

REPORT

AFRICA KNOWS ! CONFERENCE

Panel D 26: Multiplicity of Learning Events: the Relationality of Learning in Africa and Beyond

This panel examine the relational processes of learning events in there multiple and diverse context in Africa as well as their global connectedness. The conveners of this panel were Marieke van den Winden (African Studies Centre Leiden), Britta Frede (University of Bayreuth, Germany) and Hassan Ndzovu (Moi University, Kenya). The presentations were divided into four slots that generated various discussions and questions.

A1) Farmer-centred learning platforms as pathways towards more inclusive and relational learning: a study on multi-stakeholder platforms with tree-crop farmers in Ghana, Edith van Ewijk (University of Amsterdam), Mirjam Ros-Tonen (University of Amsterdam), Anna Laven (KIT Royal Tropical Institute), Mercy Derkyi (University of Energy and Natural Resources), Martha Ataa-Asantewaa (University of Amsterdam), Kwabena Asubonteng
This paper discusses farmer-centered learning platforms: an approach towards peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange with smallholder cocoa and oil palm farmers in Ghana as well as practitioners and researchers, organised around specific themes at district level. The paper asks how and under what conditions farmer-centred learning platforms provide safe spaces for smallholders to voice their concerns, bring in their knowledge and innovation capacity, and learn from the interactions. One of the questions that had been discussed in this context was the definition of small-scale farmers and their relation to poverty.

A2) How spaces owned by elites in Africa and Asia have become the most important areas for the Lions Clubs association, Jean-Frederic de Hasque (Université Catholique de Louvain)
This contribution consists of the analysis of an association and its members. The purpose is to show that knowledge does not only belong to the academic world, held by professors in a school or an university, but that it is a capacity created by relations between individuals. The goal is to show that the mastery of knowledge is also the main concern of an association. Knowledge is the ability to built and express a discourse, manage members, protect or build an influence zone, it is political! In this contribution, the build of the discourse will show the

influence of North, and struggles between Africa and Asia. Questions asked to this paper concerned the role of language and social hierarchies among the members within the association.

B) Learning to Navigate Through Social Networks as Competency in the 21st Century: Similarities and Differences in Distinct Contexts (Iris Clemens, University of Bayreuth). The main argument of this presentation is that education provides the navigational capacity to enable one in realizing their aspirations and because of the multiple futures, it is important to have multiple educational systems. Some of the questions raised: Is there a link between religion and navigational capacity? Is your research providing solutions on how to influence the educational system and make it more divergent for different categories of people?

C1) Understanding Ourselves and Our World from the Multiplicity of World-Views: Perspectives in African Epistemological Relationality (Valentine Obinyan, University of Benin). This presentation offered a theoretical analysis of the global connection and ontological background that informs various conceptualizations of ourselves and our world from African, Western and Eastern world-views and unloads its implication for a value driven and harmonious coexistence society. Some of the questions raised included: What makes a thing knowledgeable? Are there certain universal standards and principle for justifying what can be knowledge? Can there be knowledge in indigenous systems that grant understanding of ourselves and our world in their unique ways?

C2) Digitization and Commodification of Islamic Learning through Poems and Dances, (Suleiman Chembea, Bomet University College, Kenya). Key interest to this presentation was whether religious poems (*qasida*) and dances (*zamuni*) of Muslim clerics that are now transferred through the media, challenges the traditional settings on knowledge production and religious authority. One significant question: Does commodification of religious knowledge influence its normative value?

D1) Women, Education and Mediatized Sermons: The Changing Nature of Religious Authority and Transmission of Islamic Knowledge among Kenyan Muslims (Hassan Ndzovu, Moi University). The focus of this presentation was examining the phenomenon of 'women-led' and 'women-only' established educational institutions and the mediatization of female preachers' sermons as a form of transmission of Islamic knowledge. One of the question it sought to

address was: Are the female preachers considered authoritative and their mediated sermons accepted by the general Muslim public?

D2) Creating Female Space within Masculine Hegemonies. A Relational Perspective (Britta Frede, Universität Bayreuth). The focus of this presentation was to analyse the role of female scholars within the Mauritanian society through a relational perspective and drawing on how female space is defined and created within a masculine hegemony. By discussing a text written by a female contemporary scholar, the paper explored how female urban lifestyles are negotiated among pious believers and their authorities. One of the questions concerned if female authority in Mauritania experienced similar restrictions as in other African settings.

Conclusion

This panel has included a broad range of presentations. The first two presentations dealt with two concrete examples of learning environments in Africa, the first in a setting of farmer communities and the second in an elite circle of African academics. Both examples illustrated that knowledge transmission is a mean to empowerment on the one hand; on the other, it manifests hegemonies. The third and fourth paper approached the panel's theme through a theoretical perspective. While the third paper asked for a new perspective on educational aspirations, the fourth paper emphasized the importance of African epistemologies. The fifth, sixth, and seventh paper all looked at Islamic popular practice and its encounter with normative Islam. All three papers focused on women engagement with knowledge and demonstrated that the role of women in Muslim communities are subject to negotiations.

Take away: The relational approach to settings of learning events in Africa allows to foster our understanding of the complex dynamic between knowledge production, transmission, educational aspirations and means of empowerment.