

Article:

Revisiting Rigour And Relevance in 'African Higher Education'¹

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So I am ashamed for the black poet who says, "I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet," as though his own racial world were not as interesting as any other world. I am ashamed, too, for the colored artist who runs from the painting of Negro faces to the painting of sunsets after the manner of the academicians because he fears the strange unwhiteness of his own features. An artist must be free to choose what he does, certainly, but he must also never be afraid to do what he must choose". Langston Hughes

Asi vacho vanofunga kuti vanoziwa – nyanzvi, zvitopota nemagodozori. Havazivi kuti pane kumwe kuziva kuri kuseri kwekwavanoti kuziva. Ignatius T. Mabasa.²

(Even those who think they know- experts, specialists and professionals, they do not know there is knowing beyond what they call knowing. "Kusaziva Huroyi"- Ignorance is bliss/death Muzivi wenzira yeparuvare ndiye mufambi wayo Chinoziva ivhu kuti mwana wembeva anorwara - It is only the soil that knows that the field mouse's offspring is unwell Ruzivo- Knowledge Kuziva- Knowing Vazivi- Those who know

Introduction

At the very start, lest one be accused of homogenizing tendencies, confronting the complexities of African higher education, research and knowledge production, consumption, and dissemination entails acknowledging that Africa is indeed a diverse continent. It is however also crucial to point out that despite the diversities and particularities of different African contexts, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, there are commonalities in the way that challenges in higher education have been approached. This is a contentious issue.

In approaching this contentious issue, one must be conscious of the contradictions, inherent in discussing and trying to understand higher education in different African spaces, since the nature and form taken by higher education is resultant of tensions in historical and contemporary, socio-economic and political, endogenous and exogenous processes, among many others. Riddled with many challenges such as graduate unemployment, human capital flight, disease and poverty, as well as "failed" or predatory vampire states, African states and civic bodies have found themselves looking to education, in this instance higher education, as a source of some of the problems, as well as a potential solution to some challenges. Education cannot provide a quick fix solution to the problems, but it can slowly help to embed a critical culture and a way of being and imagining that may aid in finding lasting solutions to Africa's problems.

The acts and processes of knowing have always been imbued with power. What and how we know of the world remains a crucial determinant in our (co) creation of realities. It is also worthwhile noting that no linear conception of any phenomena, higher education included, can ever produce a wholly constituted picture. This makes it imperative for scholars to consider a number of issues in this regard, while also working within the confines of trying to ensure logic and coherence in the discussion. Too many issues surrounding higher education, research and knowledge gather in my mind as I try to grapple with this discussion, making it rather difficult to be linear, let alone coherent. One of the most pressing of the many issues I have encountered in discussing higher education in Africa with colleagues is whether there is enough *rigour* and *relevance* in the system. Is the nature of research on the continent systematic and precise, whilst at the same time speaking of, and to the multi-layered realities of differing African contexts? Is the nature of our research directed at not just understanding the world, but also changing it? It seems to some that the Weberian disenchantment with the world of lack and depravity may have been replaced with a kind of knowledge enchantment, in which knowledge production and dissemination suffer the danger of being caught up in ‘fantasyland’, refracted through mirrors and ending up in the same place. This leaves me with the question: for what, for whom, through whom is knowledge in Africa (un) produced?³

The need for emphasis on rigor and relevance in research and teaching in higher education cannot be overstated. The production, acquisition and dissemination of knowledge(s) in an “unrigidified” and “undisciplined” manner, useful as tools to the contexts in which such types of methods take place, remain complex and contentious issues, eliciting varied responses from various sectors of the academe, and in the broader sphere of social thought. Epistemological and ontological contestations around teaching, research and curriculum development in some “post-colonial” African contexts point to the need to constantly revisit issues of rigor and relevance, and to craft strategies in which African higher education can contribute not only to making local approximations and (re)presentations of complex realities, but also to finding ways of making these realities palatable.⁴ This may include strengthening efforts at widening access to knowledge(s) that still, for various reasons, occupy the margins. Attempting to make an exhaustive analysis of rigor and relevance in African higher education and research can be the subject of a series of texts. Within the confines of this discussion, I will try to focus on a number of issues that I deem useful in understanding the state of higher education in Africa today. My arguments are going to be based on Zimbabwe, where I have had a longer experience in a higher education institution, as well as on my experiences and conversations with young and established academics. Other illustrations and support for the discussion will be drawn from some of the work that has been conducted on education in general, and higher education in Africa. Consequently, my focus, though brief, is going to be on:

- Historical Development of (Higher) Education in Africa
- Decades of (mis/un)education, structural, and intellectual mal-adjustment

- The “sations”: Hierachisation and Marginalization in an age of Internationalisation
- Unhu Hweruzivo- Whither African Higher education?

My discussion partially follows closely what Mamdani⁵ has termed the colonialist, nationalist, and neoliberal phases in the development and conceptualisation of higher education in Africa. However, I cast my examinations in the mould of establishing, or questioning the “rigor” and relevance either ushered in, or shorn by these phases and the events and processes accompanying them.

Subsumed within these major issues are various contestations around the legacies of colonial and canonical exploitations and expropriations of Africa—such as the postcolonial vampire state and “neocolonial” epistemic violence, and the dwindling of academic freedom and its seeming subservience to the market, especially against the background of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS⁷) and whatever have emerged as the sanitised replacements of failed neoliberal philosophies. My position is of a young, aspiring academic/researcher, trying to make sense of the processes taking place and to find relevant ways to contribute to knowledge, and in some way to the socio-economic and political condition of the African continent. I also hope to sustain the resonance with and continue an important conversation, and thus be part of a relevant community of critical thinkers. In a very general survey I made of the critical scholarship on higher education in Africa, I was surprised to see how established some of the concerns I raise are. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza⁶ has highlighted many of the issues I raise in this paper. This does not diminish their importance for present day academia, but serves to highlight how higher education is faced with similar, or worse problems today as it was a decade ago, and also points to the need for continued, concerted efforts to remedy these problems. At its core, my paper brings forth the ever-present need for a sustainable intellectual project that can better our understanding, and the destiny of, the African continent.

In addressing ‘rigour,’ I adopt it as a trope with scientific connotations of systematic and precise work/research, and of rigidity and lack of flexibility reminiscent of *rigor mortis*—that is, stiff bodies of research, knowledge and education, struggling to maneuver through contemporary spaces that are as useful as they are sustainable. ‘Relevance’ on the other hand, may be perceived as the extent to which higher education, and knowledge thereof, addresses, theoretically and pragmatically, the pressing issues attendant to the complex realities of the contexts within which they are found, yet also managing, or attempting, to be of use beyond the temporal and spatial bounds of that particular context. It is also significant to note that ‘rigor and relevance’, do not exist *apriori*, and are in no way neutral or “objective” terms and processes. This is why in this discussion, I will tackle them in relation to history, as well as the ideological, socioeconomic and political processes and factors they are intertwined with.

The Shona proverbs cited at the beginning of this discussion are meant to provide lenses through which I can call, and access knowledge that has already existed outside the confines of the brick and mortar of the contemporary university and its discourse. I use the words *ruzivo/ kuziva*, referring to knowledge/ knowing, as an example of accessing and utilising knowledge (that may not necessarily occupy the main in-stream canons, but can be useful in our recontextualisation of forms of knowledge. *Ruzivo/kuziva* evokes what have been called 'local' knowledges, drawing from subjectivities and realities, in and about Africa, that have not traditionally occupied realms of what is considered knowledge. As an attempt at contributing to a larger ongoing intellectual/epistemological/ontological project, *ruzivo/kuziva* exists not to reinvent the wheel, but as avenues to contextualizing rigorous and relevant knowledge(s). With this in mind, I excuse (cautiously?) the precarious path of trying to unravel the problematic of higher education in Africa?

A Brief Look at the Historical Development of (Higher) Education in Africa

Some literature⁷ suggests that there were 'universities' in Africa, such as Sankore in Mali, before the advent of the colonial project. Higher education, the university, research and knowledge production as we know them today, however, were part of the ideological and cultural intersection of imperialism on the continent, a legacy of European Enlightenment discourse and its civilising project in Africa. Mahmoud Mamdani in an address to students at Makerere University in Uganda argues that:

The organization of knowledge production in the contemporary African university is everywhere based on a disciplinary mode developed in Western universities over the 19th and 20th centuries...The first colonial universities were few and far between: Makerere in East Africa, Ibadan and Legon in West Africa, and so on. Lord Lugard, Britain's leading colonial administrator in Africa, used to say that Britain must avoid the Indian disease in Africa. The Indian Disease referred to the development of an educated middle class, a group most likely to carry the virus of nationalism.⁸

Education within colonial regimes of power in Africa was limited for African populations, and was oriented towards inculcating obedience and conformity to the tenets of colonial administration, as well as to meeting the labour demands of the colonial system. Most of the African population remained marginal to the higher education system, except those who either went, or were sent to Western institutions in exile, or to meet the civil service demands of the imperial mission. As Mamdani advances,

Most colonies had no universities as they approached independence. When they became independent, just as sure as the national anthem, the national flag, and the national currency, a national university too became an obligatory sign of real independence.⁹

In Zimbabwe, there was only one university under the colonial government—the University of Zimbabwe, established in 1957, until 1991, 11 years after independence, when another university was established in Zimbabwe’s second largest city, with an emphasis on science and technology. Kariwo¹⁰ points out that after independence, finding themselves in new, albeit ill-fitting shoes, African states perceived higher education as a vehicle for churning out postcolonial civil servants, as well as being in the service of the ‘developmental state.’ The university became the centre of efforts for rallying a postcolonial, nationalist and Pan-African narrative that sought to restore a sense of pride and dignity to Africa and Africans, and steep forms of knowledge research and teaching in Africa’ past, and to garner recognition on the international stage. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza posits that, ‘as with other social phenomena, the educational enterprise in Africa is, therefore, a tale of triumphs, trials and tribulations, a stirring and searing story of perpetual struggle punctuated by sporadic successes and setbacks.’¹¹ The growth of postcolonial higher education has certainly not been smooth, challenged by the disjuncture of state ‘priorities’ and the need for academic freedom, as will be highlighted by the ‘predatory state. Neoliberal dispensations and their attendant challenges have not aided this process. Ali Mazrui opines that the African university was conceived primarily as a transmission belt for Western high culture, rather than s a workshop for the failure to contextualise standards and excellence for the needs of our own people and to ground the very process and agenda of learning and research in the local context. It is no fallacy then that the canons of knowledge production and dissemination historically adopted have been largely informed by what can be considered ‘alien’ texts and narratives to Africa. These have in some instances imposed rigid structures of knowledge acquisition and production and have sought to ‘objectivise’ realities and experiences that are made empirical by the fact of existence of the authors of those realities and experiences. To be empirical in some of our settings is not only to obtain ‘external validity’, but to acknowledge even our subjective expereinces In a manner, the higher education system, in upholding the ‘virtues’ of the ‘elsewhere’, have been caught in a web of constructed as well as self-inflicted inferiorisation.

A central enquiry facing higher education in Africa today, as Mahmoud Mamdani aptly points out, is around what it means to teach the humanities and social sciences in the current historical context and, in particular, in the post-colonial African context. He asks:

What does it mean to teach humanities and social sciences in a location where the dominant intellectual paradigms are products not of Africa’s own experience, but of a particular Western experience? Where dominant paradigms theorize a specific Western history and are concerned in large part to extol the virtues of the enlightenment or to expound critiques of that same enlightenment?¹²

Decades of (mis/UN) Education: Structural and Intellectual mal-adjustment

The years 1997-2006 have been regarded as the ‘first decade of education’ for Africa where a plan of action was put in place to achieve certain objectives in the

education sector.¹³ It is hugely debatable whether such efforts in education, or transformations in higher education in Africa have yielded desired results, especially considering the debilitating impact of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes, and the resulting implications on social services and the education sector in Africa. Under these programmes, governments were encouraged to reallocate their spending to a sector that was deemed to have the highest social returns— primary education. Withdrawing state involvement and funding in the tertiary sector meant that institutions of higher learning struggled to establish autonomous, private sources of funding, as well as adopting and utilising necessary technologies to advance knowledge and research interests. Kanyongo notes the effects of structural adjustment on Zimbabwe's education system¹⁴. Even with a limited number of universities, neoliberal economic strategies saw the Zimbabwean government struggling to financially support the higher education sector, and this in turn meant a lack of resources for research. At the same time, however, the World Bank, as Birdsall notes, acknowledged how higher education in Africa could encourage:

...indigenous self expression, conserve and adapt local traditions and values, and constitute important symbols of national prestige and attainment.¹⁵

It a paradox that an institution would on one hand call for the diversion of state resources away from the tertiary into primary education, yet still acknowledge the important roles of the very institutions it was decimating through its neoliberal interventions. In this regard, Thandika Mkandawire observes that looking back at the 1980s and 1990s, one is struck by how policy-makers pushed African countries in the wrong direction...as it became evident from Africa's own experience and that of others, the neo-liberal reading of history and understanding of structural constraints facing developing countries were wrong.¹⁶

The opening of spaces, physical, economic, ideological, as well academic and intellectual, gave the impetus to other players in the private sector or non-state sector to take charge. This led to Mkandawire arguing that the opportunistic and instrumentalist view of research that ensued, and the ephemeral nature of the NGOs' presence and projects cannot have contributed much to policy and to education. The space supposedly opened up by neoliberal reforms did not necessarily lead to productive knowledge practices and policies.

The state, having become predatory, and financially castrated, could not offer support to institutions and academics, leaving it to the "market" to determine the 'true' value of research and knowledge. Subsequently, in the ushering in of the neo-liberal dispensation and the push for privatization, accompanying the rhetoric of accelerated growth was acceleration in the commodification of education and of knowledge. Economic structural adjustment brought an adjustment of intellectual and research priorities, bearing the embryonic origins of what Mamdani¹⁷ has described as the corrosive consultancy culture. Higher education and academia became survivalist enterprises where seldom academia

questions the sources that enable it to survive. The old adage of biting the hand the feeds and epistemological and ontological drives take a different turn. Where then do rigor and relevance fit in? One wonders how systematic research dictated by funding cycles and external donor priorities affects these categories in Africa higher education, prompting the question: to what extent is it actually useful, to (re)present realities and change them? The market driven value of higher education and research has meant that knowledge is acquired “rigorously” and is “relevant” to the extent that it meets the demands of the highest bidder on the market. In an age where numbers seem to matter more, especially on a continent deeply affected by global economic and political hierarchies, I have often heard calls for academics to have a particular number of publications, in ‘A’ rated journals, a year, to be called ‘research competent’, or ‘relevant.’ This begs the question: is higher education and research in Africa following a Fordist assembly line production mode, without attention to what is ‘systematic and relevant’ according to the context?

The corporatisation and commercialisation of African universities, following global trends in institutions of higher learning, and the development of sausage–factory–profit–models of teaching, with students as ‘customers’, rigor and relevance may now exist as far as ‘customer’ satisfaction goes. These kinds of changes have fostered a rigid, managerial style of teaching and administration that in my view is antithetical to academic freedom, flexibility and interdisciplinarity. The corporatisation of the university constructs carcerality and surveillance in higher education so as to meet market demands and managerial expectations of productivity. Under this model, with knowledge becoming a commodity, one wonders how much Africa produces since it does not seem to fare well in other areas of economic activity. And, if economic principles of supply and demand and the so-called ‘invisible hand’ dictate the nature and pace of ‘intellectual’ activity, then Ngugi’s call for the ‘decolonisation of the mind’ which must accompany the decolonisation of Africa, may remain but a dream.

Out of this commodified world, one asks: whose market, whose knowledge? The owners of the means of material production seem to remain the owners of the means of intellectual production. Is this the case with Africa? If so, then a closer look and critiques of the relationships between knowledge and socio-economic and political factors, as highlighted at the start of the discussion, is apt. After all, which knowledge is neutral? From structural adjustment, one can see the implications of ideological, economic and political decisions on higher education as well as in processes of knowledge acquisition and production. The ‘free market’, despite all its fluctuations, may be rigid and limited after all. It may have created rigor mortis in the African higher education and knowledge system. I am well aware that SAP’s are no longer existent, that they were replaced by what is called Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP’s). These are virtually the same as SAP’s, just with some make up on. The point is not necessarily in the SAP’s alone, but the environment in which they are created, and the ensuing intellectual/epistemological/ontological damage. If economies are tumultuous, what of our education in Africa?

The Predatory State

It is ironic that that nationalist project that drove the development of higher education in post-independent/postcolonial Africa has become the nemesis of and the devourer of the very baby it spawned. The nationalist hammer, embodied in the state, began crushing its own children, stifling sustained and critical engagement on its activities. It has been mentioned already that at some point in the relationship between the ‘developmental university’ and the state, things soured. Rather than being seen as a source of knowledge and innovation for development, as dissenting voices emerged against kleptocratic and megalomaniac regimes, the university became regarded as harbouring imperialist, anti-revolutionary elements. Mkandawire points out that:

African governments often tended to reduce relevance to the provision of “manpower” resources for development and incantations of the ideology of the ruling party. Africans scholars have, like anyone else, been torn between the quest for universalistic understanding of society and the need to bring out the specificities of their societies.¹⁸

Many African academics found themselves in confrontations with their governments, with their salvation coming from the ‘non-state actors’ who now had space, thanks to structural adjustment and the ‘virtues’ of the free market! Non-state actors became the respite for academics who were facing an overly domineering state. Zeleza¹⁹ advances that African academics clearly are linked to various social groups whose interests and prejudices they often articulate. Without articulating the needs or demands of the postcolonial state, higher education became a sore as the state even utilised repressive machinery to silence literary critics. In Zimbabwe, the prevalence of violence and victimization meant that conducting research in certain areas or on certain issues became dangerous. In a state dominated environment, research priorities were thus bound to be dictated by a predatory state, with research pointing to the maladies of the state branded imperialistic. In Zimbabwe, the rigor/rigor mortis trope also finds expression in such circumstances, where intellectuals and activists, such as Lovemore Madhuku of the National Constitutional Assembly, was subjected to physical violence, and John Makumbe, a political analyst at the University of Zimbabwe, has become the subject of ‘vitriolisation’ by state functionaries as well as media²⁰. The discipline and surveillance imposed by the repressive state means issues of rigor and relevance are found at the margins of mainstream social and political activity.

There is a story where at some point during campaigns for elections in Zimbabwe, a ‘political analyst’, a Dr. of some sorts, is said to have conducted a study that predicted a landslide victory for an incumbent government. His sympathies were well known, and as was expected, the incumbent government suffered defeat at the polls. Is this what rigor and relevance are about? Similarly, some have been known to cry wolf, decry the lack of ‘academic freedom’ even when states try to go about their ‘legitimate’ business. What knowledge production is brought down to! Once again, survival takes centre stage. In the generality of some African countries, Mkandawire notes, ‘the choice was

between exile, sullen self-effacement and invisibility, or sycophantic and fawning adulation of power. There were, of course, those who heroically gave themselves the option of standing up and fighting – who ended up in jail or dead'.²¹ It is however pivotal to recognize that the predatory nature of the state has made privatization an option, considering the autocratic, patrimonial and kleptomaniac nature of (mis)government in most African countries. Funding scarcities, driven by neoliberal policies and misgovernance, as well as the repressive nature of the state makes the case for privatization legitimate. Institutions not funded by a repressive state can be critical, and not be sanctioned by the withdrawal of state funding. This also provides more flexible sites for knowledge production not necessarily constrained by the repressive or ideological apparatus of the state.

Dysfunctional paranoid states, and the power of capital combine to redefine rigor and relevance, and to cast African higher education in a new, complex mould. It is against the background of the predatory state and the advent of the 'free market' that arguments bashing the "Africanisation" of higher education have increasingly come to the fore, or rather resurrected. One of the foremost critics is how "Africanising" academia is tantamount to nativist, or rather atavistic tendencies, and has more often than not been hijacked by states and their pseudo-nationalist priorities, breeding patrimonialism and cronyism in higher education and knowledge production.²² Such criticisms, though valid, cannot be enough on their own. They serve as warning signs, yet alternatives remain needed. To claim the dangers of the rhetoric on Africanisation, without options, is to valorise the status quo as the better evil. What is crucial is to forge forward with efforts at appropriating, redefining and contextualising knowledge(s). Mistakes are sure to be made.

The 'sations': Hierarchisation and Marginalisation in an age of Internationalisation

The gruelling infrastructural as well as epistemological ramifications of the neoliberal philosophy on institutions of higher learning and the general education system in Africa are still being felt today, increasingly so with the current vaunting for 'internationalisation' of the curriculum and higher education. Vampire states have also compounded the situation either with their failure to support higher education and research, or by ill-directed interventions. It is critical to evaluate how the fad of internationalization may be regarded as continued waves of neo-liberalism and commodification, as well as epistemic imperialism, in a new jacket, an attempt to put lipstick on a well known swine. Or, maybe internationalization represents a genuine and sustainable effort at integrating African forms of education and knowledge into the global arena?²³ Past experiences with attempts at integration, political, and economic, have harsh lessons for Africa. How much of knowledge that is part of the 'internationalised' curriculum is coming from Africa? How relevant is it 'internationally' considering that all forms of knowledge are carrying with them inherent ideologies and biases? Some current forms of internationalization have been regarded as the continued international intellectual division of labor, knowledge and theft.

African higher education, in terms of teaching, as well as research, still occupies the margins, even in an age of “internationalization”. Mamdani²⁴ put universities in Sub-Saharan Africa in the dock by accusing them of not creating researchers but churning out native informers to national and international non-governmental organisations. Even the imparting of a meaningful general education requires the development of a curriculum that is responsive to local contexts and local needs, something that cannot simply be picked off the shelf.

Excluding South Africa, intensity in research and development in Sub-Saharan Africa is merely 0.3 per cent.²⁵ Unfortunately, whereas the percentage of Gross Domestic Product devoted to research and development has significantly increased in other regions, it has dropped or stagnated in almost all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa besides South Africa. The possibilities that can come with synergies, exchanges, collaborations are many. African institutions can learn what to do, and what not to do, from the examples set by other institutions. The question is how to marry the forms of ‘internationalisation’ being experienced with the larger concerns of knowledge production and dissemination in African higher education. In a ‘globalised’ world, higher education cannot continue to be a largely one-way high way, where some are the hewers of wood and fetchers of water, sponges of knowledge, whilst others are at the centre. Universities in Africa will need to significantly change their current mode of organizing knowledge production, the nature and content of knowledge, and the kinds of partnerships they seek and pursue in order to be equal players in the global arena while remaining relevant nationally and locally.

Unhu HweRuzivo/Kuziva: Whither African Higher education?

Having traversed these numerous issues, which are by no means exhaustive, the question is where to from here? If the state of higher education leaves a lot to be desired, then what If African higher education is in a state of *rigor mortis*, then its resurrection and ‘unstiffening’ is way overdue, as the countries in the continent cannot afford to be in limbo. Understanding the entwinement of socio-economic and political institutions in shaping education and knowledge production means that the African academe has to work hard to contribute to the construction of stable, autonomous, yet interconnected economic and political structures and institutions. This will provide a conducive environment to rigorous and relevant knowledge production and dissemination, and put African higher education in good stead.

In trying to curb human capital flight, and preventing academia and higher education teaching and research form become survivalist enterprises, African states, higher education institutions and other interested players must come up with strategies to promote intra and inter-regional synergies, and advance retain young and established academics. One such avenue is by establishing centres, or institutes that are dedicated to addressing the challenges faced by young academics, as well as cultivating the rigor and relevance needed in research and higher education in Africa. This is because without investing resources, there is no human capital, and consequently no transformation in the nature of research and teaching in higher education. This will assist create an autonomous

epistemological tradition adapted to needs and conditions. Mkandawire²⁶ is of the notion that even for ‘borrowed’ ideas, nations need a domestic intellectual infrastructure to adapt and translate this knowledge for local use. Society and especially those who wield power must demand knowledge and have the political will and institutional wherewithal for its utilization. In search of new lenses, Mamdani²⁷ has also argued that, “The old model looked for answers outside the problem. It was utopian because it imposed externally formulated answers. A new model must look for answers within the parameters of the problem. This is why the starting point must go beyond an understanding of the problem, to identifying initiatives that seek to cope with the problem.” Higher Education should be considered as more than just training. Basic and applied research, and the sometimes immeasurable contributions that institutions and the knowledge they produce, disseminate and are custodians of can make to critical engagement and nation building are indispensable.

Kuziva Kutsva: New Knowledge/ Knowing is Getting Burnt I cannot claim to have dealt with all that can be said on Africa, higher education and knowledge production, for that is a lot. I would like to, in ending this part of the discussion, which I cannot yet conclude, revisit *ruzivo/kuziva*, as highlighted by the quotes and proverbs at the beginning of the discussion. In Shona, the phrase for new knowledge, *kuziva kutsva*, in high tone, can also mean knowing is getting burnt. The processes of getting rid of the *rigor mortis*, of appropriating, resurrecting and establishing certain forms of knowledge/knowing are not without cost, for what is without it? Attempts at forging new forms of *ruzivo/kuziva* are fraught with difficulties, not least of all that some will find it difficult to even understand what *ruzivo/kuziva* are doing in this discussion, are they relevant, epistemologically, ontologically? Some people, some things will get burnt. In trying to expose the maladies of African states, certain academics paid, if not with ostracisation, then with their lives. Institutions and centres have faced extinction, or have suffered it already. It has, and will continue to take away from some, to try and establish, maintain, and widen sites of ‘undisciplined’ knowledge(s). Ruzivo/Kuziva is just one, small dimension of accessing and utilising knowing that already exists, that can enrich and widen these sites. Fighting for ‘new’ knowledge may mean knowing is getting burnt.

Notes

¹ The title adopts rigor as a trope. Rigor in academia suggests scientific, systematic objective ways of producing and disseminating knowledge. In this discussion it also takes on the rigidity and “rigor mortis” that can characterise knowledge and its production if it is not flexible enough to incorporate forms of knowing that may sit at the margins, as well as embracing novel ontological and epistemological processes and forms. African higher education denotes (connotes?) the tension that accompanies whether the knowledge being produced becomes African by virtue of geography, or by virtue of content and relevance regardless of geography. It stems from the contestations around what is African, or not, in a multi and trans-disciplinary academe. This is reminiscent of a discussion I had with South African youth activist and

intellectual Sabelo Mcinziba, and artist Mohau Modisakeng, on whether we, or ‘things’ are African by geography, or by consciousness.

² Mabasa, I. date unknown Kuziva, accessed 30 September 2011, http://pamabasa.com/?My_Work:Yadhakwa_Lyrics:Kuziva

³ By (un)produced I am trying to complicate the assumption underlying ‘knowledge production’, because these processes we deem as production can at the same time be processes of loss and exclusion, in which writing and researching Africa occurs, or is mediated through terms inimical to a ‘productive’ knowledge process. This also calls questions of relevance into being.

⁴ See for instance Mahmood Mamdani, May 2011 in the Mail and Guardian, *Africa’s Postcolonial Scourge*, and a Keynote address by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, 2005, *Transnational Education and African Universities*. Similar issues, as well as others, are explored around the African University and the state of knowledge therein in the postcolonial/global order

⁵ Mamdani, 2008

⁶ See for example Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, 2002, The Politics of Historical and Social Science Research in Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28:1 9-23, Zeleza ,2003, Banishing The Silences; Towards the Globalisation of African History, 11th CODESRIA General Assembly , Zeleza, 2005, *Transnational Education and African Universities*, Keynote address, Association of African Universities

⁷ See for example Thandwa Mthembu, 2004, *Creating a Niche in Internationalisation for (South) African Higher Education Institutions*, *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8:3 282-296 and a position paper by Dan Izevbaye, 2007, *The Idea of the African University*, *Social Dynamics* 33:1 217-220

⁸ Mahmood Mamdani, May 2011, *Africa’s Postcolonial Scourge*. Mail and Guardian

⁹ Mamdani, *ibid*

¹⁰ Michael Tonderai Kariwo, 2007, Widening Access in Higher Education in Zimbabwe, *Education Policy* 20, 45-49

¹¹ Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, 2002, The Politics of Historical and Social Science Research in Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28:1 9-23, p. 11

¹² Mahmood Mamdani, May 2011, *ibid*.

¹³ African Union Draft Plan of Action, 2006, Second Decade of Education for Africa.

¹⁴ Gibbs Y. Kanyango, 2005, Zimbabwe’s Public Education System Reforms: Successes and Challenges. *International Education Journal* 6:1 65-74

¹⁵ Birdsall, Nancy, 1996, p412 Public Spending on Higher Education in Developing Countries. *Economics of Education Review*. 15:4 407-419.

¹⁶ Thandika Mkandawire and Charles Chukwuma Soludo, 1999, *Our Continent, Our Future: African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment*. IDRC.

¹⁷ Mamdani, May 2011, *ibid*

¹⁸ Thandika Mkandawire 2000 , p210, *Non-Organic Intellectuals and “Learning” in policy-making Africa*, in Carlsson, J and Wohlgemuth, L.(eds) *Learning in Development Cooperation*, Almqvist and Wiksell International, p. 205-212

¹⁹ Zeleza, 2002, *ibid*

²⁰ See Zimbabwe Amnesty International Report 2008, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/zimbabwe/report-2008>, and Makumbe, Madhuku criticize Chinamasa 2011 <http://www.dailynews.co.zw/index.php/news/34-news/1660-makumbe-madhuku-criticise-chinamasa.html>. The death, and dearth of a vibrant public sphere in Zimbabwe has meant that intellectual engagement and knowledge production that stand as a critique to power and its abuses are heavily curtailed

²¹ Thandika Mkandawire 2000, p206 *Non-Organic Intellectuals and “Learning” in policy-making Africa*, in Carlsson, J and Wohlgemuth, L.(eds) *Learning in Development Cooperation*, Almqvist and Wiksell International, p205-212

²² See for instance Ulrike Kistner, 2008, ‘Africanisation in Tuition’: African National Education? *Mediations* 24:1 93-112.

²³ See Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *ibid*.

²⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, May 2011, *ibid*

²⁵ Wachira Kigotho, August 10 2011, Africa Home to only 2.3 per cent world's researchers.
<http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/?id=2000040499&articleID=2000040499>

²⁶ Thandika Mkandawire, *ibid*.

²⁷ Mahmood Mamdani, May 2011 *ibid*.