

## **Knowledge: A Critical Element in the Quest for A Contemporary African Socio-Cultural Renaissance**

UWALAKA JUDE NDUBUEZE [PhD]  
*Federal University of Technology, Owerri Imo State Nigeria*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Many appear to hold that many things are going wrong in the contemporary African world and that many things must change quickly if African peoples must develop and evolve a quality civilization which will bring about social and cultural transformation for increased well being of Africans. This desire has been expressed under various names like "African Renaissance". It is the contention of this article that if contemporary Africa must attain this expected transformation and renewal, she must pursue the conquest of knowledge that is, embarking on the project of production and mobilization of effective relevant qualitative and quantitative knowledge.

### **KEYWORDS**

Knowledge, critical element, Africa, renaissance, transformation, indigenous knowledge, human resource Development.

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### **I. THE IDEA OF A RENAISSANCE**

It would be incomplete and deficient to explain the Renaissance as a cultural and social project or rebirth, or an impetus for social-cultural transformation or even a philosophical concept without recalling the historical European Renaissance movement which has since remained the frame of reference or point of comparison for other historical Renaissance projects and activity. According to Arnold Toynbee "The metaphorical application of the French word renaissance to denote the rebirth of an extinct culture or of an obsolete phase of surviving culture is a specifically modern Western usage. *Toynbee, 1972: 456.*

The European Renaissance emerged after the Middle Ages, a period historically referred to as the dark ages for intellectual activities, a period that came after the great classical Greek and Roman thought that produced such intellectual giants and innovative thinkers like Plato and Aristotle. The renaissance was regarded as a movement of rebirth, a great cultural movement arising first in Italy in the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD, and coming into full blown in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, spreading gradually through the whole continent of Europe bringing a better understanding of ancient culture and a flowering of artistic literary and scientific creativity. Norman Davies summarized the essence of the renaissance, thus:

*The essence of the renaissance lay not in any sudden discovery of classical civilization but rather in the use which was made by classical models, to test the authority underlying conventional taste and wisdom... and it is connected with the stirrings of science and that is the principle that nothing should be taken as true unless it can be tried and demonstrated. In religious thought it was a necessary precondition for protestant emphasis on the individual conscience...*

*Davies, 1996: 471, 479.*

There is no doubt that the eventual Western or European modernity arose out of the various worlds of renaissance humanism especially its scientific spirit, which blossomed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the industrial revolution, fired by the ideology of unlimited progress through the capitalist mode of production. This was the triumph of Enlightenment reason, triumph of instrumental reason and the penetration of the scientific vision of the world. *Ferre', 1993:8.* There is an endorsement of reason in all circumstances of the life of the individual man. Also the method of verification was so important in the age of reason. Thus in the age of Enlightenment, the idea was and is of supreme importance that everyone can add to the human stock of knowledge by making experiments and can at least repeat experiment that verify important theories. *Cf. Agassi, 1981: 372.*

From the above presentation there is no doubt that it was the renaissance revolution and the consequent enlightenment with its re-invention and interpretation of its culture, secular and religious, its liberal political culture, its economic capitalist mode of production, its scientific and technological culture; its social and intellectual culture, its more materialistic philosophical orientation that eventually unleashed a modern western civilization. This was a Western modernity that would bring a great transformation in the western world, economic and technological dominance, inventions and other fantastic achievements that saw the western world

dominant in the world through conquest and colonialism and assumed a superiority that made her to make her civilization and culture a universal paradigm for the whole humankind.

## **II. THE IDEA OF RENAISSANCE IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

The idea of an African Renaissance has at various periods appeared under various names and circumstances both in the African continent and in the Diaspora as the felt need and requisite for an African rebirth, renewal and re-invention. The early manifestations are the reactions of African intellectuals against enslavement, racism, discrimination and colonialism and their assertion of an African identity and achievements with the aim of rehabilitating the image of the Blackman.

In the United States there was the Harlem renaissance which was the predecessor to the negritude movement in France. The Harlem Renaissance aimed at rehabilitating the image of the Blackman wherever he was, through the expression of Black Personality against the unfounded Eurocentric assumptions of people like Levy-Bruhl, Hegel, Kant and many others who seem to deny to the Blackman equal humanity and rationality as the European man. *Cf. Masolo, 1994: 10ff.* The cultural nationalists see renaissance in terms of showing to the world that in spite of historical and anthropological distortions by colonial and imperialist forces, that Africans have a rich culture and civilizational values that should be respected by all and by challenging cultural domination by Europeans, sought “to lift African cultures from their degraded status to a position of equality of rights and dignity with the culture of other races, to rekindle loyalty to and interest and pride in them and to restore them to a rejuvenated place in the lives of African educated Elites. *Okonkwo, 1998: 255.* For them the greatest danger for the educated African is that he could lose African genius, hence, the need for a specifically African path to Modernity.

It could be said that most of the anti-colonial and anti-neo-colonial political nationalist and Afrocentrist ideologies, philosophies, and discourses by African thinkers and leaders whether in Senghor’s Negritude, or in Nkumah’s Consciencism, or Nyerere’s Socialism (Ujamaa) or Kaunda’s humanism and the rest, are the various ways of expressing the idea of African renaissance. The most contemporary and recent articulation of an African renaissance appears to be that of former South African President Thabo Mbeki in his “I am an African” seminal speech delivered on the occasion of the adoption of the new South African constitution in May 1996. According to Kornegay and Landsberg the “I am an Africa” speech could be considered to be the intellectual foundations for the articulation of an African Renaissance. *Cf. Kornegay and Landsberg, 1998: 3.*

In Mbeki’s speeches, his idea of a contemporary African renaissance emerged, provoked by the fact that an air of pessimism, cynicism and skepticism pervades Africa and her future. There is ravaging poverty and hardship of daily life for many Africans, the disempowerment of the masses, the deification of arms, and African’s isolation in terms of trade and interconnectivity and capital markets. He called on the peoples of Africa and other peoples of goodwill throughout the world to join in a sustained offensive which must result in the new century going down as the African century. *Mbeki, 1999/1988: xxi.*

Hence, the challenge to “mobilize and galvanize the forces inside and outside government which are the bearers of the spirit (against neo-colonialism) so that they engage in a sustained national and continental offensive for the victory of the African Renaissance” *Mbeki, 1999/1998: xix.*

What has to be observed here is that despite the diversity of the various past articulations of the African renaissance at any period, one can discern an overall and at times unarticulated anxiety in the whole project namely to make the African man regain his dignity in the world and to find a veritable self conceived and directed path to enhance his destiny in the world through the realization of the enormous endowments and genius of the African man and society in order to ensure total wellbeing for the African people. In short we are talking about the core element in the philosophy of progress for the contemporary African society. Before probing forward on these issues we must address the question of whether an African renaissance is still relevant an issue today.

## **III. THE IMPERATIVE OF A CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN RENAISSANCE**

We want to join Mbeki in holding that Africa is in great need of a renaissance, a regeneration, a redemption, a renewal, a transformation as a matter of urgency if she must compete for dignity, prosperity and peace in our world today. The urgency for a renaissance is predicated on the lamentable state of affairs in our continent and this is heard loud and clear at any intellectual, cultural, social, economic, scientific and technological developmental forum in our world today. Most people will not doubt, that Africa considered holistically, is in a terrible situation of retrogression and inertia, painting a gory picture of inadequacy, incapacity and ineptitude, lacking the will to dare and the courage to pursue a transformative and progressive path. While Africans who move to other non-African climes and environment often show tremendous progress and innovativeness and productivity, those within Africa appear to exhibit mental laziness, intellectual sterility

and lack of creativity. Africa is in a terrible state of crisis of development and quite stagnated at most indices of human, social and economic wellbeing and development. The crises constitute a shameful litany: crisis of culture, crisis of survival; crisis of habitation, crisis of order; crisis of leadership; crisis of governance, crisis of nation-building and crisis of developmental direction.

In all we can say that Africans are today suffering from a crisis of being and having; an Africa lacking originality and under the dearth of bold and grand ideas; a gross absence of creative and inventive productions, and appear to be contented with repeating, copying and hailing other peoples and lands doing the discoveries and making the scientific and technological breakthroughs, while they remain consumers fascinated with the foreign. A people, society culture and continent under the burden of such a deplorable intellectual and socio-cultural condition are no doubt in need of decisive liberation, urgent transformation and radical positive change in order to avert a catastrophic destiny. This is a project that deserves to be called a Renaissance.

We now return to the more critical question: how can contemporary Africa engage in this project of regeneration and transformation? What is the tool for this Renaissance? There is no doubt that this will require a comprehensive activity at all levels of human and social development. However a philosophical analysis is not very much concerned at the many activities but to unveil the fundamental response, or to locate the fundamental cause which should give direction to all activities, social, cultural, economic, political or even intellectual. What is the fundamental catalyst or stimulus for the re-invention of contemporary Africa?

#### **IV. KNOWLEDGE AS THE CRITICAL FACTOR IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN RENAISSANCE**

The fundamental, thing in any renaissance culture is knowledge, because it is knowledge that opens reality to us and opens us to the true situation of things, to the possibilities available and our proper possibilities and increases our operational vision. It cures us of the illusions and delusions and even shortsightedness which ignorance imposes. A contemporary African Renaissance should not be a continuity of the old polemics of mere identity and race. An ideology of pure Africanness is no longer enough even though no one can deny Africanness as a productive agent in the world. What history and various civilizations seem to teach us today and which explains the rise and fall of nations is the centrality of the quality and effectiveness of their knowledge generating, knowledge, producing and knowledge disseminating capacity.

Knowledge is fundamental and foundational in any renaissance and developmental enterprise and the engine of progress. Hence a contemporary African renaissance should be a renaissance of knowledge or should be based on the ideology of knowledge. Thus an effective qualitative and transformative African renaissance should be built on a philosophy of action that is nourished and directed by an effective, relevant qualitative knowledge based goals. Africa and the world are engaged today is a competition of and for knowledge and that, in the long run, will determine the quality of her development, her dignity and power in the world. A renaissance contemporary Africa is one to which relevant, effective and appropriate knowledge has been opened to and which appropriately appropriates it in resolving her crisis of being and becoming.

Thus Dani Nabudere called on African scholars to pursue knowledge production that can renovate African people's identity and civilizational achievements and contribute afresh to a global agenda that will push Africa out of the crisis of modernity as promoted by her present subjection to new dependency and absorption into external direction. Such knowledge must be relevant and directed towards the current real needs of the African peoples and able to bring about a positive social transformation out of her present predicament. The African Renaissance can be used as a mobilization statement and the basis for articulating an African agenda for knowledge production that is not just relevant to African conditions but also sets an agenda for the reclaiming of African originality and wisdom which sets the rest of human society on the road of civilization. Nabudere, 2001: 6, 2, 11 – 27.

The history of nations and even European Enlightenment as we have earlier presented show clearly the centrality of knowledge in the holistic transformation, reconstruction and achievement of peoples and nations. Western Renaissance and Enlightenment and others in history show that in spite of other motivations, they were at base knowledge-producing, knowledge-creating and knowledge-purifying, knowledge-multiplying, knowledge-distributing and knowledge-application. But what do we really mean by knowledge here. It is the acquisition and possession, of beliefs, ideas and relation of ideas, information, experience, aptitudes, skills and mode of living which are considered to be adequate and true reflections of the state of affairs in respect to nature, supernature, humans and their activities in the world which can promote and facilitate an effective and successful intervention especially in the resolution of the many challenges of mans existence, and in our context here, in the contemporary problems confronting the African man in his crisis of being and having.

History can attest that the beginning of the western mans' domination and even conquest of the world, was fuelled by their conquest in certain domain of human knowledge in the way they tried to understand nature and unlock some of her secrets which become harnessed for scientific and technological purposes. A driving spirit, an ardent and disinterested curiosity, un-pessimistic and unresigned skepticism and the geometrical mind,

led to modern science. Once born and tested and proved by its practical application, Western Science became means of power, a means of physical domination, creation of material wealth, an apparatus for exploiting the resources of the whole planet. Of course armed with the secret knowledge of nature, emboldened by the power advantage it confers him, the world would be his limit.

Even before the European ascendancy, the ancient African world of Egypt became the cradle of civilization because of her superior knowledge base in agriculture, mathematics (geometry) and in a way astronomy, which gave them some ascendancy over others. The intrinsic connection between knowledge resources and human and ethical progress goes to confirm the statement that ideas rule the world and that ideas are the factors that lift civilization and create revolutions. This is particularly true if the ideas are adequate and appropriate ones which we would normally call knowledge. No wonder Francis Bacon declared long ago, that knowledge is power. Knowledge is the tool for unlocking the secrets of many aspects of life, especially nature. Man's survival depends on his ability to conquer his environment and to harness the potentialities and forestall possible dangers emanating from human or natural causes, or that which leaves man and society at the mercy of cosmic, moral, sociological and spiritual negativity.

Knowledge is thus a dominant tool for this conquest and foresight and the defining element in development. Nelson and Nelson reminds us that human beings draw from their repertoire of knowledge to deal with problems that confront them as a society either through procedural or declarative knowledge or both. This implies that there is a link between the process of knowing and how a society tackles its problem. Linkage here means that understanding how people and societies acquire and use knowledge (and why they sometimes fail to do so) is a necessary guide on how to improve people's lives. Thus a world development report that studied the complex inter-relationship between knowledge on the one hand and economic and social development on the other argued that strong economies are built not merely through accumulation of physical capital and human skill but through a solid foundation of knowledge. It is this wider foundation of knowledge that provides the basis for the choices that determine the direction and development taken by societies. *Nelson, K., and Nelson, R., 2002: Vol. 31, 719-733.*

In fact knowledge has always and still more today the defining element in development and it could be said that the stock of qualitative and quantitative knowledge available in society is proportional to the level of real development and progress potentials of that society. No one society can operate beyond its knowledge base, its level of the stock of knowledge embodied perhaps in her belief system, tradition, values and know-how. If a people's knowledge base is low, myopic, or static, it will also produce a society that is myopic, static and unproductive, which will of course reflect on the way and means the available resources are harnessed. For example it is held that there is a direct relationship between the level and quality of technology with the state of knowledge of a society or era. As Frederick Ferre' has shown, technology has always reflected the character of the human knowledge of its era. The technologies of a culture embody the state of knowledge within that culture. This knowledge could include "knowing how" or "knowing that". Ferre', 1993: 41-43.

The bases for sustainable development (growth) are essentially found in skills and knowledge rather than in natural resources. Resources may play a very important role in kick-starting the process of development providing for "great leaps" forward, but has never been the end game for development. Reflecting in similar vein, Hountondji emphasized that knowledge is the basic capital for sustainable development in any society and pointed to the imbalance in global politics of producing, distribution and consuming knowledge. Improving on the stock of local knowledge becomes the basis for politically meaningful and locally sustainable development. Therefore, African development and regeneration must begin with the net-growth in its knowledge especially scientific knowledge. *Cf. Hountondji, 1996 (1983).*

It was the rediscovery of knowledge as the basic energy of development and transformation which lift all areas of development, that made the former Soviet Union through their leader Gorbachev to move the country (although very late when the damage has already been done) away from the old fashioned ideas, from their knowledge incarceration in the iron-curtain, to embark on what could be called a knowledge acquiring project, by introducing what he called perestroika (restructuring), and glasnost (openness). *Gorbachev, 1987: 17 – 19.* The recent economic and technological miracles of the communist China was not accidental, but a result of many years in serious investment in the conquest and generation of knowledge, through internal and external strategy, through research, and through imitation.

This investment in knowledge has become most evident today in this our age of globalization which is knowledge driven. In this respect Prof. Anya observed that while in much of the twentieth century economic development depended on the resource base of a nation, often amplified by technology but now at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, economic development in any given nation is driven by the knowledge base especially the skills and expertise of nation. He would affirm that with the march of globalization it has come to be recognized that national resources do not confer necessarily any long term and/or intrinsic advantage in terms of opportunities. It is rather the knowledge base and the skills of the population, the human capital that confers the competitive advantage in the critical phase of development. This marked a fundamental paradigm shift in our perception and approach to development. *Anya, 2002: 17.* The truth of the above is evidenced in the African

societies which despite the vast reservoir of natural and human resources yet lie very low in the productivity scale, with an impoverished population because of the deficiency in knowledge of the most effective way of harnessing the vast resources. They are therefore exploited by those foreigners who have the appropriate skills and know-how

Thus an author would say:

*Intelligence is necessary to productive activity as the genial co-operation to the natural elements. The earth, may present her fruitful surface...the sun may send down his fructifying rays but all in vain if men be destitute of the knowledge of the wonderful advantage which they offer him. This consideration fully accounts for the poverty of many who might otherwise be vastly rich. Augustine, 1972: 141.*

In fact some resource poor countries are enough relatively developed while some of the resource rich are among the poorest. This shows the importance of intellectual capital and indeed knowledge in the creative efforts of man to change and transform his society positively. This is well articulated in the observation that the power of intellectual capital is the ability to breed ideas that ignite value. Poverty will be reduced when intellectual capital is increased and leveraged to export knowledge and ideas. Intellectual capital defined as the collective knowledge of the people increases productivity, and knowledge and ideas are the engines that drive economic development. *Emeagwali: 2009*. It is generally accepted today that the difference between the so called developed world and developing world is difference of intellectual output.

It must be clearly stated that it was the Europeans man's superior knowledge and skills in certain areas of life that was responsible for defeating the African societies which culminated in the colonization of Africa, and the consequent imperialism and neo-colonialism. So we can say that Africa was defeated by knowledge which had other disastrous consequences of suppressing or even obstructing the proper evolution and growth of our indigenous knowledge systems and the eventual lack of actualization of their possible potentialities and development potentialities.

There is no doubt that the first few Europeans that initially subdued Africa before the massive scramble and colonization of Africa, could have met the societies somehow deficient in their knowledge base in some aspects; the economic, political, moral, cultural, and epistemic configuration. Having had her effective knowledge and know-how manipulated and disoriented, they re-orientated the Africa people in their own image and likeness. Isaac Ugwu put it most frankly:

*Because the knowledge base of our culture was thin, and new things were anathema, our world had to crash when it came in contact with the outside world. The Europeans partitioned our land among themselves as if we did not even exist. They carted away millions of our people to slavery, believing them to be less human. Then they proceeded to overthrow all our structures and impose their religions and ways of life on us-all these without as much as a whimper from us. Nothing incapacitates and brings disgrace to a people as a weak knowledge base. Isaac Ugwu: 2000.*

Thus many Afrocentricists would argue that Westernization was an intellectual colonization because Europeans not only colonized African land but also African knowledge not just to claim it, as its own but also to disconnect Africans from their heritage and culture, because people who are cut off from their heritage and culture are more easily manipulable and controllable than people who are not. The colonization of the African people was the complete conquest of the African people with the globalization of European consciousness and the planetary wide impositions of European worldviews, and lifestyles as the human norm. *Cf. Uhuru Hotep: 2003.*

In this respect Godfrey B. Tangwa would observe:

*The spirit of omnivorous discovery which the industrial revolution engendered and made possible in Europeans, guided them to all parts of the globe where they discovered people's cultures, so different from theirs that they felt reluctant to qualify them as 'human'. From there on, Europeanization (Westernization) of other peoples and cultures appeared natural in their eyes as humanization and civilization... Since the industrial revolution has been propelled to great heights by Western commerce and the profit motive, by war and will to dominate, by pure epistemological and scientific curiosity as well as (occasionally) by the altruistic urge to improve human well-being. In this process, Western culture has developed the penchant for patenting, monopolizing and commercializing any of its so called discoveries and knack for spreading and promoting its ideas, visions, convictions and practices under the guise of universal imperatives..."*  
*Tangwa, 1999: Vol. 13, 2/4, 220.*

Continuing the story of the defeat of Africans by the European knowledge system and the tragic consequences for the indigenous knowledge systems, Ngara and Goduka, observed that indigenous ways of knowing constitute the African paradigm that was misunderstood, misinterpreted, ridiculed and ignored during the scramble for and colonization of Africa. Africa then was portrayed as the "Dark continent" and terra "in

cognito” (meaning land without cultured mind) which justified occupation and subjugation of the Africans by the imperial forces. With the African self-esteem and efficacy having collapsed, Africa degenerated into a dependence syndrome as a helpless receptacle of both pity and charity. Cf. Ngara, 2007: 22, 7-20; Goduka, 1999: 13, 26-33.

This failure to tap into the indigenous knowledge resources has been blamed for most of the development misfortunes, and lack of creativity that have befallen the African world. For some it blocked the emergence of giftedness for technological and economic development and perhaps other necessary knowledge that could have helped in solving many of the African’s crisis of being and having. Eyong C. T and colleagues explain that colonialism largely inhibited the development of indigenous technology in Africa and destabilized some of the existing processes of technical growth and the indigenous manufacturing capability. Equally, the retrogressive step and the failure in most development initiatives and lack of competitiveness of African world in the world of inventions and discoveries today have been traced to the failure to integrate local knowledge value into these programmes. Development anywhere does not occur within a cultural vacuum. Cf. Eyong, et al.: 2000.

#### **4.1 Linking Knowledge and Power in Africa**

Many post-colonial thinkers have emphasized the disempowerment of Africa through the deliberate negligent and inferiorization of Africa indigenous knowledge. Mudimbe sees the discourses on African societies and people in western libraries as invented to mark off Africa and the African as the other of the West and the Western. Despite its claims to objectivity, the discourses served the interest of the western hegemony, ordering the world with the order of centre. *Mudimbe, 1988: ix*. Many think that the quest for knowledge as a tool of African renaissance must necessarily involve reclaiming and the re-appropriation of the African Gnosis. Hence the observation that what is at stake is the fact that knowledge on Africa produced in the West, like any knowledge produced elsewhere serves consciously and unconsciously a hegemonic desire. During colonialism a complex science of ordering territories and peoples were developed; such ordering included Western education as a system of ordering minds, bodies and souls according to the modes used in Europe ... seeing the modern era ordering, according to western modes went on under the guise of universal reason and universal truth. Cf. *Achille Mbembe, 1992: 62, 3 - 37*.

Hence the need to find a method of liberating the Africa mind and revalorizing Africa indigenous knowledge, to tap into this neglected vast knowledge resources of Africa. If from our above thesis that Europeans defeated Africa because of knowledge and that African’s present crisis of development is also because of the lack of appropriate and effective knowledge, it stands to reason, that Africans will also be reborn or renewed or liberated through knowledge. This is possible through the positive generation and acquisition of relevant knowledge process and also through combating ignorance and all obstacles to knowledge. If knowledge is the way forward, then ignorance and all obstacles to knowledge, or false ideas are surely the path to backwardness.

The quest for progress and a better improved understanding of our world and events demand that man no matter his society and culture must place on his shoulders, change mentalities and prejudices to “examine what time, tradition and customs have superimposed on reality and truth. B. *Haring, 1978: 35*. This means that there comes, a time in the movement of a people if they must enjoy qualitative existence, when they must call a halt to their un-rationalized propulsions, exorcise anachronistic and obscurantist ideas and practices and take stock of themselves, to discover what their tradition have provided in relation to the problems arising from their physical and social environment, assess the continued relevance of such traditions, and discard those which prove disruptive and progress resistant and modify those which could contribute to meaningful development.

Progress and success demands a mindset, capable of seeing what exists and as it exists and occasionally challenging our old mental structures and paradigm. Thus any false application of the mind, a misinterpretation of facts of experience, false linkages could be the fundamental obstacle to progress, to building a powerful culture and civilization whether scientific, moral or economic. If people develop wrong beliefs, ideas, framework and linkages, then they will take fancy for fact; illusory for the real and in such a climate, inventiveness will become fairytales and clear impossibilities. Applying this to African Renaissance, there is need for proper mental re-direction. For example, some authors, Africans and outsiders have decried how the belief in Juju and other related beliefs are so deeply rooted in many African societies regardless of education, religion and social class.

*Like any other culture, this aspect of the African culture is irrational and blinds one from a realistic assessment of problems. Such counter-productive thoughts by African Elites show how the irrational African cultural values appear to outweigh the rational parts and how such patterns persists in African development process. While the scientific side of the African mind demands objective evidence as to why Juju should influence them, their brains mythopoeic, irrational Juju thinking side entices them to irrational marvels to evil spirit, Juju or demons.... Kofi, Akosah – Sarpong, (S. D): 30.*

The world renowned Robotic Engineer Barth Nnaji lamenting this irrational attitude said “It is a pity that our society is fast lapsing into superstition and irrationality. Even supposedly highly educated people now believe that a person can through magical means turn into an animal like vulture and then return to human form after committing unimaginable havoc!...A society with this kind of mindset cannot be expected to do well in this knowledge –based age”. *Nnaji, 2011: 54-55.*

If what Nnaji and others said is true of Africa and many people think so, this becomes a clear case of how wrong beliefs, false mental linkages and connections can become an inhibitive force to development hence the need to be very sensitive to the initial conditions of our knowledge infrastructures through which a people organize their world. Perhaps this is what Chinweizu meant when he said that in rationally considering reconstruction we would need to be reconstructed and the environment in which the construct will operate and the goals of the new construct if it is to serve our group interests. *Chinweizu, 2005.* An African Renaissance must necessarily demand the elimination of such obscurantist beliefs, pushing backward the frontiers of mystery by evolving knowledge based society. Wrong beliefs will necessarily bring about certain disorientations and false deductions. What emerges from all we have been saying is that a contemporary Africa renaissance must be a knowledge –renaissance, because knowledge empowers; knowledge enlightens, knowledge directs, knowledge creates, knowledge corrects; knowledge emboldens, and this at any level and aspect of human existence.

## V. CONCLUSION

To realize the above knowledge generation and production, dissemination and application project, in and for contemporary Africa, we suggest certain initiatives, reforms and means which we have in an earlier writing considered as are imperative. *Uwalaka J, 1:2014*

### 1. Dedicated Knowledgeable and Visionary Leadership

A Renaissant Africa needs Renaissant leaders, leaders with grand visions and ideas, knowledgeable, in understanding the problems and challenges of the African people, capable of innovative ideas and able to take critical decisions. Africa for long has been unlucky to have men who throw themselves up for leadership positions purely for the love of power but powerless in the capacity to evolve the right ideas to propel African Nations in the path of progressive development. This is a Leadership whom Amos. N. Wilson described as a “Leadership that is not concerned with developing its productive capacities but with merely getting jobs and being identified with the productive capacities of others” This is a leadership who reigns over the decline of African people the world over, the decline in African education, the disruption of the African family, the retardation of African Technology, the decline and paralyzing of African economics, assimilationist Leadership that has brought us to the terrible moral, economic, social, political and educational impasse (*Amos.N.Wilson,1999, (P64 – 65)*)

It is axiomatic that the blind cannot lead the Blind. The world today is so complicated and African problems so enormous and the need for African rebirth so pressing that it will be tragic to continue to have as leader’s people of suspect intellectual competence and shallow ideas. We recall here the iconic words of Paschal Dozie “All over the world today, it is men of knowledge and therefore character who preside over the affairs of Nations, not men of wealth and material needs. Today leaders of whatever level in society must not only be highly educated, they must be champions of Education, for the mere reason that education in the most functional, visible and enduring source of power in the present age. (*Dozie 2001*) This knowledge power must need to be complemented by the moral and patriotic determination and zeal to eschew selfishness and guide African Nations in the path to material, social, cultural and political wellbeing.

### 2. Human Resources Development

The great treasure of Africa nation today is in her human resources, especially in her vibrant and dynamic youth population. A Renaissant Africa is impossible without a proper investment in the educational and moral empowerment of her youths. Education is the cornerstone of any collective renaissance enterprise. The possibility of empowering the people to be able to change the status quo starts with the transformation and abilitation of the mind towards creativity. And as I wrote elsewhere “Human capital formation satisfies the criterion of having a long – term social return. The basic human expenditures will ultimately change society and give the tools with which to determine their own destiny in due time. A nation that wants a prosperous future should invest in her youths, unless it develops the spirit and human potentials, it cannot develop much else materially, economically politically and culturally. (*Jude Uwalaka, 2003 P, 197*). This means that it cannot be reborn or renewed. African Nations must be able to offer their youths, an updated, progressive educational and knowledge acquiring opportunities, and facilities that equip them as change agents, in our world today; An educational system and policies that equipped them to be competitive in the world ideas, to be able to courageously, creatively and productively meet the challenges, posed by the natural, human, social, cultural and economic realities of today in order to achieve a better future; An educational and knowledge- offering

strategies, centers and institutions capable of inculcating relevant, adaptable knowledge and challenging the recipient to innovativeness both in harnessing the best from the external and internal forces. African societies must provide the people, a social environment favorable for positive freedom and self-reliance. Here the thought of Molefi Asante is highly relevant, when he talks of an educational system that will give Africa a new consciousness, pride in African achievements, an Ethics that overcome mental slavery and inferiority complex, that challenges African men to the Will to create and invent; have intensive knowledge of our reality before reaching others (*cf. Molefi Asante 2004*). Of course, when we talk of knowledge – empowerment, we are not referring only to the theoretical aspect but also the technical and artistic skills and competences.

### **3. A Realistic and creative appropriation of the Indigenous Genius (Knowledge)**

A lot is being said about African Indigenous knowledge system as an important element in any African Renaissance project. All peoples and societies have through hundreds or thousands years of their existence in the struggle for survival, in often hostile and challenging conditions could have evolved and accumulated a lot insights and secrets about nature, strategies and rules of living, technical skills of doing things – and this can be in many areas, governance, medical interventions, craftsmanship, human behavior, harmonious existence with nature, moral insights, language skills and belief systems. These constitute what is referred to as indigenous knowledge, the local genius of a people. Of course African people have these in abundance. It will be the height of prodigality if they allow this important heritage of people’s knowledge reservoir, to dry up or waste away, in the unguarded pursuit of the exogenous. For as it is observed: we cannot escape the fact that many African problems require African –oriented solutions in form of knowledge insights, theories, skills that are relevant to African people and situation of which probing the indigenous knowledge heritage is a fertile starting point. (*Cf Crossmen,2004*).

And as I wrote elsewhere, African Renaissance as knowledge Renaissance must set up institutional, organizational, intellectual, individual and collective strategies probing into African knowledge systems, to tap into the great potentialities that have been lying dormant in them, to unleash their power and to harness them in the much needed African transformation and regeneration. (*Jude Uwalaka 2014*)

However, attention to the legacy of indigenous knowledge systems and beliefs, also calls for critical discernment. For not all in the past are salutary. Hence as Amos N. Wilson warned, we should not be “obsessed with the past to the exclusion of the present .We have some nationalists whose heads are on backwards and they can only look at the distant past. They are concerned with the past until they stumble over the present and cannot see what coming in the future” They grovel and revel in the great glories of the past to the Absence of the future. *Amos .N. Wilson 1999 P.66 – 67*

We must however be realistic to know that, not all in the past insights are relevant today. Some have been surpassed by recent researches or ideas from other knowledge systems, Renaissance Africa should not wallow in obscurantism or Anachronism, or practices that are injurious to men and society or inhibit progressive growth and competitiveness with other alternative claims. Renaissance implies breaking the inhibitions to knowledge, and enquiring into the condition for the possibility of true reliable knowledge. African Renaissance demands that we look at the mistakes of the ancestors and our past civilization, integrate these mistakes into the African Personality and then move forward, to build new civilizations, new worlds and not just to lament the ones past and gone. This means opening up to all kinds of knowledge and information as a way to getting to know reality. (*Amos .N.Wilson 1999.P.70*)

### **4. Serious Attention to Science and Technology**

No political or cultural Nationalism should blind any Nation to the importance of science and Technology in our world today, both for economic, survival and security. Africa needs modern Technology to deal with her many problems. To talk of Africa Renaissance without a Renaissance in science and Technology will be chasing a wild goose and a mere shadow boxing. African Nations must make investments in service and Technology and serious priority, not only in appropriating foreign Technology but also in developing her local Technology where it offers them a comparative advantage. Of course its appropriation must be critical, selective and realistic.

Surely not every technological innovation is needed in Africa. As Pope Francis in his Encyclical dealing on the Environment and Ecological problems of day said “Science and Technology are not neutral; from the beginning to the end of the process various intentions and possibilities are in play and can take on distinct shapes. Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age but we do need to slow down and look at reality in a different way, to appropriate the positive and sustainable progress which has been made, but also to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur.” (*Pope Francis 2015 No 114,*)

All boils down, to taking wise decisions on what African societies need relative to their actual situations and in the light of other life –affirming and life – sustaining values which are very important to them. Surely we can learn from the mistakes of the western world. Pope Francis insight could offer us some guidelines in this Technology choice for African Renaissance today when he said “we have the freedom needed



to limit and direct Technology, we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier; more human, more social, more integral.” (Pope Francis 2015, No 112 ).

### **5. Social Conscientization**

One of the causes of poverty and oppression in African society today is that people do not know their rights and therefore easily succumb to the oppressive manipulation of the Elite. So there is need to promote massive conscientization of the populace, those who might not have been privileged to have Access to formal education and even others who may not even understand the mechanics of underdevelopment in society. Our people have been crippled by ignorance at all fronts, and this is why their life situations do not improve and they demand no accountability from their leaders. If Africans must rise and her society renewed, massive education of the populace is imperative. This can be carried out by formal and informal organizations, through popular cultures, through the media, through civil Society group, through drama and plays. We can see the role played by Priests, dramatists, Journalists during the French Revolution. This mass conscientization is the greatest way of promoting mass education and conquering mass ignorance and also a fast way of bringing about positive change of attitude and mentality. This helps society and individuals to escape from the tutelage of questionable traditions, the pressure of conformism, uniformism and the servitude of authoritarianism. To grow in knowledge is to grow in freedom. And as it is said knowledge makes men easy to be controlled but difficult to be enslaved. Without mass conscientization of African societies, they will lack the capacity for self – actualization and emancipation. To this Carter .G. Wilson regretfully observed “if you can control a man’s thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions. When you determine what a man will think, you do not concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status for he will seek it himself (Carter G.W 2000:84).

The whole crux of this article is to show that knowledge will always be the key to unlocking the door of Progress for any society and the generation and dissemination of reliable, effective, productive and relevant knowledge is the real anchor to any socio-cultural renaissance especially that of Africa in our contemporary world.

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