

**MARKS OF OSTROMIC INTELLIGIBLE SCHOLARSHIP IN AFRICA: TAKING THEORIES TO  
THE STREETS THROUGH POLYCENTRIC PLANNING AND POVERTY REDUCTION  
STRATEGY (PPPRS)**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper reports the impact of my intellectual encounter with Vincent Ostrom – “taking theories to the streets.” Knowledge and its application are acknowledged as key sources of growth and development in the global economy, especially if it is adapted to specific circumstances and effectively utilized to generate significant opportunities for reducing poverty and promoting development. However, knowledge generated by African scholars is in defiance of African realities; hence, the persistent gap between theories and realities in all spheres of life. Vincent Ostrom cautions, “To find a theory useful for thinking about problems does not mean that Africa should copy the American model. The task, rather, is to use conceptions and the associated theoretical apparatus as intellectual tools to think through problems and make an independent assessment of appropriate ways for addressing the problems of contemporary Africa.” The question is: How capable are Africans to resolve their internal crisis without recourse to external assistance?

Using the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, this paper identifies and discusses repetitive missing links as well as the areas that are neglected by scholars and policymakers in the governance of community affairs in Africa. The point of departure of this paper, therefore, is in problem solving and solution seeking. It argues that in some ways, the weakness of centralized and structurally-defective governance in Africa provides an opportunity for community self-governing institutions to play the role that governments and their agencies have abandoned. This paper provides case studies and designs models to demonstrate principles and practices needed to make Polycentric Planning and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PPPRS), self-governance and adaptive development strategies resolve socio-economic and political crisis in Africa. It calls the attention of African scholars to the imperative of making their scholarship problem-solving, solution-seeking, and relevant to their community.

The paper, thereafter, charts a course of action that could be taken to ensure that African scholars and African universities become “organic” in their activities and use their intellectual capabilities to impact positively on their communities. It is in the light of this exigency that two strategic development models are advocated – (1) African Intellectual Gap Measurement Model (AIGMM) designed to measure intellectual potentials and relevance of African universities and (2) African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM) developed to restructure the public sphere in Africa. APSRM derives inspirations and workability mechanisms from thirteen (13) African development models that cut across several sectors of the economy in Africa. Using polycentric planning and poverty reduction strategy, these home-grown models are concerned with how people can work together, from community level, to address African challenges, especially the current food insecurity and unemployment crisis and thereby tackling the current global economic meltdown in Africa.

## Introduction

*To find a theory useful for thinking about problems does not mean that Africa should copy the Western models. That would show intellectual poverty – of doing no more than imitating the West example. The task, rather, is to use conceptions and the associated theoretical apparatus as intellectual tools to think through problems and make an independent assessment of the appropriate ways for addressing problems of contemporary Africa (Vincent Ostrom 1991, 2000).*

This paper reports the impact of my intellectual encounter with Professor Vincent Ostrom – “taking theories to the streets.” Knowledge and its application are acknowledged as key sources of growth and development in the global economy, especially if it is adapted to specific circumstances and effectively utilized to generate significant opportunities for reducing poverty and promoting development. However, knowledge generated by African scholars are in defiance of African realities. The pertinent questions that this paper raises are: (1) Why have several theories propounded and models applied in the continent failed to respond to the diverse challenges confronting the continent? (2) Why have the series of reforms and development programmes implemented in Africa, over the years, failed to resolve the developmental challenges? (3) Why have Africa, in spite of several endowments and potentials remained a beggar to the G8 and have nothing to show for the aid and grants received over the years? (4) Why have the efforts of international organizations and non-governmental organizations in Africa over the last four decades refused to yield expected results and development is still illusory? (5) Why have strategies that worked elsewhere refused to work in Africa? The position of this paper is that: if a theory, model or programme is not responding to reality we should look for alternatives, otherwise intellectual poverty will arise. Again, it is obvious that the institutional mechanism and technical know-how of how to take (existing) theories to the streets in Africa have not been adequately explored and developed and, hence, the persistent gap between theories and realities in the continent. Given the peculiar attitudes of African leaders towards knowledge and its application, speaking the ‘truth’ to the power by African scholars is not enough to resolve the complex and hydra-headed problems in the continent.

Vincent Ostrom cautions, “To find a theory useful for thinking about problems does not mean that Africa should copy the American model. The task, rather, is to use conceptions and the associated theoretical apparatus as intellectual tools to think through problems and make an independent assessment of appropriate ways for addressing the problems of contemporary Africa.” What is required, therefore, is that African scholars should go the extra mile in applying knowledge to the challenges confronting the continent – taking theories to the streets.

My contact with Professor Vincent Ostrom in 2003 at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA ignited a vision in me on how scholarship should be made beneficial to citizens at community level. This, invariably, made me to venture into adaptive education, food security and poverty reduction strategies that African continent needed desperately. I believe that the socio-economic and techno-political crisis in Africa is an acid test of Africans capability in resolution of the challenges facing the continent. The question is: How capable are Africans to resolve their internal crisis without recourse to external assistance? In view of the apathy of African leaders to effectively govern the continent, the only hope of the continent, I presume, is for African scholars to rise to the challenge and ignite necessary changes the continent needs. How will they do these?

Ideally, political leaders and scholars should work together when there is a problem to resolve rather than apportion blame when things go wrong. In my own view, there are two options. While in some instances both scholars and government officials should work together, in other cases scholars should also be concerned with how to take theories to the streets to proof and test their knowledge. It is not enough to critique the governmental system without offering an alternative workable strategy of how to solve the problems at hand. However, since it seems that African governments are not interested in harnessing African knowledge, potentials and skills towards socio-economic and techno-political development of the continent, it is the contention of this paper

that African scholars should first ensure that Eurocentric scholarship is jettisoned for Africentric scholarship. Second, they should be prepared to go the extra mile in taking theories to the streets and fashion out the possible way forward for the continent. This paper calls the attention of African scholars to this urgent assignment of making their scholarship problem-solving and relevant to their community.

While a group of scholars and analysts believe that African crisis is caused by bad governance and/or bad leadership, some others (such as Jeffrey Sachs, McArthur, Schmidt-Traub, Kruk, Bahadur, Faye and McCord) argue that Africa is caught up in a poverty trap. That is, the poor African performance is due to poverty explained by lack of resources and skills (Sachs, et. al., 2004). These theoretical formulations are erroneous and misleading. The position of this paper is that these two schools of thought have addressed the challenges in Africa at superficial level. Neither poverty trap school nor bad governance/leadership theory has done a deeper analysis of the challenges that are confronting Africa. The contention of this paper is that analysis should not end on bad governance or bad leadership. The question is: What causes bad governance? Some might want us to believe that bad governance is due to bad leadership. This is also superficial due to some reasons (as explained later in this paper). On the poverty trap school, is lack of resources and skills the problem in Africa? Is this assertion correct on Africa? No. there are abundant resources and well talented people in Africa. It becomes increasingly evident, however, that these theoretical formulations, Western ideologies and paradigms were inadequate to diagnose African challenges not to talk of proffering solutions that could produce balanced socio-economic, political and technological development. The Public Choice Theory (PCT) believes that governance and developmental crises in Africa are predicated upon institutional dilemma that originated in the colonial settings. The system has been highly centralized and monocratic (Ayittez 1991; Olowu 1999, 2006; Ayo 2002; Sawyer 2005; Akinola 2004, 2007a,f, 2008b, 2009a,b).

This paper, therefore, emphasized that the problems of disconnect and alienation make the pattern of governance to be structurally-defective. As expected, policies and programmes of African governments, regardless of their good intentions, have not been actualized in the lives of the people. The position of this paper is that centrally and externally motivated strategies lead to increasing economic and technological dependency, heightened mass poverty and choking of local initiatives. The problem is largely a case of institutional dilemma as there is an absence of appropriate institutional mechanisms that could motivate African peoples to work together as partners in development. This institutional dilemma confirms the problem of “disconnect” in the continent. As long as stakeholders in development are not operating in synergy, development is forgone (Akinola 2007f).

This paper strongly contends that it is possible for Africans to use their entrepreneurship and work together as colleagues with equal standing within development arenas to redeem the continent from the clutch of Western hegemony and liberate the people from poverty and oppression. However, it needs be noted that, regardless of the system of government practiced, the type of relationship that a state has with the people and their community institutions, to a large extent, determines the outcome of democratic process. African states in their present forms are uncheckable with unfettered power and thus become predatory. Put differently, the actors and operators of African states, even if highly intelligent and have good intentions cannot deliver appropriately the basic needs and aspirations of citizens except deliberate actions are taken to restructure the public sphere in the continent.

This paper, therefore, suggests that there is the need to restructure the public sphere for the emergence of a new working relation between public officials, scholars and citizens in Africa. This new working relation requires that African scholars and African public officials adopt alternative development strategy that is Africentred, people-centred and community-oriented. This paper, therefore, suggests polycentric planning for reconstructing the public sphere through appropriate institutional arrangement that is capable of connecting the stakeholders in development.

According to some Tocquevillian analytics, the public sphere as one of the four terrains of the public landscape is the central axis of public life where deliberation according to “universal rules” exposes citizens to competing viewpoints through public debates and in doing so teaches

them to become critical, tolerant and enable them to transform their “particularistic” concerns into “universal” ones. In addition, the public sphere, more than any of the other domains, provides women, as well as racial, ethnic, and other marginalized groups, a way of broadening the public agenda and therefore a way of gaining access and entry into public life (Mansbridge 1983; Habermas 1989; Warner 1990; Colas 1997; Alger 1998; Forment 2003:16-17).

Using the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, this paper identifies and discusses repetitive missing links as well as the areas that are neglected by scholars and policymakers in the governance of community affairs in Africa. The point of departure of this paper, therefore, is in problem solving and solution seeking. In view of this, the failure of structurally-defective governance in the continent calls attention to polycentric planning and decision making arrangements whereby community self-governing institutions could play critical and indispensable role by bringing the local people into the main stream of socio-economic and political decisions, thereby synergizing the efforts of the African state and community institutions through bottom-up and integrative planning. Polycentric planning and decision making system enhance the capacity of citizens to talk, discuss, dialogue and engage in contestation in an assembly, whether at local or national level. It deals with multiple units of governments (multi-layers and multi-centers) and a way of working with one another among citizens with complementary arrangements for formulating, using, monitoring, judging, and enforcing rules (Elinor Ostrom 2005). If such institutions are granted autonomy, it will enhance effective collaboration, self-regulation and accountability (Wunsch and Olowu 1995:123).

This paper, therefore, provides case studies and designs models to demonstrate principles and practices needed to make Polycentric Planning and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PPPRS), self-governance and adaptive development strategies resolve socio-economic and political crisis in Africa. It argues that in some ways, the weakness of centralized and structurally-defective governance in Africa provides an opportunity for community self-governing institutions to play the role that governments and their agencies have abandoned.

The paper, thereafter, charts a course of action that could be taken to ensure that African scholars and African universities become “organic” in their activities and use their intellectual capabilities to impact positively on their communities. It is in the light of this exigency that two strategic development models advocated. First, is an African Intellectual Gap Measurement Model (AIGMM) designed to measure intellectual potentials and relevance of African universities as well as intellectual gap(s) among African scholars. Second, is an African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM) that derives inspirations and workability mechanisms from thirteen (13) African development models that cut across several sectors of the economy in Africa. Such home-grown models developed by African scholars would need to be applied on pilot scale so that findings and experiences gathered from these pilot cases would help in refining and modifying the models for full replication across the continent. The impact of these models would not only reduce poverty but findings and experiences gathered from these exercises would also, invariably, be useful to reform African educational curriculum.

This paper is organised into six sections. The first part is the introduction, while the second section discusses how the problem of disconnect has engendered governance crises and development dilemma in Africa. The theoretical underpinning upon which the paper is anchored is the focus of the third part. The fourth section discusses the resilience of community self-governing institutions in Africa, while the fifth section presents how African scholars can engage in problem-solving scholarship by designing Africentred strategy to confront the problems of poverty in a polycentric manner. The sixth section contains the conclusions.

## **GOVERNANCE CRISES, DEVELOPMENT DILEMMA AND THE PROBLEM OF DISCONNECT IN AFRICA**

*Underdeveloped countries should not accept the inherited Western economic theory uncritically but remould it to fit their own problems and interests (Myrdal 1957: 99).*

The present governance crises and development dilemma in Africa are predicated upon repressive institutional order that disconnects the peoples of Africa from their leaders. The post-independent African states as constituted are not designed and equipped to respond to the needs of African people as they are unable to articulate transforming projects or mobilize societies around such projects. Policies adopted since political independence have reinforced the state institutional character and its inability to progressively enhance the living standards of majority of the African population. The elite are alienated in terms of the educational curriculum introduced by the colonial governments. The curriculum did not pay much attention to the study of African culture, its roots and adaptive education that can help the society to release the potentials and capabilities of the African people. This problem still persists till today as higher institutions in the continent only train students for white collar jobs instead of creating jobs using local resources. At the same time, African governments depend on ideas from developed countries, which are in most cases at variance with Africa's ecological conditions. This initial mistake opened the way for importation of foreign ideologies – political, agricultural, technological, industrial, and security spheres. The “disconnect” from the roots is manifested in several sectors of African landscape (administrative, educational, political, economic, social, judicial, security, etc.).

The above facts suggest (if nothing is done to alter the trend) that African countries will continue to be bedeviled by violent conflicts (of various types), human rights violations, ineffective and personalized political parties, some form of economic growth, increasing poverty, deepening and extreme inequality and deepening aid dependency. All these clearly point to the absence of democratic governance and failed economic development. The forty years experience since independence indicates that Africa is still searching for its own governance system acceptable to all its people and not simply the political elite and a section of the “middle class”. At the beginning of independence most countries inherited the parliamentary system from the British or the Presidential system from the French. In the 1970s these were abandoned for a one party or military rule which continued to the early 1990s. Through internal and external pressure these were abandoned for a return to the multiparty system. During the past 15 years serious doubts have emerged as to the suitability of the this multi-party liberal democracy. Indeed the post independence states have deepened as well as created hostility between communities within the countries - hostility partly stemming from colonial divide and rule policies, but also over unequal distribution of resources and power since independence.

As expected, authoritarianism has now shaped the political culture of the state; individuals are co-opted into the state apparatus, legitimised by periodic elections that are not people-centred (see Ake 1992, 1996:7; Chole 1995:3; Callaghy 1988; Chabal 2002; Olaitan 2004:18; Fawole 2005). The more struggle/opposition authoritarian regime faces, the more repressive it becomes, even getting to the point of assassination of its own officials. There are three elements of presidential authoritarian system (PAS) – intelligence, military and high businesses or shadow state (large scale farming, big insurance and financial institutions, oil companies, etc.) with big monies. PAS has been in Africa for quite a long period of time and it has been responsible for series of repression and assassinations in African countries. Unlike American democracy that is largely inclusive (in spite of the background of cultural diversity), African democracy is largely exclusive. It is winner-takes-it-all, while oppressors rule with impunity.

One might be tempted to think that the prevalence of multiparty systems in most part of Africa should be an advantage because of the envisaged checks and balances they could generate on the party in power. Contrary is the case as political party is essentially a class formation. The people of the same interests come together to form political party. That is why African democracy is best described as tyranny of democracy where rulers rule with impunity. That is why the current prevailing phenomenon of concession or power-sharing or government of national unity (as found in Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe) calls for serious caution because it can prolong hegemony. This is because consensus is usually built around the leader and not around the structure that respects the right and freedom of citizens.

The problems of disconnect and alienation in Africa reinforce the notion that the highly centralized governance structure in the continent makes it difficult for the policies and operations of African governments to impact positively on the lives of the citizenry. African states are more highly centralized than any of the other world's regions. This centralized posture has tended to become a part of the problem rather than be a part of the solution (Olowu 2006:7). As a matter of fact, no appreciable progress has been made in spite of all the Declarations and Resolutions made by African leaders over the last four decades to address persistent socio-economic and political crises in the continent. The state-dominated and state-driven economy has no mechanism and inspiration to rally the large percentage of African citizenry and their institutions, which are in the informal sector, around socio-economic and political projects (Akinola 2007f:218).

In spite of these challenges, this paper identifies development potentials, which include: natural resources potentials, innovations potentials and institutional potentials. Unfortunately, these development potentials are largely untapped and Africa, thus, becomes a dumping ground for goods that it could produce locally. Predictably, instead of development and enhancement of citizen's welfare; poverty, hunger, conflicts and sickness are heightened across the continent.

As a result, sub-Saharan Africa is a very small player in the global economy. As at 2005's exchange rates sub-Saharan Africa produced only 1.4% of global GDP in 2005 and had an average per capita income that was 1/41 of that of the high income countries. Africa is clearly the poorest region in the world. This, invariably, affects savings and thus reduces investment and development. As a result, official financial flows or aid were US\$30.5 billion in 2005, foreign direct investments US\$16.6 billion and other private transfers, which include various forms of private remittances, were US\$9.8 billion (Bigsten and Durevall 2008:7).

The failure of the past development paradigm, state-centered efforts and market economy requires a rethink on alternative ways of addressing African socioeconomic, political and technological problems. Market forces alone are incapable of addressing these problems; social capital plays an indispensable role as well. Since it is difficult for individuals to change certain exogenous variables (physical environment in particular), individuals usually adopt and adapt institutions based on their life exigencies. This is where Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework becomes relevant for sustainable development in Africa. The specific variation used in this paper draws from the IAD framework developed over the years by Vincent Ostrom and Elinor Ostrom and colleagues at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA. Institutional analysis helps us to better understand how individuals within communities, organizations and societies craft rules and organize the rule-ordered relationships in which they live their lives. This approach to scientific inquiry, often referred to as "new institutionalism," is within the broader tradition of political economy.

The major key sectors that constitute the development of any society are government, university, industry and agriculture, while the key players in these sectors are governments' officials, scholars, industrialists and farmers respectively. These groups should of necessity interact within socio-economic and political action arenas. The bane of African governance and development is that these stakeholders that are the key players and participants within development arenas have not been interacting; hence, there is no collective response to exogenous variables that they needed to deal with. Rather, they operate more or less along parallel lines; individual player has been responding to exogenous variables in a disjointed and adjusted incrementalistic manner. Consequently, development potentials that are associated with collective action within the action arena have been eluding Africa as a continent (Akinola 2007f:219).

Analysis so far confirmed that governance crisis in Africa is predicated upon institutional dilemma, hence, without integrative institutional arrangement to re-order African governance system, economic prosperity is foregone in the continent. The benefit of economic growth in Africa does not get to the grassroots. How do we explain the situation in Botswana, a country with large deposit of diamond but without a single industry to process the solid mineral? The mineral is exported to be processed abroad and then imported to the country for usage. This is slavery technology consumption. Invariably, growth is not benefiting the people as industries that process raw materials (which should generate employment) are not in Africa but in Europe and America. In essence, what we have in Africa is growth without development which invariably breeds exclusion

as few people that share political power determine resources distribution that are usually skewed in favour of those in the corridor of power, while citizens are deprived and marginalised in all ramifications (Akinola, 2007f:234). Economically, this position is reinforced by findings in Nigeria as well as in South Africa where economies are growing but of little to no benefit to the people as unemployment and poverty are increasing (Ibiam 2007; Monare 2007).

This section will not be complete without discussing international conspiracy of international organizations in their policy agenda in Africa. International organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conspired against Africa in several areas – subsidy and policy on trade liberalization to weaken African capabilities in food security and employment generation. The conspiracy stems from the imbalance in the world capitalist development clearly explained by the dependency and/or conspiracy theory (Amin, 1972; Rodney, 1976; Frank, 1979).

For instance, the Bretton Wood Institutions had introduced four programmes in Africa within the last three decades. The programmes are decentralisation, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and the Policy Support Instrument (PSI). All these programmes have deepened economic crisis which in turn precipitated declining social welfare and increased human misery simply because the programmes contained no viable strategy that could motivate and mobilise the peoples of Africa in diverse cultural and ecological settings around economic projects (Ali 1990; Khalid 1986; Sawyerr 1990; Mbaya 1995).

## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

In order to contextualize the line of analysis in this paper, Public Choice Theory (PCT) is adopted. The PCT recognizes the fundamental defects in the centralist model of governance and the persistent failure of the state to meet the collective yearnings and aspirations of the citizenry. In view of this, the Public Choice Scholars have consistently advocated “de-emphasising the state as the sole focus of political theory and policy analysis” (Ayo, 2000:23). The position of the Public Choice Scholars is that effective governance and meaningful socio-economic development can best be attained in human societies through systems of democratic administration. The main thrust of democratic administration is the people and a people - managed system of governance. It is based on the assumption of eligibility of every individual to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

As a result, the Public Choice scholars have called attention to the self-governing and self organising capabilities of the people. Though this alternative paradigm was originally conceived within the context of American experience, it has become a potent alternative effectively employed by African scholars in their works (Ayittez 1991; Olowu 1999, 2006; Ayo 2002; Sawyer 2005; Akinola 2004, 2007a,f, 2008b, 2009a,b). These scholars have confirmed the resilience and effectiveness of institutions designed and managed by the people. Those community institutions are found to have performed better than state run institutions, and that community based institutional arrangements readily meet the yearnings and aspirations of the people in delivering goals and services which the state run institutions have failed to deliver efficiently and effectively.

The Public Choice Scholars, therefore, emphasise that the state and its formal structures should concentrate on the provision of public goods and services, but they need not be directly involved in their production. The most important role of government, in a polycentric order, according to them, is to help local people resolve their conflicts of interest in a way that remains consistent with societal standards of fairness. The emphasis is that individuals under certain institutional arrangements and shared norms are capable of organizing and sustaining cooperation that advances the common interest of the group in which they belong (see, for example, E. Ostrom, 1990).

This line of thought recognizes that human beings can organize and govern themselves based on appropriate institutional arrangements and mutual agreements in a community of understanding. This is the fundamental of the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework. The IAD believes in institutional arrangement designed by people who cooperate based on rules and constitution of their choice; and are thereby able to resolve socio-economic and political problems which other people (external to their conditions) are not capable of doing for them.

The Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) states that part of colonial legacies had entrenched a culture of public service and governance that has not put the interests of the indigenous people first. In some cases, post-colonial African elites have used these entrenched systems to plunder national resources, while disregarding democratic norms and traditions (DBSA 2006:vi). After independence, African ruling elites gave top priority to state sovereignty and national security and sought to bring about “departicipation”. In spite of elites efforts to discourage autonomous organizations from taking root in civil society, in many places, voluntary associations proved too strong to be subordinated and survived as an alternative institutional framework to officialdom. The poor performance of planned economies in Africa gave an added impetus to autonomous activity beyond the purview of the state.

It is important at this juncture to point out that this colonially engineered misfortune had denigrated and denied Africa the development that existed in pre-colonial period. It has been documented that Africa once had several flourishing empires (that could compare with European empires) before colonial intrusions. Rodney (1976) shows that Africa has its own institutions and ideas of government before the intrusion of colonising powers. There were cases of flourishing, well-ordered and wealthy empires, kingdoms and city states (see for details Rodney 1976:40). This confirmed Africa’s precolonial development which Eurocentric scholarship sought to deny. Thanks to Cheikh Anta Diop who successfully struggled against this erroneous, misleading and flawed Eurocentric scholarship which tended to obscure the contributions of ancient black Egyptians to world civilization and re-established an Africentric epistemology as a liberating process (see Nabudere 2007:6,13; Sertima 1986:8; Carruthers 1999:3).

It is in this line that Vincent Ostrom, an American Professor Emeritus of Political Science argues that:

If Africans were to concern themselves more with covenanting with one another to form civil bodies politic, they would appreciate that African peoples draw upon diverse ways of conceptualising patterns of order in their societies. There is as much to be learned from stateless societies as from those that merged as “kingdoms” and “empires” before the intrusion of European empires. Modern democratic societies cannot be imposed from the top. They emerge as people learn to cope with the problems of collective organisation associated with their shared interdependencies (Vincent Ostrom, 1991:18).

The fundamental questions, therefore, include the following: How are diverse peoples of Africa coping economically and socially? How do people resolve their conflicts? How are the people surviving regarding basic needs like food, housing, clothing, health, education, transport, security, etc.? These are some of the questions that African scholars need to answer through empirical surveys in their various disciplines. Findings from such studies will help us come to terms with the resilience and robustness of African peoples as well as their vulnerability, exclusion and marginalization. This will produce a new body of knowledge that is necessary for decisions and policies that can positively touch the lives of African people.

For Africa to be self-governed, diverse and multiple centres of human activities that African peoples have established should be of significant interest to African scholars. They need to pay attention to indigenous and endogenous political economy structure and second, extract governance principles which we can modify to suit the present day realities. Models that will take cognizance of these self-governing arrangements and multiple centres of human activities should be first developed by African scholars and then apply to development. These multiple centres of human activities resemble what Elinor and Vincent Ostrom (2003:12) describe as polycentricity. Polycentricity simply means a system where citizens are able to organize, not just one, but multiple governing authorities, as well as private arrangements, at different scales.

It is important to sharp the contrasts between decentralization and polycentricity/self-governance here. Decentralization does not mean the same thing as self-governance though the two may embrace one another if the operators mean well. It is possible for decentralization structures to accommodate the self-governing principle. However, post-independent African governments have tended to exclude the elements of self-governance from their concepts of decentralization. While decentralization is state-centered and outward looking, self-governance is

people-oriented and inward looking. Decentralization as a World Bank agenda, though regards local governments as participatory institutions, in practice it is more of extension of central government to the local level where bureaucracy and machine politics prevailed.

Overwhelming evidence confirmed that most African countries operate a centralized local government within a decentralized system as these third tiers of government have no interactive links with community institutions. Evidence abound that decentralization across Africa (in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda, etc.) is a failure as it lacks the mechanisms that could enable the people and their elite leadership to work together as citizens of the same country. Invariably, party patronage, embezzlement, improper use of council property and facilities, corruption and consequently poverty have been heightened (Wunsch and Ottemoeller 2004; Akinola 2004; Aye 2006:137; Olowu 2006).

Despite the shortcoming of the state institutions in responding to the yearnings and aspirations of the citizenry, diverse peoples of Africa are still surviving through several coping strategies and self-organizing arrangements in the same areas where the state has faltered. The people were able to achieve these by reviving their old traditions and through shared strategy, problem-solving interdependency, self-organizing arrangements were able to achieve modicum level of success. Through these strategies, the people, to an extent, have provided and produced infrastructure such as schools, health facilities, community hall, postal service, road repairs and other essential services. Unfortunately, these democratic people-oriented values are neither properly documented nor recognized by official statistics in Africa. The next section presents in more details the resilience of these self-governing institutions in Africa.

## **THE RESILIENCE OF COMMUNITY SELF-GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA**

The local people in Africa have no confidence in those who run African governments, hence, they invest their sovereignty horizontally in one another through collective action and self-organizing and self-governing capabilities and thereby, to an extent, addressing daily challenges – education, health, community hall, postal service, security services, road repairs and other essential services. They achieved these through various forms of associations and community institutions (not donor civil society) by revisiting and reviving their old traditions. The people relied on institutional arrangements, shared norms and mutual agreements in a community of understanding that enabled them to sustain cooperation and advance the common interest of the group in which they belong. It is institutional structures that the people have developed over the years that availed individuals in these communities to make inputs to development in their locality by contributing towards projects (labour, finance and materials) and decision-making in socio-economic and political arenas (See for instance, Akinola 2007a:34, 2008b:97-102).

This section draws examples from Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal to justify the robustness and resilience of community self-organizing and self-governing institutions in Africa. Recent indications in Nigeria, for instance, confirmed that civic democracy as a daily practice and form of life was rooted in the culture and social organisation of the people, which were based on mutual trust, reciprocity, and common understanding (Akinola 2005d, 2007a:34, 2008b). The people organised themselves into several groups and associations to confront their present day challenges. The power of collectivity and joint efforts among the people are based on contractual relationships, building of trust and reciprocity in their day-to-day existence. The joint efforts, however, require certain rules and laws the people used in checking the individuals' excesses and free-riding. Although these rules, in most of the communities, are not written down, they are already part of the people because their daily existence in all ramifications revolves around cooperation. In some other communities, especially as literacy rate is increasing, associations are now writing their rules. For example, local people demonstrate great entrepreneurial capabilities in the way they handle local/community challenges in Nigeria and have achieved a reasonable level of success in the same areas where state-centred institutions have faltered.

Selection and checking of leaders were based on democratic processes and these have some impacts on the service delivery capacities of these community institutions. A familiar code of social justice is applied and there is a high moral tone in the management of public matters and financial accounts. The moral pressure surrounding the public expectation of prudent spending of

public resources is a living source of public accountability. Embezzlement is very rare because of the social stigma it attracts. When this occurs, however, the culprit is made to refund the money and also fined or suspended, while his property may be confiscated and sold to recover the funds.

Indications from South African corroborate the findings in Nigeria. For instance, the Zenzele clubs of the Eastern Cape of South Africa, which date from the late 1920s, were founded by educated African women who sought to improve the lives of rural African women by enhancing their subsistence farming and cooking skills and educating them about household cleanliness, basic child care and health care. The associations later spread to places like Uganda, Tanganyika and Southern Rhodesia where they catered for rural women and focused on community development. Unlike associations for African women in British colonial Africa, Zenzele clubs in South Africa did not evolve into political organisations. In the white-run segregated and apartheid states that persisted through 1994, Zenzele women did not engage in direct political action; rather, they sought to unite African women across class and ethnic lines and focused their efforts on community development (Higgs 2004).

In Senegal, different occupational groups – traders, farmers, artisans, transporters, etc. form different types of associations that include: tribal associations, women's associations, burial societies, neighbourhood society associations, youth associations, etc. It has been confirmed that urbanisation sparked a sharp rise in associational life in Dakar and other towns in Senegal. Several associations emphasised social and recreational activities, the provision of mutual assistance and credit to finance important life-cycle events, and a safety net to help the needy (Gellar 2005:94). Similarly, in the rural economy of Senegal, traditional age-grades organised themselves into work groups to earn money. There are village-level youth associations that incorporated all members of the same age-grade or several age-grades. These village-level youth groups evolved into the most dynamic and effective associations and constituted the base for a strong peasant movement in many parts of Senegal. It is clearly evident that rural Senegalese successfully adapted and expanded pre-colonial institutions to addressing challenges of daily life (Gellar 2005:98).

These groups, since 1996 have come together to establish their own local development committees that engage in a wide range of economic activities, to evaluate their neighbourhood's needs and to develop plans to improve the level of public goods and services. The rising participation of grassroots organisations in local governance in Senegal has been accompanied by a heightened sense of citizenship on the part of their members (Gellar 2005:105). These developments in Senegal are slowly changing the nature of local politics by undermining patron-client relationships and party control of associational life and making local government officials increasingly accountable to their constituents rather than to their party (Gellar 2005:106). However, this remarkably successful institution received relatively little attention from government decision makers and donors largely because they were not part of national programmes and donor projects (Gellar 2005:98).

Government's apathy notwithstanding, there is evidence that civil society – i.e. occupational, community-based, and religious organizations – exists at localities all over Africa, and in some circumstances can be an important participant in service delivery and in enforcing accountability (Olowu, Ayo and Akande, 1991; Bratton 1989, 1990, 1994; Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Olowu and Erero, 1997; Adedeji, 1997; Coulibally, 1999; Akinola, 2000, 2003b, 2004, 2005d, 2007a, 2008b). This self-governing arrangement empowers citizens, protects individual choice and allows for polycentric institutional arrangement that permits citizens to join with one another to take collective action (Wunsch and Olowu 1995:274). These patterns of self-organising and self-governing capabilities of the local people in resolving their daily challenges are described as polycentricity.

Evidence abound that these people-centred institutions have also ventured into security of life and property as the fear of crime and feelings of insecurity had led to people losing confidence in official policing. Recent studies have confirmed that the people have exercised considerable entrepreneurial capabilities by exploring their pre-colonial community-based security arrangements. This has resulted into huge investments in private security and community-based security arrangements that include: Vigilante Groups and Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) in Southwestern Nigeria. The remarkable performances of these community-based security institutions (CBSIs) in

crime bursting lend credence to the effectiveness of institutions designed and managed by the people themselves and these confirmed them as alternatives and/or complementary structures for the maintenance of security of life and property (Akinola 2009a).

As in Nigeria, local people in South Africa have started creating their own parallel structures of law enforcement to enforce safety and security and the result is a growth in the phenomenon of vigilante groups. For instance, security volunteers in SOWETO (South West Township), Johannesburg, South Africa handed over an average of 30 suspects to the Police every month (Prime Time News, (e-news), 18 February 2007). However, tendency exists for these voluntary security associations to have contempt for due process as found in certain parts of Nigeria, especially the Bakassi Boys in the eastern Nigeria. The Bakassi Boys were not in the habit of handing suspected criminals to the Police simply because of corruption and brutality charges against the police. They applied jungle justice or, in some other cases, imprisoned the suspected criminals in cells. This has, however, invariably affected the public image of their role in security matters. Like in Nigeria, especially in the eastern part of the country, where the Bakassi Boys operate, some vigilantes in South Africa do not follow due process when criminals are arrested. The 'arrest' and punishment frequently cause the suspect to be assaulted.

Notwithstanding, the important thing is to design institutional framework that could convert the negative social capital into positive resource as in the case of Saki community and other communities in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State, Nigeria, where the Saki people, through collective action, have been able to transform the OPC in their community from violent orientation to positive result such that there exists a symbiotic relationship between OPC and the Local Government with the community development association as the facilitator between the duo (Akinola 2009a).

In spite of discouraging picture with respect to African development, further indications from other African countries such as Ghana, Chad and Uganda confirm the role of community-based organisations as units of de facto local government (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:11). Africa has its glorious picture of real democratic life necessary for development as depicted by associational life of diverse peoples in the continent, though may not be accepted by the Western tradition. Bratton (1994:5) found that associational life took different forms in different African countries: Christian churches in Kenya and Burundi, Islamic brotherhoods in Senegal and Sudan, lawyers' and journalists' associations in Ghana and Nigeria, farmer organizations in Zimbabwe and Kenya, and mineworkers' unions in Zambia and South Africa. The common denominator is that everywhere that independent associations survived they provided ordinary Africans with an outlet for the urge to combine in pursuit of shared goals. According to Hyden (2006), there is a vibrant associational life in African societies. Had Alex de Tocqueville been able to pay a visit to Africa, he would no doubt have been aroused by what he could see on the ground in the same way as he was when first visiting America. The kinds of civic spirit in African peoples in terms of willingness to make sacrifices are worth commending. They are apt to postpone other personal activities to meet the community needs. In a nutshell, there is a strong sense of community-oriented, people-centered and true democracies among diverse peoples of Africa outside the domain of the state.

From the above analyses, it is clear that mass mobilisation strategy provides answers to most local development questions which the state has been dodging over the years. Rather than wait for the public authorities, the communities in these countries through self-organising and self-governing capabilities have planned and executed several public goods and services that directly touched the lives of their people. It is only at this level of common pool resources that some achievements have been realized. These groups see the need to come together and address their universal problems. It is only at this level of common pool resources that some achievements have been realised. This is the doctrine of polycentricity which provides alternative strategies to address problems of daily existence at the grassroots level in the face of dismal performance of the modern state institutions. These experiences are not limited to these countries alone; they are common in other African countries as confirmed by other scholars working on Africa.

The existence and operation of these self-governing and community-based institutions, however, does not replace the role of government; rather to redefine it. The most important role of government, in a polycentric order is to help local people resolve their conflicts of interest in a way that remains consistent with societal standards of fairness. In other words, government should not

be involved in too many things; rather it should play the role of facilitator to ensure fairness and justice.

The lesson we can learn from these institutions is how they are able to mobilize and use resources judiciously for the provision of social services. The concern is that if these institutions are so accountable to their members, we should begin to conceptualize how they can be used to re-constitute socio-economic and political order from the bottom-up and to serve as alternatives and/or complementarities to the modern state institutions. In order to reconstruct the public sphere and democratise social relations in Africa, an important task that needs to be accomplished is to build on the existing self-governing structures in the continent. This, however, places enormous challenges on African scholars to play a critical role in order to resolve the challenges in the continent.

The fundamental questions, therefore, include the following: What kind of incentives favour trusted institutional arrangement among the people? What lessons can we learn from peoples' creativities and the adaptive strategies they evolved over the years in addressing problems of daily existence? My research efforts within the last fifteen years have attempted to answer some of these questions through empirical surveys. Findings from these studies have confirmed the resilience and robustness of local people in Africa as well as their vulnerability, exclusion and marginalization. Consequently, institutional mechanisms capable of bridging the gaps between the ruling elite and the local people were designed to ensure that the two groups operate in synergy (see for details, Akinola 2008d; 2008p).

Though there is a growing awareness of the need to strengthen community institutions which have existed and have facilitated self-reliant development at the local level, these institutions in Africa exist at grassroots without official connection with the state-based institutions. They operate on parallel line with governments, their agencies and multinationals. Under normal circumstances, these people-oriented institutions and governments should operate in synergy as stakeholders in development and colleagues with equal standing within socio-economic and political arenas. This, however, has not been the case. What has been happening is that government officials dominate decision making arena and decided for the people who have a well established structure of community self-governance (see Akinola 2008b). If these institutions are viable (though not perfect), the question then is how do we connect them to the formal government structure?

This is the type of questions that African scholars need to reflect upon and come out with concrete ideas on how to harness African potentials towards redemptive development.

## **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND PROBLEM-SOLVING REGIME: THE POLYCENTRIC PLANNING AND POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY IN AFRICA**

*But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding (Job 32:8 in the Holy Bible).*

In this era of problem-solving knowledge regime, the onus rests on African scholars to think in a new way i.e. add value to their disciplines or fields to solve specific problems in Africa. The role of divine inspiration in birthing the ideas on food security cannot be over-emphasised. The voice of God ignited a vision in me and consequently spurred me into entrepreneurial endeavors, especially on how to address the problems of food insecurity and poverty among Nigerians and Africans. In October/November 2004, God spoke to me that: "There is going to be food scarcity; go into farming." This propelled me into action and consequently, I ventured into food security experiments. I started with fishery in October 2004; cultivation of yam, maize and cassava in March/April 2005; rabbitry in October 2005; goatry in January 2006; wide range cockerel in November 2006; and plantain cultivation in August 2007. Part of these experiences culminated into a community level investment cooperation project at Irepodun Local Government Area of Osun State between 2005 and 2006.

For example, the results of an experiment on rabbitry that I carried out between October, 2005 and February, 2006 shows that three rabbits (2 female, 1 male) multiplied to 22 rabbits within

three months. By projection, using simple arithmetic (for four generations), the number would be 380 within a year – October, 2005 to October, 2006 (see Akinola, 2006b,j). This is one of several areas African universities can demonstrate their entrepreneurial capability by practically developing ideas for the consumption of larger society, especially in the areas of food security, employment generation and poverty reduction.

Hitherto, innovative ideas developed by African scholars are limited to experimentation and personal use (see Akinola 2007d,f). Examples of creative innovations from Africa that can be applied to enhance development abound:

- Investigations carried out by the Department of Agricultural Engineering, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria demonstrated a saving of 20 work-days when farmers used mechanical methods designed by agricultural engineers, instead of the traditional methods (Akinola 2002:73).
- The Department of Food Science and Technology of this same Nigerian university, using physical principles, has developed effective and viable methods of food preservation (see Taiwo et. al. 1997; Enujiugha. et. al. 2002; Akanbi et. al. 2006).
- Scholars in the Department of microbiology in Obafemi Awolowo University had invented techniques using decomposed wastes to generate energy. In particular, Prof. Odeyemi has been using energy generated for cooking and lightning in his home for several years (see Odeyemi, 1979, 1982; Odeyemi, et. al. 1991).
- Scholars in the Department of civil engineering in Obafemi Awolowo University had designed machine that converts palm kernel wastes to activated carbon for water treatment to de-colourise, and de-odourise water as well as remove taste, chlorine and heavy metals such as lead, chromium, cadmium and arsenic that are carcinogenic. This machine can be used for industrial water treatment and liquid refining (Ogedengbe et. al. 1985; Adewumi et. al. 2005). At present, Engineer Adewumi has developed batch processing furnace capable of assisting rural women and youth who work in palm oil processing in activated carbon production to enhance their income and social status.

The required thing is that African university should develop these ideas for the consumption of larger community in Africa on a pilot scale following the example of Irepodun Investment Cooperation in Osun State of Nigeria (Akinola 2007d,f). The result of such experiments can then be used to design African models and also for redesigning school curriculum.

The issue of appropriateness of technology for food security (pre- and post-harvest activities) is very crucial and imperative for all stakeholders in agricultural sector. It is increasingly being appreciated that appropriateness of technology does not only have to do with the technical efficiency and effectiveness of the technology but also with its impact on the social balance in the society, the environment, skill requirement, etc. The contention of this paper is that, in this era of problem-solving knowledge regime, the onus rests on African scholars to think in a new way and add value to their disciplines or fields to solve specific problems in food security and employment generation in Africa. This requires that Knowledge Management (KM) tools and techniques practiced in Europe and Asia need be taken into consideration with its potentials fully employed by KMA for wealth creation, food security and employment generation in Africa.

For example, much of socio-economic development in Germany is attributed to the development path undertaken by the country's universities:

The German Democratic Republic has become one of the leading industrial nations in the world. Its success is due, in no small part, to its ability to produce a large, highly trained technical elite through a sophisticated education system closely tailored to the needs of the society (Giles 1978).

It has been found that "socialization" of the university (relating their work more closely to the requirements of the state) or the doctrine of social adaptation of university education is a precondition for the technological survival of nations. No modern university can exist in isolation from the society on which it thrives (Aderinto 1985). Given this caveat, the impact of any university must be measured by its ability to improve the well-being of the society and offer practical solutions to intractable problems of development.

Unfortunately, African universities and governments have, so far, not taken concrete action to ensure that African resources are harnessed and globalisation system is changed in the favour of Africa. Bingu Wa Mutharika corroborates this when he argues that:

Africans have not developed home grown strategies to deal with the continent's specific situations. In most cases, the continent depended on "surrogate economists" for advice and ended up with wrong diagnoses, wrong prescriptions and hence wrong results (Mutharika 2007).

Further, Bingu Wa Mutharika suggests that:

Africans must agree on economic strategies and technological innovations that are tailored to respond to the challenges of poverty alleviation and help to bridge the "technology divide" between industrialised and developing nations (Mutharika 2007).

The current global economic-financial crisis, more than ever, requires urgent intervention of scholars in various disciplines to engage in problem-solving scholarship. In this era of problem-solving knowledge regime, the onus rests on African scholars to think in a new way i.e. add value to their disciplines or fields to solve specific problems in Africa. It is in this context that African Intellectual Gap Measurement Model (AIGMM) is suggested.

### **African Intellectual Gap Measurement Model (AIGMM)**

African Intellectual Gap Measurement Model (AIGMM) is designed to measure intellectual potentials and relevance of African universities and other higher educational institutions in Africa (Akinola 2008m). The starting point is to determine what is missing in African scholarship by measuring intellectual gaps. The result of the measurement would determine the type of models that need to be designed to fill the identified gap(s), test the models and refine the models to ensure they fit into realities and become problem-solving. Knowledge management tools and techniques as well as effective planning and institutional framework that can make knowledge generated by African scholars relevant to the needs and aspirations of the peoples of Africa would need to be employed for generating home-grown models. Such home-grown development models developed by African scholars would need to be applied on pilot scale so that findings and experiences gathered from these pilot cases would help in refining and modifying the models for full replication across the continent. The findings and experiences gathered from these exercises would, invariably, be used to reform African educational curriculum at university level (see Akinola 2008m for details on this model).

African scholars and researchers need to articulate and pursue their intellectual concerns with all the energies and sense of scholarly engagement and academic integrity that they could muster to serve the peoples of the continent. African scholars will make a great difference now if they can generate practical examples of how communiqués, policies and actions can impact positively on community and citizens' welfare in the continent. In order to fulfil this objective, scholars should focus on specific sectors of African economy so that they could complete the process of theoretical reasoning, empirical analysis and practical application of knowledge that African continent is in dire needs now.

The contention of this paper is that, since political factor determines the operation of other sectors of economy, the starting point is to commence with the application of strategies that can restructure African public sphere so that socio-economic and technological crisis in the continent can be addressed on pilot scales. As a matter of priority, once the public sphere is restructured, the next step to take is to embark on programmes that can address pressing needs such as food security and employment generation. It is within this context that this paper provides some directions and strategies on how to address the challenges of the current food insecurity and unemployment in African countries.

The pertinent questions that are raised here include: Are there some roles citizens should play in the process of reconstructing the public sphere and participating in public debates? What are these roles? What lessons can we learn from peoples' creativities and the adaptive strategies they evolved over the years in addressing problems of daily existence? How can we reconstruct and reconfigure the public sphere in Africa to synergize the efforts of the people through their institutions and that of governments as well as international financing organizations to resolve the

lingering socio-economic crises and poverty in the continent? How can citizens at community level be mainstreamed in decision making, rule-monitoring and enforcement of sanction on rule infraction? What role should citizens at community level play in policy making, for example?

The paper suggests that there is the need to restructure the public sphere for the emergence of a new working relation between public officials, scholars and citizens in Africa. This new working relation requires that African scholars and African public officials adopt alternative development strategy that is Africentred, people-centred and community-oriented. In this vein, the paper advances polycentric planning for reconstructing the public sphere through appropriate institutional arrangement that is capable of connecting the stakeholders in development. In order to restructure the public sphere in Africa, the paper further suggests African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM) (See Fig. 1).

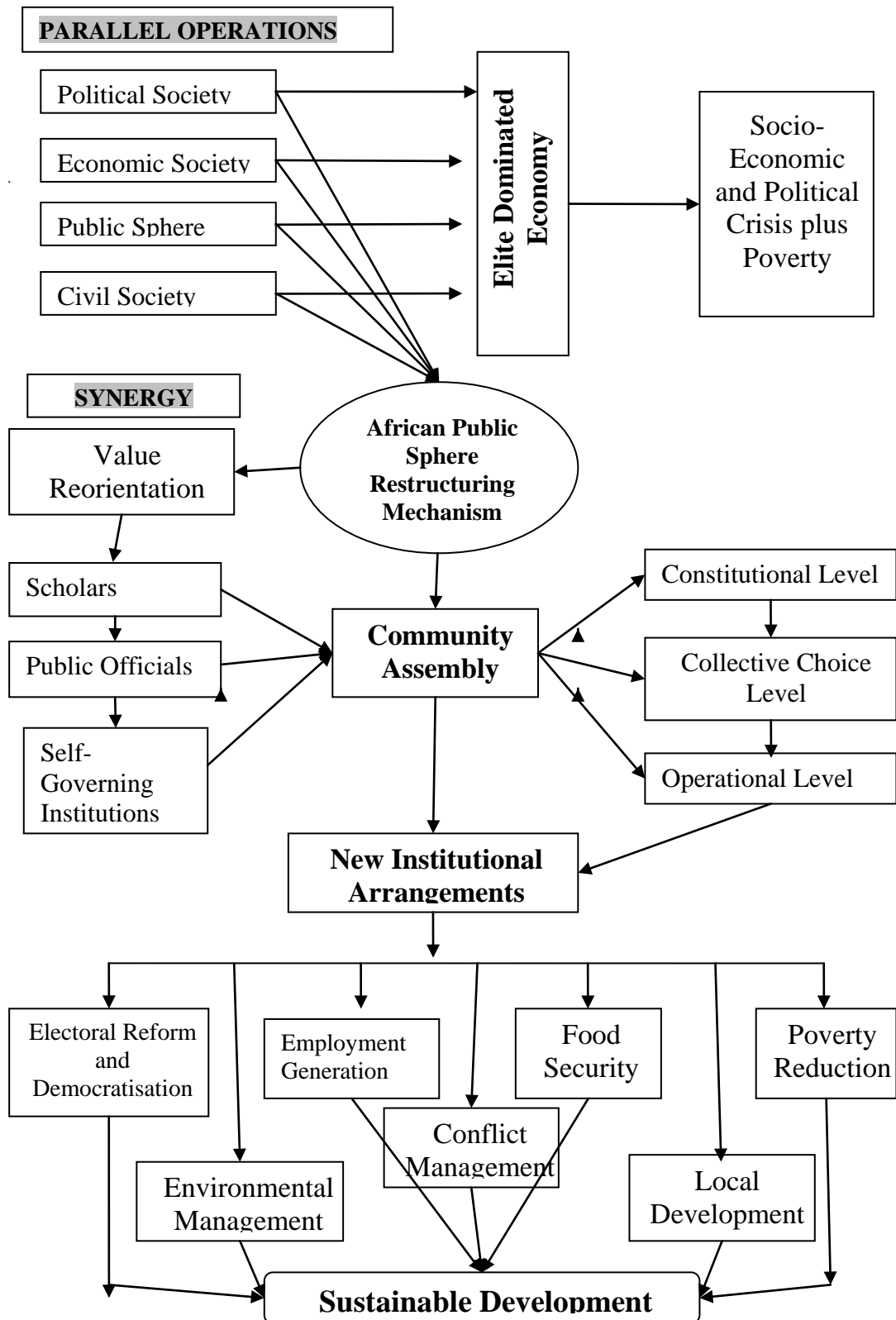
### **African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM)**

African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM) is conceptualised as a deliberate act of setting up self-governing community assembly (SGCA) for deliberation, collegiality, mutual trust, reciprocity and shared community of understanding. APSRM emphasises two elements – deliberation and deliberateness/action. APSRM requires that African scholars should take the lead in this new arrangement. It derives inspirations and working mechanisms from fourteen (14) African development models (Akinola 2007f,j; 2008f,m,o,p). The fourteen (14) models are: (1) African Intellectual Gap Measurement Model (AGIMM) for measuring intellectual potentials and relevance of African universities as well as intellectual gap(s) among African scholars with the aim of reforming African educational curriculum and making African scholarship problem-solving and solution seeking (see Akinola 2008m for details on this model); (2) African Development Institutional Mechanism (ADIM) for connecting all the stakeholders in development at various levels of decision making (Akinola 2007f); (3) African Polycentric Information Networking (APIN) for creating networks between the leaders and the people for effective information sharing and communication (Akinola 2008p); (4) African Food Security Model (AFSM) for securing food for the citizens (Akinola 2008f); (5) African Employment Generation Model (AGEM) for generating employment opportunities (Akinola 2008f); (6) African Conflict Prevention and Peace Building (ACPPB) for detecting and preventing conflict as well as building peace (Akinola 2008p); (7) African Sustainable Environment Model (ASEM) for conserving and protecting environmental resources (Akinola 2008q); (8) African Road Trilogy (ART) for building cost effective and durable roads (Akinola 1998); (9) African Community-Initiatives and Development Model (ACID) for empowering the people economically and reducing poverty (Akinola (2000:186-187); (10) African Electoral Reform and Democratisation (ARED) for inclusive democratisation (Akinola 2008p); (11) African Local Economic Development Strategy (ALEDS) for enhancing economic growth through local industrialization and sustaining development (Akinola 2006j; 2007f:233; 2008p, 2008c); (12) African Polycentric Privatisation Model (APPM) for distributing the benefits of economic growth among the citizenry (Akinola 2007f:233); (13) African Security Model (ASM) for ensuring security of lives and property (Akinola 2009a); and (14) African Forest Management Model (Akinola 2007i; 2008q).

African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM) is diagrammatized in Fig. 1. The first part of the diagram displays the failure of structurally-defective public landscape and public policies in Africa as exemplified by parallel operations of the four terrains of public landscape (civil society; economic society; political society and public sphere) that has resulted into elite dominated economy and socio-economic and political crisis, which have, in turns deepened poverty and heightened human misery in Africa. This failure calls for a paradigm shift in governance structure to a new institutional arrangement whereby the efforts of the participants in the public terrains – politicians, bureaucrats, technocrats, multinationals, scholars and citizens – are synergized through public sphere restructuring mechanism (the second part). APSRM suggests that the first step is a value re-orientation among African scholars and then among other participants. This new orientation, invariably, determines: (a) the ability of African scholars to take theories to the streets and applied them for the benefit of the citizenry; (b) the synergy between and among African scholars and public officials in executing socio-economic and political projects; (c) the relevance and indispensability of community self-governing institutions in socio-economic, political and

technological decision making; and (d) the centrality and imperativeness of community assembly for the resolution of socio-economic and political crisis.

The outcome of the restructuring is in three parts: (i) rule making at all levels of decision-making (constitutional, collective choice and operational) at the community assembly; (ii) new institutional arrangements would reflect integrative constitutional order in socio-economic and political realms; and (iii) deliberateness – joint action and synergy by the three groups (scholars, public officials and representatives of community self-governing institutions). After the institutional arrangement has been designed, operational strategy for implementation of any programme/project (e.g. employment generation, food security, poverty reduction, etc) can then be fashioned out (see Akinola 2007f; 2008c). It is at this stage that any of the thirteen models can be applied to specific action situation. For example, African Electoral Reform and Democratisation (ARED) could be applied for connecting all the political stakeholders in development and governance at various levels of decision making for enhancing public accountability. Similarly, African Local Economic Development Strategy (ALEDS) could be applied for enhancing economic growth through local industrialization, while African Polycentric Privatization Model (APPM) would help in distributing the benefits of economic growth, thereby empowering the people economically and reducing poverty. The application of African Food Security Model (AFSM) would ensure food security for the citizens, while African Employment Generation Model (AGEM) would generate employment opportunities for unemployed youth, etc. These models and others (in various sectors of African economy) that would be developed by African scholars working in collaboration with the Centre would be applied on pilot scale for practical implementation of polycentric strategy by using African associational life as a foundation for bottom-up restructuring in democratisation processes in Africa.



**Fig. 1: African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM)**  
 Source: Akinola (2009b).

### **Implementation Strategy for Polycentric Planning and Poverty Reduction Strategy**

In the light of the above, it is clear that the crisis of development in Africa could be addressed if a new institutional arrangement and planning mechanisms that are capable of bringing all the stakeholders together for regular discussions and decision making are designed and implemented. Such a public sphere restructuring mechanism should regard the existing self-organizing and self-governing arrangements as well as associational life that have proved effective as building blocks for re-constituting democratic order from the bottom up in Africa. The self-governing institutions can act as checks and balances on the local government officials. Much might be made of community-level government both to enhance “voice” and to improve local governance. A community assembly that comprises officials of governments, as well as representatives of various groups and associations in Africa should be established. Since no two communities are ever the same, cultural diversity that characterised Africa is quite easily captured in a polycentric system with its multi-layer and multi-centre relationships and interactions.

In self-governing systems, citizens, interacting through appropriate institutional arrangements, engage in rule making at all levels of decision-making (operational, collective choice, and constitutional) and within all scales or domains (neighborhood, township, local government or district, state/province, national, and supranational). Boundaries between the three decision making levels are blurred. Depending on the activity at hand, two or all the three actions can take place within a particular scale or domain. The IAD framework, however, differentiates between three levels of interaction – constitutional, collective choice and operational – that function concurrently.

At the constitutional level lies the system that determines how rules are made and can be modified. At the heart of effective governance of Africa is the imperativeness of constitutional reform which can be accomplished through polycentric privatization and local industrialization. It is important to emphasise here that constitutional reform should be tied to specific task – programme or project – so that the actors can play practical role in the process. The effectiveness of this strategy has been proved in an experiment performed in Irepodun Local Government area of Osun State, Nigeria between 2005 and 2006 by the author (Akinola 2007f:230). Based on the Irepodun experience, the adoption of polycentric privatization strategy could avail the citizens in Africa the opportunities to dialogue in community assembly and jointly take decision on how resources are to be allocated and utilized as well as on other socio-economic and political activities.

At the collective choice level, rules that define and constrain the actions of individuals and citizens have to be established. At the operational level, concrete actions have to be undertaken by those individuals most directly affected, or by public officials (McGinnis 1999a). This can then be applied to different sectors of the economy in the Africa – employment generation, food security, poverty reduction, road development, environmental management, electoral reform and democratisation, conflict detection, prevention and resolution, etc.

It is believed that when the participants and stakeholders at the community assembly are able to sit together, discuss their common problems and craft working rules together, a shared community of understanding will be established. The interactions between the governments, universities and community self-governing institutions will eventually produce new working relations that will be people-oriented. For governance to benefit the people it has to proceed from the people, be guided by them, and they should be able to modify the governing institutions as their situations change (Tocqueville 1966). The argument is that if Africa wants to address the problems of infrastructural deprivation, corruption, environmental degradation, conflict, poverty and hunger, it needs to learn how to make efficient use of its physical, human, and institutional resources. Experiences of community-based institutions through self-organizing and self-governing capabilities in meeting common challenges in the delivery of common goods and social services need to be taken into consideration in policy formulation. It is these people-designed and people-oriented structures that can be regarded as building blocks for the emergence of people-centred and self-governing public sphere capable of reconstituting democratic order from the bottom-up in Africa. Political leaders should realise that the more inclusive the marginalized groups in the political system, the less opposition they (leaders) face and the more time they (leaders) have to devote to address issues on community affairs.

It is pertinent at this juncture to discuss two models that are very central to the application of Polycentric Planning and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PPPRS). These are: African Development Institutional Mechanism (ADIM) and African Polycentric Development Planning Model (APDPM). At the heart of APSRM is African Development Institutional Mechanism (ADIM) capable of connecting all the stakeholders in development at various levels of decision making.

### **African Development Institutional Mechanism (ADIM)**

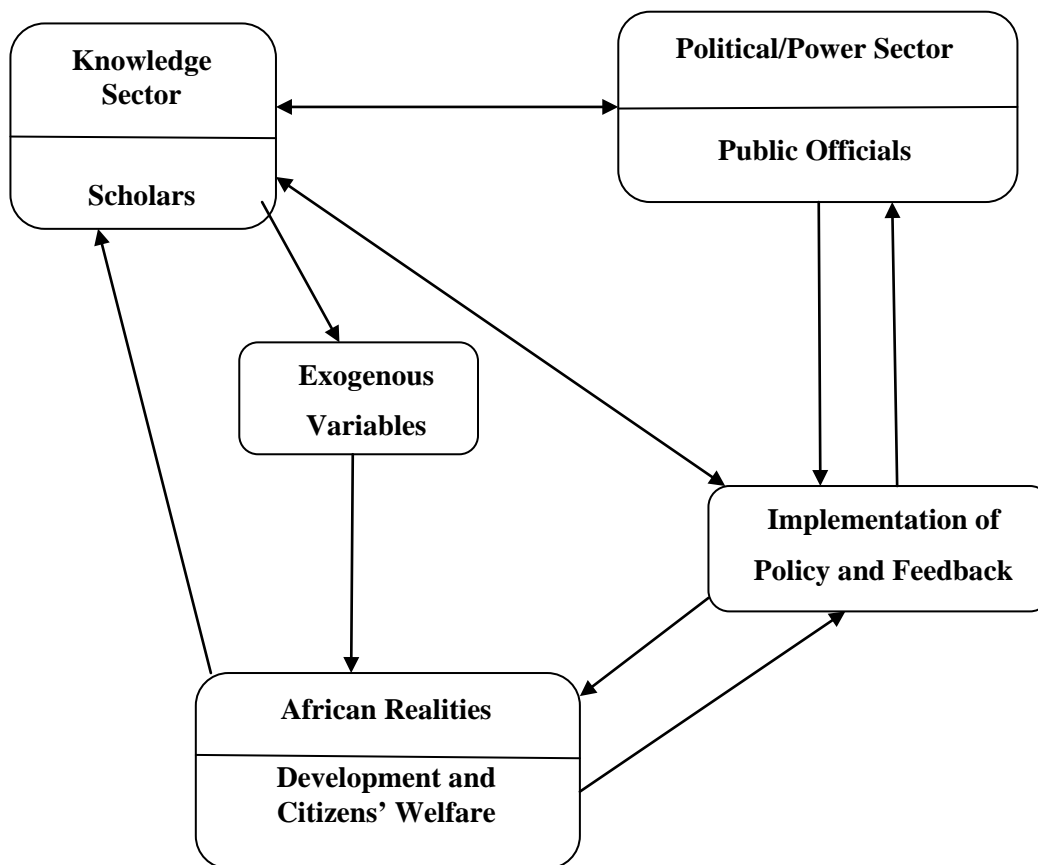
African Development Institutional Mechanism Model (ADIM) (fig. 2) ensures that both African public officials and African scholars develop smooth working relations. With innovation coming from scholars and robust institutional arrangements, it will be easier for government to increase its presence and relevance at the community level. Training programmes in ministries of agriculture, works, health, education, etc., should be executed in the field, in conjunction with working associations on the ground. The trainees should identify specific sites of interests where trainers will demonstrate new ideas to them. Civil servants should spend less time in offices so that their presence can be felt in communities where they are connected with the people. Experiences gathered through these contacts with academics should be shared with the community members. ADIM will enable scholars and public officials to operate in synergy as shown in steps 1 to 4 below.

**Step 1:** African scholars should view African realities with intellectual lenses through exogenous variables. African scholars should factor exogenous variables into their study and understanding of African realities, otherwise, such studies will be repeating the error of the past – illusion.

**Step 2:** African scholars generate knowledge through relevant applied research and analysis of existing scholarship focused on overcoming Africa's problems.

**Step 3:** African scholars pass knowledge on to the political sector (public officials).

**Step 4:** Public officials, along with scholars, implement policies.



**Fig. 2: African Development Institutional Mechanism (ADIM)**

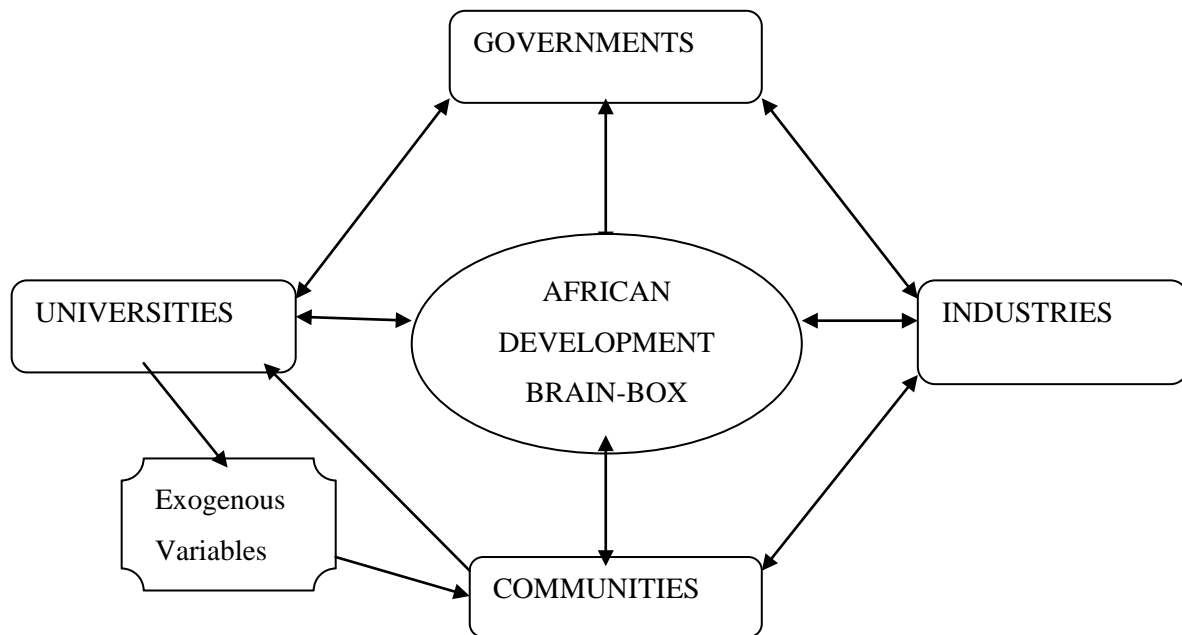
**Source: Akinola 2007f:231**

### **African Polycentric Development Planning Model (APDPM)**

African Polycentric Development Planning Model (APDPM) is a multidisciplinary and stage-wise poverty reduction process that has strong connection with other models such as African Development Institutional Mechanism (ADIM), African Local Economic Development Strategy (ALEDS), etc. APDPM can function effectively in a special centre established for African development such as African Development Centre (ADC). Under the ADC there will be two units such as: African Development Brain-Box (ADBB) and African Innovation Centre (AIC) (Akinola 2008p; 2009c) (see figs. 3 and 4). ADBB relies on African Polycentric Development Planning (APDP) in synergising the efforts of the key stakeholders in harnessing development potentials. APDP conceptualizes development based on synergetic interactions of key development actors within development arenas. It deviates from centralized and state-centred development planning that characterizes African state. APDP is the process of conceptualizing, initiating, executing and monitoring people-centred and community oriented development.

APDP, as an adaptation strategy, helps in matching the output/product of scholars and industries with the needs of the grassroots. In order words, the supply of scholars and industries are related to the demand of the grassroots. This strategy, as a bottom-up development strategy, has been experimented in Irepodun Local Government area of Osun State, Nigeria (Akinola 2007f, 2008p, 2009c). APDP as a tool is used in designing multi-layered and multi-centered institutional arrangements to bridge the gaps between key development actors within development arenas in Africa. ADBB/AIC, as a control unit for the three development players (in fig. 3), is conceived as an intellectual center where innovations and new ideas generated by African scholars are adapted

through experimental stations on a pilot scale and then send its output to the community where they will benefit the people.



**Fig. 3: African Development Brain-Box (ADBB)**

Source: Akinola (2008p, 2009c)

Fig. 3 can be operationalised through five steps.

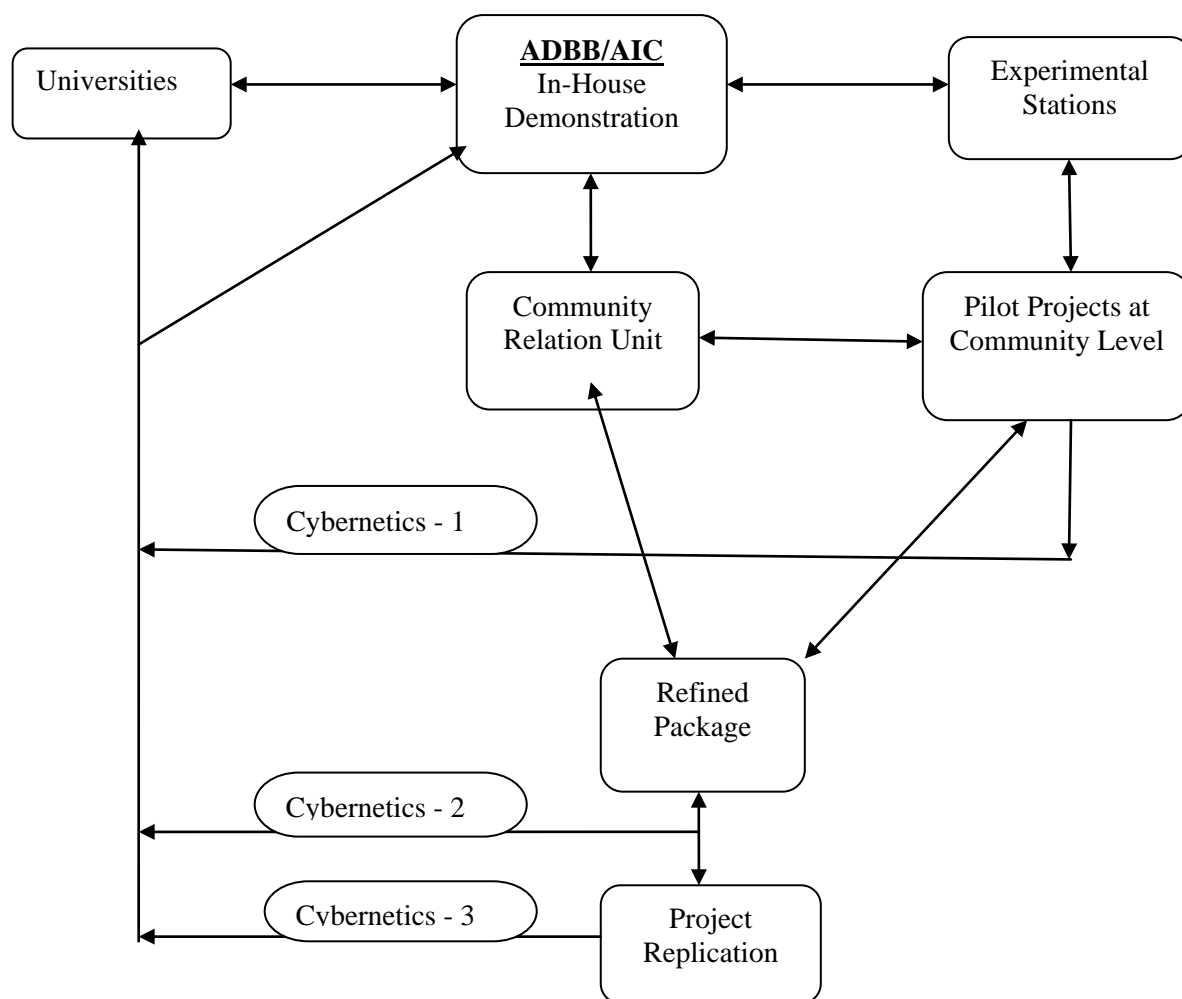
**Step 1:** African scholars should view African realities with intellectual lenses through exogenous variables.

**Step 2:** African scholars generate knowledge.

**Step 3:** African scholars pass knowledge to ADBB where knowledge will be assessed on its strength to resolve specific problem. If the model is found to be good, then it will be experimented at the field.

**Step 4:** Universities, being in close contact with governments, should through its adaptive research, discover the needs of the society, develop new ideas and innovations and send them to ADBB, an African Innovation Center (AIC), which plays moderating influence for knowledge utilization. As shown in fig. 4, it is ADBB/AIC that will adapt knowledge to reality through its experimental stations and pilot projects for every sector of African economy – social, economic, technological, and political spheres. AIC will have strong community relations such that any innovation coming to it will be quickly fixed up in relevant or demand communities where the idea is needed and can be demonstrated.

**Step 5:** After the pilot project, there is the need for feedback, called cybernetics which will occur at three levels as shown in figure 4. The feedback on the performance of pilot project will be sent to ADBB, which will lead to the refining of the model/package that will be demonstrated again at the field. The performance of the model shall be evaluated and the report sent to ADBB for further refinement. At this stage, the model should be ready for full replication by ADC.



**Fig. 4: Illustration of the Mechanism of ADBB/AIC in taking theories to African Streets**

Source: Akinola (2008p, 2009c)

Using appropriate institutional mechanism, African scholars' capacities in various fields should be identified for further innovation and invention. Without intellectual breakthrough, there is no societal development simply because intellectual capacity is the foundation of development. Good critiques with concrete recommendations on specific problems are needed. By now, we should be tired of myopic and shallow suggestions/recommendations. What we need is the ABC of how to address specific problems that are confronting African continent. It is not enough to critique the governmental system without offering an alternative workable strategy of how to solve the problems at hand. If there is anything that is more desirable today in Africa and for Africa, it is how knowledge can be used pragmatically to re-order events for mutually productive ways of life in the continent.

### **Pilot Project: Food Security and Employment Generation**

Since democracy is a means to an end (enhancement of citizens' welfare), democratisation project should be tied to some socio-economic projects/programmes. Therefore, this section focuses on how pilot projects could be set up to test African development models. The models are concerned with how people can work together, from community level, to address the current food insecurity and unemployment crisis. If this can be accomplished, the present global economic meltdown would be addressed in Africa. It suggested that any organisation that has vision on African liberation and some universities in tandem with specific governments could kick start food

security and employment generation programmes by applying AFSM and AGEM through the implementation of Polycentric Planning and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PPPRS) in selected countries in Africa. The proposal is designed to experiment food security project in specific food related areas and provide job opportunities for people at the community level. In doing this, the organization will:

- (i) demonstrate how to develop entrepreneurial capability by combining factors of production (land, labour and capital) toward food production and employment generation in Africa;
- (ii) establish university/industry partnerships in translating innovative ideas into machines that are capable of enhancing agricultural productivity; and
- (iii) establish a strategic and robust corporate social responsibility by utilizing vast agricultural resources in agro-based industry to provide affordable food and generate employment for people at the community level.

Within the academia, agricultural engineers, food scientists, and food technologists would have to be involved in the design of machines<sup>1</sup> for food pressing, food storage and food packages. The implementation strategy of the proposed project spans five stages (see Akinola 2008f,o). Food-related activities and employment generating ventures that could be embarked upon include:

- (i) Large-scale mechanized farms in the cultivation of yam, cassava, maize, guinea corn, fruits, etc.
- (ii) Food processing plants – yam flour, cassava flour, maize, guinea corn, fruits, etc.
- (iii) Animal husbandry section – fishery, poultry, rabbitry, pigry, goatry, cattle and other ruminants.

During the first phase of the programme, extra care should be taken in involving the public officials due to their sycophant tendency. The representatives of self-governing institutions are participants directly involved in the programme. However, during the second phase after the programme might have taken proper shape, the state agents could be regarded as full participants.

## CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that the problem of disconnect caused by colonial afflictions has engendered colonial intellectual syndrome that informed intellectual poverty in Africa. Invariably, this misfortune has led to structurally-defective governance that has made the goals and objectives of development unrealized in Africa. In order to achieve mutually productive ways of life for the diverse peoples of Africa, pragmatic strategies, that are capable of addressing the problems of internal disconnects and international conspiracy plaguing African continent, are highly imperative. This calls attention to polycentric planning and decision making arrangements whereby community self-governing institutions could play critical and indispensable role by bringing the people into the main stream of socio-economic and techno-political decisions, thereby synergizing the efforts of the African-state, universities and community institutions through bottom-up and integrative planning.

African scholars should take the lead by making their scholarship problem-solving. They are expected not only to develop home-grown models but also make efforts at applying these models on pilot scale so that findings and experiences gathered from these pilot cases would help in refining and modifying the models for training and full replication across the continent. The impact of these models would not only reduce poverty but findings and experiences gathered from these exercises would also, invariably, be useful to reform African educational curriculum. It is in the light of this exigency that this paper adopted two strategic development models – (1) African Intellectual Gap Measurement Model (AIGMM) designed to measure intellectual potentials and relevance of African universities and (2) African Public Sphere Restructuring Model (APSRM) developed to restructure the public sphere in Africa. APSRM derives inspirations and workability mechanisms from thirteen (13) African development models that cut across several sectors of the economy in Africa. The common denominator to all these models is polycentric planning and poverty reduction

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<sup>1</sup> Import, understudy and adapt the machines to our ecological and socio-cultural settings.

strategy that emphasizes the centrality of community self-governing institutions in reconstituting democratic order from the bottom-up in Africa.

Though the current global economic crisis has complicated the protracted development crisis in Africa, a pragmatic approach capable of re-inventing human capability for adaptive education that can harness African potentials will go a long way in opening a new chapter for development in Africa. This paper charts a course of actions that could be taken not only to generate relevant knowledge for African realities but also to apply the knowledge to specific challenges and conditions in Africa, especially on how people can work together, from community level, to address the current food insecurity and unemployment crisis.

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