AFRICAN INDIGENOUS ELDERSHIP, EPISTEMOLOGIES AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR CRITICAL UNIVERSITY STUDIES

Onoyona-Ekeocha, E.I PhD

University of Ibadan

ekeochasoky@gmail.com

+234-802-951-1799

Abstract

Many Western theories imported into Africa encounter dysfunction and fail during application, not because they were faulty, but owing to the lack of consideration for socio-cultural differences between worlds. The error could be blamed on the university curriculum and educational institutional training that is solely grounded in Western ways of knowing, discounting indigenous Southern thoughts, hence the gap. The thesis of the paper states that indigenous elders serve as knowers in many Southern hemispheres, called Agba amongst Yoruba and Okpako in Isoko. Hence, paying attention to indigenous thought systems and social order during theory implementation could help resolve the failure of many Western theories. This paper aims to explore African Indigenous Elders 'knowledge as a contribution to knowledge production in their communities and how this should be integrated into university curricula. Its objectives include determining ways that African Indigenous epistemologies could be used to enrich critical university studies and curriculum development; examining how universities can ethically engage African Elders as co-creators of knowledge, and what challenges or opportunities could be encountered in the developmental processes. It employs

metaphysical concepts, ethnographic discourse, and critical analysis to interrogate and evaluate indigenous notions of belief in the wisdom and justification for elderlyknowledge. It concludes on how indigenous wisdom and knowers could be fashioned into a curriculum for critical university studies across Africa.

Keywords: Indigenous-Epistemologies, Ogbon-Agba, Eldership, Yoruba, Isoko

Introduction

Sustainable research in African universities can be more relevant by the inclusion of practical courses for final year students. But more pertinent is when indigenous knowledge is considered in courses like engineering and architecture, as lived experiences show that project execution in this category requires the input of indigenous knowers and traditional leaders. These rulers, who are mostly elders (Agba) in Yoruba and Okpako in Isoko,represent knowledge agents that could impact the success of such a project. This is the case when considering sustainable projects, and not just the application of Western theories.

Ogbon Agba', as the wisdom of elders as referred to in Yoruba culture, is critical to sustainable societies and valuable to progressive development in these spheres. The lived experience in indigenous societies shows that when local knowledge is incorporated with Western theory, it produces a unique knowledge base. This is the case when indigenous elders, who act as 'knowers',are invited to express

their views and share their knowledge about the implementation of a particular project. This has several benefits,like bridging the gap between old and new, and forknowledge transfer, including assisting in the production of indigenous African theories for African universities and Afrocentric institutions, as collaborative approach in the utilisation of knowledge.

The Itoikin story is significant for learning this lesson in this regard. A myth-like story was told about Itoikin, a Lagos Town, in the ethnographic history of "Itoikin Bridge" located on the outskirts of Lagos (Ọbátulà, 2025). Itoikin is a fishing town and a border town that connects the town to other cities and states. Government intervention led to the construction of a bridge to allow easy access to the commercial fishing town and other associated benefits. This, however, became a mission impossible as the bridge kept collapsing. The story showed that the bridge was difficult to construct, and defied engineering principles; resources and funds were wasted until the 'indigenous elders' intervention. Elders' intervention meant that they applied their knowledge of the phenomenon connected with that environment. The research questions in this paper are: What roles do African Elders play as epistemic authoritiesỌ How can indigenous knowledge be validated in academiaỌ In what ways should university curricula be redesigned to include African Indigenous knowledge and practicesỌ And how can universities build sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities for a sustainable curriculumỌ

Indigenous Eldership and Knowledge Production

A close examination of African cultures and value systems will prove that their humanity and human liveshave always been guided by norms and ideals that direct actions or inactions. These standards are worth studying, despite the lack of writing that could have preserved the thoughts. While ethnographic debates help resurrect these thoughts and capture those ideas, much learning can take place just by observing elders and listening to their wise sayings. In many African cultures, elders are the reservoir of knowledge, which they disseminate through wise sayings and storytelling. Though, formal education is the forte of the West, the curriculum approach in many educational institutions discountenance African systems and African approaches as backwards; an attitude that should be frowned upon since African epistemologies largely owe many to experience and intuitions. Both serve as justification for knowledge in these societies.

Many African students know little or nothing about African methods and approaches to the theories in their area of study, despite the fact that, as Africans, they come across these notions every day. This is particularly challenging as their educational curriculum, embedded in Western epistemologies, alienates them from their lived experiences.

This is the case when close observation shows that several Western theories have their African equivalent, or their African approaches.

This gap in understanding indigenous knowledge can be bridged with research and studies that pay close attention to indigenous notions and ideas, thus leading to progressive curriculum development. As it stands, African epistemologies are critical and vital to the continuous progress of the continent. Largely, African epistemologies evolved from observation and could be justified by experience. It becomes necessary to explore the integration between Western theories and the indigenous system of knowing, particularly in anticipation of how engaging with university and educational curriculum will add to sustainable practices. Speculatively, such a feat that includes communities' engagement should improve practical education in Africa. Collaboration between Western theories and indigenous views also portends an emergence of an holistic curriculum.

Studies in African proverbs confirm that wise saying is the forte of elders, portraying African elders as knowledgeable and acting as knowers. In this indigenous view, African proverbs serve as a theory of knowledge, particularly when "taken to mean the perception of the origin, nature, reliability, or unreliability of what constitutes a relationship between the knowing subject and the known object". According to Dei (2016), African societies have their special ways of understanding their metaphysical worlds and their connection to social life, which makes their perspective unique. He insists that their understanding could be found in their use of language and selected proverbs. To buttress the relevance of proverbs in African

epistemology, Etta (2012) justifies and defends African philosophy by insisting that African proverbs are necessarily and essential to the understanding and transmission of African epistemology. This could explain why Oyewunmi (2004) frowns at the 'racialization of knowledge', indicating that it is one of the effects of Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism is an idea that ascribes the primacy of European experience and knowledge. This approach to teaching could be experienced in principles and theories applied through university scholarship. Lamenting this system of education and colonised knowledge in universities and African educational institutions, Oyewunmi (2004) insists that "Europe is represented as the source of knowledge and Europeans as knowers", and this effect continues to be the case in the educational curriculum of many African universities. Thus, decolonising the curriculum means that researchers and students will collaborate in the production of indigenous knowledge that impacts a practical approach to curriculum education. In contrast to Eurocentrism, Africans know a lot, and what they know can serve as sources of knowledge, a thought and knowledge system that should be developed and included in the educational curriculum. African epistemes rely on senses and their lived experience, and when it involves their societies, many African elders act as knowers who disseminate knowledge through sayings and proverbs. In examining what constitutes a "relationship between the knowing subject and the known object", Lajul (2024) insists that African societies have their own ways of knowing and understanding relationships, which can be explored in their language

and selected proverbs. Accordingly, proverbs and wise sayings are employed in the daily lives of many Africans, particularly indigenous ones. Still on knowing, Lajul explains that a special place is reserved for mystical knowledge, gained through divination, a practice which many indigenous Africans understand.

Elders in African cultures are conversant with employing minimal words in communication, and elderly conversations are embedded with double connotation; it is very unclear whether this approach comes with age or is passed down from mouth to mouth. However, when elders get to speak, hidden in their words are wisdom and life lessons, of which the listener has to think critically to understand them.   For instance, Isoko elders always speak in proverbs, as they employ idiomatic expressions and sayings that serve as a knowledge system. This has been confirmed in focused debates, Ekpoh (2025), where idiomatic expressions are lived experiences amongst Isokos.

Hence, for practical education that recognises theory and practices, universities and educational institutions in Africa should intentionally include an African knowledge base and traditional teaching in the curriculum. This approach could improve education as student can relate more with their lived experiences, which enables practical studies.

To emphasise it further, Jimoh (2023) connects the relationship between knowing and knowers as "cognitive agent (knower) and the

object of cognition (the known)"as indigenous elders serve as agents in knowledge practice, thus grounding African epistemology as a communitarian epistemology. Furthermore, indigenous elders act as knowers when their knowledge is sought after in matters concerning their ethos. Ethnographic researchers (Momoh,2000) show that when approached, many elders would gladly share their views on matters that concern their sphere. Hence, elders become informants on issues that are sensitive, speculative and mystical knowledge. The use of wise sayings, idioms and proverbs is a common place in all interactions. Thus, being African necessarily means being familiar with proverbs, as hanging around elders, particularly the indigenous ones, produces loads of knowledge. In this approach, many elders are conversant with the interposition of wise sayings into their communications.

African Elders know how to incorporate wise sayings into their communication to buttress their point; such elders do not like wasting words. This explains sayings like 'what an old man can see sitting down, the child would not see, even when he climbs the tree'. These sayings and many like them in the communication styles of indigenous elders show a distinction between Western and Southern Epistemological approaches. A wise student who listens to such sayings and applies them is sure to make fewer mistakes in their daily living. Thus, studying elderly sayings could be beneficial as knowledge transfers, to successful living and understanding African approaches would resolve the knot experienced when applying

foreign theories in the African environment.

The Itoikin example and many others like it could explain why many Western theories fail during application, particularly when executing the projects. This shows that indigenous viewsare critical to project planning or execution. The Itoikin experience could not be easily brushed aside until indigenous elders intervened and halted the waste of time and funds. Another possible explanation for dysfunctional theories is the foreign nature of such philosophies. Thisexplains why, to make the theory more practical, university curricula and institutes of training should consider involving elders in practical project implementation, particularly when it concerns the environment, to allow for collaboration between Global Northern Epistemologies and Global Southern Epistemologies. Elders' intervention meant that they applied their knowledge of the phenomenon. Here, elders are not only the 'knowers' but are the faculty of this environmental and indigenous engineering principles. Hence, despite its being a social intervention to ease the lives of those citizens, government agencies and researchers could not act alone without adherence to certain indigenous protocols. Thus, in addition to Western theories and principles, employing indigenous views, sayings, and proverbs can help resolve African social issues, as taking cognisance of them in application to theories like the ones above would guarantee fewer errors.

Therefore*, Ogbon Agba (*elderly wisdom) as an indigenous

epistemology, provides an alternative approach in resolving African crises, particularly the problem between theory and practice, and the concerns arising from project execution. Recognising and resolving this problem is critical for African faculties, researchers and students, who need to embrace a new narrative of an inclusive indigenous knowledge system, which ethnographic research can contribute knowledge. Candidly, ethnographic researchers according to Momoh (2000) have made valuable contributions to African studies and the understanding of African thought systems.

Thus, a further study that explores African epistemology, like 'OgbonAgba', adds to such knowing. Africans employ several notions of knowing, including intuition and senses, as indigenous sources of knowledge. Interrogating these applicable ideas involves networks of university communities. This is necessary for collaborative generation of indigenous curriculum at the final year level where students would be required to seek indigenous knowledge-base to support their theses. Such knowledge would not be complete without the input of elders, traditional leaders, and rulers, who represent indigenous knowing and knowers. Isoko elders"Okpako' and Yoruba 'Agba'could be properly referenced and their 'knowing' incorporated as Faculty education. Progressively, these sages and indigenous faculties will have to teach courses as a way to transfer knowledge, thus assisting the production of indigenous African theories for African universities.

Exploring African Indigenous Eldership

The fundamental assumption in indigenous eldership is the regard and value for chronological age, displayed in '*Agba'*. Wisdom in this sphere comes with age or by association. Indigenous people can identify the difference between children brought up by their parents and those who grew up with elders. It owes to the experience of finding such children being extra wise beyond their peers; they are admired for their maturity. Yoruba have special names for such children; they were referred to as *Omo Agba* (child of elders), child of the aged. But beyond this, there is a great regard for age and wisdom in these cultures, as elders are believed to be the embodiment of wisdom. Indigenously, Intuition and lived experience serve as a justification for elderly knowledge, including inspiration, linked with the sphere of influence. Validating elderly wisdom helps address what Falola (2025) refer to as "Western dominance in the field of epistemology", thereby affirming the realm of indigenous African knowledge systems and metaphysical thought. African thoughts, sayings and proverbs show their understanding of the connections between the physical and spiritual worlds, which approach influences societal organisations and roles. This approach is the same for other African cultures like Isoko, Yoruba and Igbo cultures, amongst others. This explains why elders who understand this view and fail to live up to social expectations are soon stigmatized as useless elders '*Agba Iya*'. The notion of 'Useless eldership' is a stigma and label that no indigenous African wants to be associated with. Elders want to be associated with respect and

regard. Thus, in many African settings, elders are part of the society; they live amongst 'others' at home, not in care centres as it is found in the West. Elders living with their families create a mutually beneficial relationship. Many elders are perceived and honoured as wise, connoisseurs of knowledge. As age is considered an honour and highly regarded, those entrusted with this sphere of indigenous epistemology help in transferring trans-generational knowledge to those around them, and they serve as a pot of episteme. Elders thus serve as the source of knowledge transfer, trainers and mentors of their grandchildren, as they act as custodians and gatekeepers to trans-generational knowledge, as the general belief is that children brought up by grandparents are wiser, with a better understanding, which helps them in making wise decisions.

The belief in eldership could explain why many African cultures view eldership as a thing of pride, and people want to be associated with being elders. Again, elders are prominent in the decision-making of the next generation; they partake in critical decision-making like marriage rites, indigenous naming and other cultural ceremonies. According to Onoyona-Ekeocha (2024), the naming system in Isoko is an avenue to honour elders. The view is that elders' opinions matter, and the regard accorded them is displayed when the oldest person takes on the rite of naming a child.

Isokos have a custom that celebrates the oldest man in the clan and in the village; this could explain why many young people cannot wait to

be elderly or to become seniors. Seniors, according to Oyewunmi (1997), are given regard and respect. Fondly, young Yoruba girls like to be called *Iya* that is, 'mother', after birthing a baby, another way of respect and regard, progressing to eldership.

Indigenous Epistemic Notions of Knowledge

For Yoruba, *Ogbon-Agba* (wisdom of elders),is usually associated with modules like *ojuagba,* (elderly perceptions), and *Ikoko-Ogbon, (*pot of knowledge) while the Isoko associated term is *Okpako (*elders). Coincidentally, amongst the Isokos, many elders become titled chiefs, called *Edio.* While *Edio* is the plural, *Odio* is singular; the point is that these titled elders serve as critical thinkers whose views influence others. For Yoruba, the committee of elders also helps develop critical thought systems employing their wisdom, *Ogbon* and perception.

Undauntedly, indigenous African elders' knowledge base is useful during the application of Western theories for critical university studies and future curriculum development. According to Owolabi (2001),the notion of *Ogbon Agba (*elderly wisdom) resonates as a communal philosophy of the Yoruba. It indicates the "veneration of wisdom as the ultimate value". He indicates this as a conception of elderhood and the deployment of the idiom of age in Ibadan, explaining that certain factors circumscribe 'elderly authority' and status in this sphere, including metaphors of seniority, considered as the prerogative of 'elders'.

Indigenously, the view about the wisdom of the elderly and the act of knowledge transfer reveals that each clan is gifted with certain secrets that help the progress of its people. For instance, among Isokos, skills about the herbal potency of certain plants are bestowed on a family, usually the oldest man, who can confide the skill to his child or a faithful servant. This same approach of knowledge systems and knowledge transfer could be found in many West African cultures. Their knowledge methods flow between closely knitted spheres as they share their knowledge among trusted family members and associates.

Hence, the expectation is that those who have questions can seek out the wisdom and council of elders, as custodians. And when this happens, the custodian senses that the seeker is facing a situation that requires honesty, and they act appropriately. Indigenously, elders perceive that when a person becomes critical by seeking an explanation about certain occurrences, this reveals the inquirer's ability to deal with the truth and their capacity to face reality. Thus focus group discussion held with these elders during research will contribute to academia, particularly if included in university curricula.

On validating African Epistemology

The experiences with social media and other trends in African social life have resulted in mistrust among associates, and African *agba* (elders) are not exempt from the brunt of this mistrust. Many African

elders now face suspicion from the younger generation as many of them seem to have betrayed the respect and regard accorded them. Hence, many young people do not find it easy to confide in their struggles and challenges with the *agba*, despite the strong belief that these elders have hindsight and foresight.

Hindsight and foresight could explain the saying like *agbalagba kin paro* meaning elders don't tell lie; and others like, *Oju lagba n ya, agba kin ya enu*, (elders perceive more than they communicate). This corroborates intuition, understanding certain phenomena and the force of perception in elders; owing to the hindsight and foresight of elders. In "African gnosis", Mudimbe (1985) insists on African knowledge not being confused with the epistemic sense, that there are "knowledge worthy of pursuit, as they were "mythical, religious and intuitive in nature (Ani, 2013). Intuitiveness, hindsight and foresight feature regularly in African epistemes. This explains why elders are perceived as embodying truth. Emphasising this further the indigenous belief is that elder have experience and backup knowledge, and, elders make decisions, issue warnings, cautions and counsels which should not be taken lightly, which can be expressed through saying like *agbalagba ki n paro*, 'elders don't lie', is not in literal terms, as the opinions of such elders are based on experience. Hence, the general belief is that it is rude to say an elder is lying. Clearly elders may not have all the facts, yet a younger person is not expected to declare them liars. In this indigenous setting, the character trait of elders should identify them as knowers and justifies

their experience. Hence, among Yorubas, it is a slight on the eldership to be associated with lies and falsehood.

The notions about hindsight and foresight place elders above others, though a younger person may acquire formal knowledge, thereby believing that they are more intelligent. Elders possess age and have lived experience. For Òkè (2005), "as living humans who have experiences", African epistemology owes more to elderly perceptions, which could later be verified and justified after certain occurrences, than the logic that can be attested to by others. For Adeboye (2007), "Elderly wisdom" in Yoruba has a similar culture to age. While Ipadeola (2024) explains that wisdom "*Ogbon*" or *Ogbon-inu* or *laakaye* equates practical wisdom, she indicates that adroitness, *Ogbon,* is the hallmark of maturity and leadership among Yoruba. *Ogbon,* then, is the forte of seniors. As elders in many indigenous African cultures enjoy this privilege, they could become rulers, as people give them preferential treatment. Hence, elders who want to continue benefiting from this sphere have a lot of work to do. This must explain why many African elders watch their experiences prevent them from voicing opinions indiscriminately.

Critical University Studies and Curriculum Development

Progressively, universities can build sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities as a means of decolonising educational curriculum, to help minimise Western dominance in the field of epistemology and other forms of knowledge systems. This way,

instead of discountenancing the metaphysical and intuitive nature of African thought systems, engaging in the merging of Western epistemologies with African realities will show how indigenous epistemologies can inform societal development. Aligning with this approach and philosophy would be a growing and difficult process, yet it would have eventual benefits.

This means harvesting the revered position attached to the elderly knowing system, and the continuous belief in the capacity of elders to justify knowledge on intuition. Having been exposed to esteeming Western values and thought systems, validating wisdom through hindsight and foresight is at risk; particularly with formal education and the application of a new curriculum. The question is, with elders who do not like to talk, how patient will they be in helping their student gain insight and a better understanding of indigenous notions, especially, when children come home, to question that are taken-for-granted, assumptions and the knowledge baseQ Clearly, many trust in their books, believing in social media more than in indigenous *episteme*.

Accordingly, Au, (2012) addresses the problem of Critical curriculum studies by insisting on students' understanding of the world around them. For him, this should include "curriculum theory, and critical educational studies" as teaching should be embarked on for social justice. The author insists that this can only be achieved in a transformative curriculum which challenges existing theories. In

another study, Hurlimann, March and Robins (2013) examine "University curriculum development", as stuck in a process, particularly as many African institutions are stuck with a Western curriculum. It therefore appears that the process of breaking free involves more policy development and a decolonisation of educational systems across Africa.

Clearly, the curriculum challenge is real for many African universities. This explains why Ndlovu (2019) views it from a Decolonisation approach. The work examines the current status of "power structure with multiple forms of colonialism that affect the meaning of development within the Development Studies curriculum" (Ndlovu, 2019).He explains that differences in the social and epistemic backgrounds of different institutions blur the definitions of colonisation. Notwithstanding, African students know little or nothing about indigenous philosophy, and how it correlates, or differs from their curriculum. Thus, it is certain that works need to be done through revisiting and restructuring of the curriculum in many African universities, with the urgency for knowledge transfer as justification for knowledge.

For instance, indigenous pedagogy allows elders you use fewer words and more symbols. In this method, a story was told by a student whose grandma wanted to teach a lesson about relationships. Grandma decided to use food. She wanted to cook beans, so she decided that the student should cook hers separately. Ignorantly, the

youth washed the beans and cooked them. After which, she tried to eat the cooked food, only to discover that the eating experience was traumatic, as there were stones in the beans. While she suffered with the 'rocks' colliding with her teeth, Grandma was having fun eating hers. The young one decided to partake of Granma's portion. The elderly woman refused to share, but quickly shared the moral of her action. The moral is, just like the beans needed to be picked, the student was supposed to 'choose her friends. She was taught that not everyone qualifies to be called 'a friend'.

Their unique style of teaching is common among many African elders, and it has proven to be very effective over time. For many African elders, instead of spending days and long hours teaching and providing guidelines, they would rather engage in proverbs and deep sayings to express their views. Such sayings evolve from experience, which progresses into intuition, hindsight and foresight.

This approach to eldership does not welcome questions and logic of reasoning, as previously stated that it is embedded in respect for chronological age and the accompanying experience, more than logical deductions. Thus, African *episteme* rely on intuitional verification, which formal education based on the Western curriculum does not support. But developing this skill of intuiting knowledge becomes difficult for younger generations as they are faced with several distractions. The lack of understanding of the African system of knowledge and approaches to indigenous

knowledge systems is evident in their choices.

In this wise, curriculum development in education incorporates *Ogbon-agba,* the Elder's knowledge, or elders who eventually become moral agents. As relying on elderly wisdom allows for less error in judgment, young people ought to ask their elders for input in approaching life; this allows for riding on the experience of others. For Isoko, age continues to represent leadership. *Ekpako*, representing the plural form of *Okpako*as leaders in all spheres of life, are expected to have a track record. Isoko watch their *Okpako* all the time. They study their leadership styles and manner of approach to determine whether they were worthy of more regard or less.

The leadership levels vary in Isoko, allowing for eloquence and strategic representations during certain meetings. In this sphere, only an appointed leader '*Otota'* speaks on behalf of others. This is practised for experience and knowledge of special celebrations. Thus, such elders understand the expectations in their communities, and they are to propagate the peace and progress of the community. Such checks and balances mandate selected or elected elders to defend their stewardship and uphold the regard accorded to their age.

Osu, the government, understand how indigenous people can manipulate *Otho,* the earth,to react cosmically against injustice. Hence, despite the respect and regard accorded to elders, they were expected to conduct themselves with dignity and respect. According

to the saying that 'there is honour and regard in eldership', this type of honour exceeds materialism.

Critical Analysis

Validating indigenous epistemologies can take place through redesigned curricula in African universities to include African Indigenous knowledges and practices. Universities can also build sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities when they are referenced and included in project execution. The saying that 'the fear of elders is the beginning of wisdom' teaches that the training of children is perceived as the responsibility of everyone. Africans do not practice elderly homes; rather, elders, particularly those who have worked hard, invest in the life of their immediate and extended families, and get to stay at home with their children and grandchildren. This is for care and as a means of knowledge transfer. This way, elders transfer intergenerational wisdom to their children and grandchildren. Hence, grandparents serve as companions to their grandchildren, and those grandchildren help create an environment that is mutually beneficiary.

Indigenous psychology holds that children trained by grandparents show more maturity, make better choices and display wisdom beyond their age. This owes to the methods of transferring knowledge and sharing experience, as previously cited. Ironically, while many of these elders and grandparents could not have succeeded in getting their own children to listen, they could be more

successful with their grandchildren.

Critically, the vacuum in learning and understanding Indigenous epistemologies has been created over time, with the elevation of Western theories over other forms of knowledge and epistemologies. The impact is felt during project implementations, leading to the failures of those theories. The new approach could no longer afford to elevate Western approaches over Africa's rich epistemological and ontological experiences, known as '*Ogbon-agba'* wisdom of elders. As *oju agba*' elderly perceptions, reveres elders, require exploration. This is more than an examination; it is going back to what works, as indigenous experiences have been able to sustain these communities over time.

It is therefore time for African Universities to harvest, indigenous knowledge base of elderly wisdom, *Ogbon agba*, and *oju agba*' elderly perceptions, to build up Africa's *'ikoko ogbon"* pot of knowledge', for developing curriculum studies in African Universities, as a practical application for the African context. Thus, it requires more ethnographic, critical and philosophical exploration of African epistemologies. This includes ideas about how to engage and harness the network of university communities for collaborative generation of an indigenous curriculum. Thus, for critical university studies across African and policy-making institutions, it is time to propose practical courses for final year students, which require traditional leaders and rulers, who represent indigenous elders like

'*Okpako'* and '*Agba',* to be incorporated into the academic curriculum. These sages will serve as faculty to teach similar indigenous notions, as a way to transfer knowledge. This explains why academic intervention for the production of indigenous African theories for African universities will continue to be insisted on in Afrocentric institutions, encouraging collaborative utilisation of knowledge.

Again, in characterizing elders, *Agba* and *Ekpako,* who are being incorporated into these institutions, should also understand the need to be patient, as the cultural approach to knowledge that allows Elders to be all-knowing could no longer be attainable. Elders should create an atmosphere for effective communication and mutual sharing, being calm and patient in transferring the required knowledge. As the Yoruba popularly hold that temperate elders attract more mentees. 21st-century youth will not accept the elders' position of docility. They will raise questions, like the justification for knowledge. Evidently, holding back information on the grounds of sacredness is no longer acceptable. People are curious; they want to know those secrets, as ignorance of these notions and approaches hurts the African psyche.

Harnessing indigenous epistemologies will contribute greatly to knowledge; it will allow new approaches to the Pedagogy of teaching. For instance, with the centre of African studies in almost every university, graduates of engineering may understand indigenes

approaches to simple things as cutting down a tree and the idea of new road construction in certain areas, which, when not properly executed, impacts the success of the project. Hence, *Elders*, *Agba* and *Okpako* help pave the way for progressive and restorative project studies in Africa.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Thus, curriculum development should promote more indigenous research methods through discussion sessions like Town-square meetings, indigenous knowledge support systems, which enable the incorporation of local knowledge in implementations of projects, to bridge the gap between theory and practice, in which case, experiences would serve as enough justification for knowledge.

Indigenous wisdom can become a curriculum for critical university studies across Africa; its framework can be sustained by proposing practical courses for final year students, which require traditional leaders and rulers as teachers. Such courses serve as a way to transfer knowledge, thus assisting in the production of indigenous African theories.

Therefore, African universities and Afrocentric institutions can collaborate in the utilisation of knowledge. Thus, it elevates the role of researchers in documenting and disseminating Indigenous knowledge. This could be achieved by introducing a curriculum where the module involves ethnographic debates, lectures and

seminars.

Again, a concerted effort should be directed at African study centres in African Universities as a strategy to drive the research in African studies, developing the knowledge base, as research would help capture long-forgotten notions, creating a better understanding of African approaches and the belief systems.

This serves as a means of comparative analysis with Western theories, which usually encounter dysfunction during application in the African terrain. Many of these Western philosophies and theories fail during application, giving Africa the bad image that theories do not work, whereas the problem is not the continent, but the imported philosophies.

Ironically, African elders were able to manage African problems before the addition of Western ideas; surely, they can do it again. Thus, incorporating local community and indigenous notions in theory applications is critical to progressive Africa and curriculum development in many African universities.

References
Adeboye, O. (2007). *The changing conception of elderhood in Ibadan*, 1830-2000.
Ani, N. C. (2013). Appraisal of African epistemology in the global system. *Alternation, 20*(1), 295-320.

Au, W. (2012). *Critical curriculum studies: Education, consciousness, and the politics of knowing*. Routledge.

Busija, L., Cinelli, R., Toombs, M. R., Easton, C., Hampton, R., Holdsworth, K., ... & McCabe, M. P. (2020). The role of elders in the wellbeing of a contemporary Australian indigenous community. *The Gerontologist, 60*(3), 513-524.

Ekeocha, I. E. (2021). *Transgenderism, agency and personal identity* (doctoral dissertation).

Falola, T. (2025). *Yorùbá metaphysics: spirituality and supernaturality.*

Gaski, H. (2019). Indigenous elders' perspective and position. *Scandinavian Studies*, *91*(1-2), 259-268.

Hurlimann, A., March, A., & Robins, J. (2013). University curriculum development–stuck in a process and how to break free. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 35*(6), 639-651.

Ipadeola, A. P. (2024). Omoluabi feminism: political leadership through an African lens. In *Research Handbook on Feminist Political Thought* (pp. 466-479). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Kennedy, A., McGowan, K., Lindstrom, G., Cook, C., Dean, Y., Stauch, J., ... & Price, S. (2020). Relational learning with Indigenous communities: Elders' and students' perspectives on reconciling Indigenous service-learning. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, 8*(1).

Lajul, W. (2024). "Theory of Knowledge in Selected African

Languages and Proverbs." In *African Philosophic Sagacity in Selected African Languages and Proverbs*, pp. 151-180. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024.

Mudimbe, V. Y. (1985). African gnosis: philosophy and the order of knowledge. *African Studies Review, 28*(2-3), 149-233.

Ndlovu, M. (2019). *Decolonising curriculum in an African university: The case study of development studies at the University of South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities).

Ọbátúlà, A. A. (2025). *Odo Ayee: The Itokin river reported to have taken away the life of popular construction engineer, Julius Berger! How true?* Retrieved from: https://www.tiktok.com/@_aremooflagos/video/7506225906025811206

Òkè, M. (2005). From an African ontology to an African epistemology. *An African journal of philosophy/revue africaine de philosophie, 1*(1), 25.

Owolabi, K. A. (2001). Wisdom is Mightier than Might: Fagunwa's Narrative and the Yoruba Communal Philosophy. *Journal of Cultural Studies, 3*(2), 574.

Oyewumi, O. (2004). Conceptualizing Gender: Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies. *African gender scholarship: Concepts, methodologies and paradigms*, 1-8.

Sefa Dei, G. J. (2020). Elders' cultural knowledges and African indigeneity. *The Palgrave handbook of African education and Indigenous knowledge*, 279-301.

Viscogliosi, C., Asselin, H., Basile, S., Borwick, K., Couturier, Y., Drolet, M. J., ... & Levasseur, M. (2020). Importance of Indigenous elders' contributions to individual and community wellness: results from a scoping review on social participation and intergenerational solidarity. *Canadian Journal of Public Health, 111*, 667-681.

Yang, T., & Warburton, D. E. (2018). Indigenous elders' role in fostering intergenerational relationships with youth. *The Health & Fitness Journal of Canada, 11*(4), 88-93.