

Hdrc Education Forum (HEF)
Orienting Sketch for Africa-sensitive Book Project
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A Positioning

The Hdrc Education Forum (HEF) positions itself as an Africa-sensitive or Africa-friendly advocate. Accordingly, it exhorts African professionals, scholars, their partners and Africanists to produce intellectual properties, particularly textbooks, guided by Africentric [Africa-friendly] perspectives, not in seclusion but within the framework of state-of-art trends in global scholarship. This posture fits into the often-undiscussed reality that all scientific inquiries and discoveries are firmly rooted in, and spring from, sociocultural “biases”, in the sense that hitherto focus on one way of being mostly excluded other ways of being. Indeed, Western scholarship and Western scientific discoveries that ordain the reigning world order are not matters of pure accident, divorced from the “Enlightened” cultures and ideological systems in which they were re-crafted and given vibrant tangible expression. Western scholarship is so-called precisely because Western biases, not valid search for universal truths, initially formed the foundation for its scientific investigations and resulted inevitably in Eurocentric generalizations (Kashoki, 1982).

Regrettably, Africans have acquiesced to the “bias” of scientific knowledge in the social sciences, for instance, in the United States as “mostly a body of facts and generalizations about white experience” (Scott, 1973) that largely deprives the Majority World, especially Africa, of the right to its own knowledge systems and practices (Moss and Petrie, 2002). “Africa’s systems possess their own coherence and purposeful consistency, which deserve attention and discovery rather than replacement with a so-called superior system” (Nsamenang, 2005).

An Orientation

Hare (1973) suggested that a Black scholar [more so an African] is more than just “a man [sic] who contributes original ideas, new insights, and information to the existing fund of knowledge.” On the shoulders of the African scholar falls an enormous task. He/She must de-colonize his/her mind prior to any attempts to guide other citizens, intellectuals and students in their quest for liberatory knowledge and lifestyles. The African scholar must be able to destroy, so to speak, obsolescent alien norms and values on and about Africa in order to create and evolve new ones in their place, albeit in the light of the coexistence in contemporary Africa of multiple realities from a triple heritage (Mazrui, 1986), which “no existing theory fittingly explains” and to which “no antecedent evolutionary template exactly corresponds” (Nsamenang, 2005). Africa is an unprecedented sociocultural landscape requiring exploratory “discovery” and enhancement of its strengths and useful components, such as Africa’s supportive social capital, for an increasingly alienating world.

Complementarity, Not Rejection or Revolt of Received Knowledges

Our position/orientation is neither a rejection of nor a revolt against Euro-western knowledges and technologies, but a naïve statement of valiant efforts to transcend posited legacies to understand Africa and its peoples and “modernize” Africanity. This is reinforced by our alertness to the persisting bypass or loss of “sight of the soil out of which the existing African society has grown and the human values it has produced” (D. Westermann, as cited in Kishani, 2001).

This attitude is borne out of a legitimate desire to document experiences and life-journeys (Serpell, 1993) within Africa’s ecoculture and theory of the universe not in competition with or antagonism of imported knowledges but to complement existing chunks of others’ indigenous knowledges that have and continue to be “given to our present [African] experience as if they were timeless, natural, unquestionable” (Rose, 1999). Our bold project to contribute to Africa’s deserved niche within the universal fund of human knowledge also frames this outlook. We consider it our right as Africans to question why a minority of our global village has “a monopoly on the ripple effect” (Kashoki, 1982).

Drawing Strength from Rich Cultures and Wisdom of Timeless Traditions

To be able to explore and truly “discover” the value of contemporary Africa, the African scholar in general and you, as a solicited author of HEF in particular, will have to revisit Africa’s cultural roots and proceed from the thesis that human existence does not exist in a vacuum but that its explanatory theories and practices reflect the structure and values of society. It is in African epistemology – in the legends, myths, folklore, beliefs, customs, superstitions, spiritualities, philosophy, medicine, government, agrarian livelihoods, human connectedness, etc – that the genuine African scholar will find the platform on which to anchor his/her concepts, assumptions, hypotheses, models, theses, and theories.

To us more reliance on and renewed faith in African theories of the universe, cultural traditions, and issues as the basis of the African scholar’s explanatory models hold out any promise of original African scholarship. Instead of the present almost wholesale aping on the Western intellectual traditions, the future African scholar will need to construct models and theories based on concepts and biases embedded in African culture, history and social reality. Wherever necessary and appropriate, the African scholar would have to make informed reference to historical antecedents in the African experience itself and would then draw generalized and generalizable lessons or conclusions from those antecedents. This is best undertaken from awareness that the world has become a tightly entwined and interdependent global community and that Africa has neither locus standi nor offers credible voices in global discourses and international affairs, including decisive African affairs.

Original Contribution from a Laborious Project

In Africa's unique cultural history and experience, we submit, lies the future of a new Africa-based scholarship, a novel perspective, and a freshening epistemology. In this light, we call on you to delve into "your own" or your lived cultural history and experience to "extract" from it relevant aspects or elements of that rich culture and timeless wisdom to weave into your chapter. Our guess is that everyone can begin to imagine the unique contribution s/he would input into the fund of human knowledge from his/her unique cultural position and outlook. Perhaps only few of us have done so prior to now, which is why you are being called upon to systematize and bring Africanity (indigenous Africa) consistently into this project and your scholarship and professionalism generally.

We must acknowledge that this is an onerous agenda, a difficult but not an impossible task, however. If you agree with the HDRC that Africa is a pawn on the global chessboard, then, you will not hesitate to join the "movement" to stop the raging uncritical panting after Western scholarship to take one of Africa's most decisive first, respectable steps on to the fraught expedition into the global community and the knowledge economy (African Union, 2006). Our project can only enrich and extend the frontiers of human knowledge, not impoverish it. Let us accept and act on the spirit of Africa's peer groups of being "better together" in making good progress with this foundational effort to place Africa into active estimable contribution to global knowledge waves.

Tentative Book Title

The tentative title of the first Volume of HEF series is *Generative Pedagogies: Enhancing Africa's Wisdom from Timeless Traditions*. Think of something better; please get back to us with useful suggestions.

Audience

The primary target audience is students in teacher training in African colleges and undergraduate faculties of education. The secondary audience is African researchers/scholars, Africanists, and policy planners.

A Strategic Statement

Our basic intention is to prepare this potential book as a pan-African book. The strategy is for the Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC) to publish the first impression and **hold the copyright** and, as soon as possible, arrange for author(s) per country to print and distribute the book in own country and neighboring countries but to concede a percentage (exact figure to be resolved later by the editorial board) of the proceeds for the sustainability of the HDRC and the editorial board. In this sense, we wish to expand the scope of the book, along and beyond the lines suggested by Prof. Andy Dawes as well as across Africa and beyond. If you have suggestions of prospective authors in countries

other than yours or where you're working, please give us their names and contact addresses but don't inform them.

A decision of how to cover the initial cost of publication and distribution shall be discussed via email exchanges and the final decision taken by the editorial board. However, the initial feeling is that the authors might share this cost, except we will be fortunate to locate and obtain funding in the course of the project. Additionally, we will fundraise and request for "in-house charity." Please advise accordingly if you are privileged with relevant information or strategies.

Depending on how the "Project" turns out, with specific reference to its quality, we will endeavor with the assistance of more informed and well-placed persons like Prof. Andy Dawes and others, to interest the African Union with becoming partner in this project or even supporting and funding it.

Flexible Roadmap

Date	Key Tasks to Be Completed
2007	
June-July	Invitation to serve on the editorial or advisory board and to author chapters. We than those who have already accepted the invitation. Expecting a response soon from those who have not yet responded.
July-August	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sharing the Orienting Sketch for Africa-sensitive Book Project Chapter. 2. Identification of more prospective authors and more invitations to them. 3. A revised outline of chapters/authors/ boards. 4. Fundraising drive and "in-house" charity solicitation/appeal.
August-September	Editor coordinates orienting discourse on modalities, concerns, clarifications, etc. with co-authors and interested board members.
October-December	E-mail exchanges with authors – Sharpening of chapter outline & revision of roadmap, etc.
2008	
January	First draft of manuscript (as a Microsoft word email attachment)
February-May	Editorial review of chapters and feedback to authors for revision
June	Revised manuscript submitted to section editors with copy to editor.
September	All soft copy chapters submitted to editor by section editors.
November	All chapters submitted to the publisher
2009	
January	Book is published
February	Book Launch

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