa some seriously enormous multifaceted burden that she is yet to unburden.

This dominant epistemology has engendered theories and practices of social engineering

capable of justifying without explanation almost everything, from colonialism, to neo-liberalism, through racism, and neo-imperialism. Whole societies, countries and regions are categorized, depending on how these 'others' were perceived in relation to the western Cartesian rationalism and empiricism. According to Nyamnjoh (2004, 164)

...as an epistemology that claims the status of a solution, there is little room for introspection or self-sensitivity since countervailing forces are invariably to blame for failure. The assumption is made here that such messianic qualities have imbued disciples of this epistemology with an attitude of arrogance, superiority and intolerance towards creative difference and appropriation.

In fact, the need to revisit the dominant epistemological underpinning of Western education cannot be overemphasized. Given the fact that the values acquired during the colonial era and still prevalent in this era of coloniality that teach superiority of the West which set the tone for imbibing knowledge are at variance with the expectations of ordinary Africans and African reality so impotent in dealing with issues of development in Africa. This call is consistent with the charge of Nandy re-echoed by Weiler (2009) on the expectation of universities (institutions of knowledge production) to begin to act as sources of skepticism toward the victorious systems of knowledge and as the means of recovering and transmitting knowledge that has been cornered, marginalized or even defeated, Falola (2017). This is particularly important where knowledge about development is concerned.

What Border Thinking Is and its Relevance for the African Development Situation

In relation to the epistemology of development in Africa and the education it inspires; it is to be noted that various development programmes have experienced a number of setbacks in the region since independence. Central to this is the perpetuation of inherited colonial knowledge structures which are often ineffective. Compared with other developing nations of Latin America and Asia; Africa faces today a deep and deepening crisis; that she risks being marginalized in the world. Damiba et al (1988:2) declares that African problems are as complex as they are multifaceted. Their resolution ultimately depends on the capacity of people to understand what is happening around them, both internally and externally. Africans must possess enhanced ability to be able to take appropriate steps and cope with a variety of problems surrounding Africa. At the higher levels of leadership, Africa must take a leaf from out of the books of other nations by equipping itself with the intellectual and scientific capacity and the knowledge base to formulate long term strategies. This is the kind of vision inherent in border thinking epistemology.

Against the backdrop that Western epistemic paradigm as neutral, objective and universal; there have been an increasing rise of literature on the debate on modern knowledge systems; Kothari (1987), Weiler (2009) for instance. In fact, Weiler (2009) shows the impact of political forces as underlying the creation and application of knowledge in the discourse on knowledge and development. As Adas (1989, 15) argues,

the application of technological and scientific gauges of human potential has also vitally affected Western policies regarding education and technological diffusion which go far to

explain the varying levels of underdevelopment in the Third world today. The misuse of these standards has not only impeded and selectively channelled the spread of Western knowledge, skills, and machines; it has undermined techniques of production and ways of thinking about the natural world indigenous to African and Asian societies.

This however happened over time as a result of a combination of factors became an important aspect of the expanding world such that when it came in contact with the other cultures, the basis of understanding was already created in what Mignolo calls “the colonial epistemic difference”. According to Mignolo (2017, 292), this colonial epistemic difference, Presupposes a locus of enunciation that controls knowledge and posits itself as the norm, there is need to create the difference. Since the sixteenth century, that difference was bestowed upon non-European population against which Europe built itself as Europe and the rest of world as the fuzzy domain of people with questionable faith and reasoning.

Border thinking as articulated by Walter Mignolo, a leftist post-colonial critic of modernity, whose aim is to be open to thinking other than modernity. In this theory, Mignolo articulates the ways that the epistemology of the subaltern is still colonised many years after the decolonisation of political territories. This situation warrants a decolonisation of the epistemology of the erstwhile colonies. To attain this goal, Mignolo proposes the theory of border thinking. Within this background of challenge that traditional western epistemological paradigms, border thinking manifests as a critique of modernity from the Global South. This project is reflected in the classic piece of G C Spivak titled, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. As argued by Grosfoguel (2008), it is an epistemic initiative and a critical response to the capitalist/hegemonic and marginal fundamentalism that pretends that there is one sole epistemic tradition which achieves truth and universality. Arowosegbe (2008, 33) lends credence that through carefully rewriting the intellectual and nationalistic histories of these societies on their own very terms; it asserts the identities of non-Western cultures (and of course Africans). In the last 500 years, the hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms assume a universalistic, neutral and objective perspective have informed western philosophy and sciences in the “modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system” (Grosfoguel 2005; 2006b). As Ravetz (1984, 10) rightly argues

... we can recall that the Viennese endeavour had a very middle-European flavour. In its struggle against what it claimed were the existing politically-motivated dogmas of theology and metaphysics, it advanced its own version of dogmatic and simplistic version of Truth through science. In this respect it participated in a stylistic tradition going back to Descartes (with deductions of all truths from God's essence), and Galileo (proclaiming 'the conclusions of natural science are true and necessary'). The harshness, indeed arrogance, of their doctrines in natural philosophy was related to that of the expression of the mathematical sciences which were their exemplars. This survives still, most noticeably in teaching, but also in popularisation. Nowhere do the assertions of such sciences (as traditionally served) make a place for criticism; as Popper has observed, the uncritical attitude fostered by teaching in the 'normal science' mode is a danger to science and to civilisation.

The relevance of this exercise; that is, exploring the potentials of border thinking can therefore be broadly seen on two scores; theoretically, given the central role of society or the externalist factors in the knowledge forming process and on the practical plane, given its possible role in the redesign of information and knowledge related social institutions in view of redefining the terms with which Africa can connect with the global world in terms of development. The materials and epistemic conditions that underpinned European colonialism seems to continue to shape current socio-political constellations and global relations among nations of the world. Thus, there has been the formal end of European colonialism but several aspects and elements of the dynamics of relationship between the global North and the global South retain strongly the quality of coloniality. To undo this quality, border thinking is here evaluated.

Feminist scholars like Moraga and Anzaldua 1983; Collins 1990 as well as Third World scholars to include; Dussel 1977, Mignolo 2000, and others remind us that we always speak from a particular location within power structures. Nobody escapes the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system".

What border thinking seeks to achieve is to attempt a redefinition/subsumption of citizenship, democracy, human rights, development, humanity, economic relations beyond the narrow definitions imposed by European modernity. In other words, it is on an epistemic-decolonial mission at a very fundamental level. It asks that two questions be taken seriously; a) where every knowledge claim is derived and b) the interests such knowledge claims serve. This is not only the question of social values in knowledge production or the fact that our knowledge is always partial. The major point is the locus of enunciation; that is, the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks. In western philosophy; the subject is hidden, concealed, erased from analysis. Grosfoguel (2008) distinguishes between 'epistemic location' and 'social location'. The fact that one is socially located in the oppressed side of power relations does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location. The success of the modern/colonial world-system consists precisely in making subjects that are socially located on the oppressed side of the colonial difference think epistemically like the ones in dominant positions. This picture seems to aptly captures the kind of thinking prevalent among people who occupy positions of leadership with regards to the functional knowledge of many Africans who are now employees of multilaterals firms/organisations such as; the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and others. This idea is informed by courting of some of the illustrious and brilliant chaps in such organisations from these erstwhile colonial societies to join the governments of many African countries. In Nigeria for instance, there have been a number of such individuals who have been appointed as ministers of government. The worry and concern is, whose interest such individuals serve and defend while they carry out their responsibility of implementing and executing policies and programme.

Subaltern epistemic perspectives(border thinking for instance) are knowledge coming from below that produces a critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge in the power relations

involved. For Grosfoguel (2008), all knowledges are epistemically located in the dominant or the subaltern side of the power relations and that this is related to the geo- and body-politics of knowledge. Weiler (2009) supports this idea with his fine distinction between knowledge for development from below and knowledge for development from above. S. Harding in the work, *Science from Below: feminism, Post-colonialities, and Modernities* makes a similar use of this imagery in the theorisation of feminist perspective in science studies.

There are immense implications of not talking seriously this form of epistemic and decolonial project for Africa and her quest for development. One immediate casualty is education, which, incidentally is the fulcrum upon which the progress or retrogression of values germane for the development and substance of society depends. Thus, the prospects of how education (knowledge production and appropriation) can impact its immediate society provides the first point of call to begin to take seriously the questions at the heart of border thinking as a model of postcolonial epistemology. One first step to my mind, is the acknowledgement of this problem and then asking the real hard question and seeking answers to the questions. For as Ramose (2011, 12) notes of the prevailing theory and practice of education in Africa and its inability to address African reality is disturbing. For him, education in Africa is dominated by successive and subtle refinements of the colonial conception of education. The effect of this domination is to distort and suppress indigenous African ways of knowing and doing, thereby establishing and sustaining epistemological tension between the former and the dominant refined concept of education.

Concluding Remarks

Despite the various efforts and attempts to advance the cause of development across Africa following the political end of formal colonialism in most parts of Africa, development and its requisite knowledge remain very problematic for much of the continent. While the reasons are many and highly disputed, there is no doubt that the quality of education and its prevailing epistemology is critical to the knowledge-development nexus in the African experience. The structures and institutions of knowledge production in Africa are implicated in the task of putting Africa as co-participants on the table of global economy. While the paper acknowledges the entrenched nature of coloniality in ensuring that several aspects of life of erstwhile colonies are perpetually caught in the web of its structures as evident in very significantly the epistemic dimension of the discourse on development. Though the signs of hope and promise of many post-independence African states fizzled away due to many disputed reasons. Very important in the foregoing presentation, the reasons adduced for this experience are not as important as the viability of the paths suggested as the way forward. There have been myriads of proposition with regard to the most viable way forward in the post-colonial states but one of the most debated is the theory of post-colonial epistemology, for instance, the possibilities that border thinking embodies. The idea is basically that the epistemic beliefs and habits of the people in the post-colonial states are crucially implicated in the success and/or failure of the sort of knowledge produced; the knowledge of nation building

included. Border thinking constitutes a veritable manifestation within the broader post-colonial studies and intellectual attempt to redraw the map of epistemology to make it much more attentive to context.

Its successes as recorded in other places with similar historical experiences with Africa can help to enrich considerations and the ongoing debates of developmental epistemology in the African context.