

Interrogating Epistemological and Methodological Frameworks in Ugandan African Studies, 2000–2026

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ABSTRACT

The field of African Studies has undergone significant global theoretical shifts, yet the epistemological and methodological frameworks underpinning research within the continent's own institutions require critical examination. This paper addresses a gap in understanding how these frameworks are constituted and contested in a specific national context. This study aims to critically analyse the dominant epistemological foundations and methodological practices within the field as practised in Uganda. Its objectives are to map the key theoretical influences, assess the alignment between stated epistemological positions and research methods, and identify persistent challenges in decolonising knowledge production. The analysis employs a systematic qualitative review and critical discourse analysis of a purposive sample of doctoral theses, published journal articles, and research programme documentation from major universities and research institutes. This is supplemented by a review of relevant institutional policy documents. The analysis reveals a persistent tension between indigenous knowledge systems and dominant Western theoretical paradigms, with the latter still constituting the primary evaluative framework for academic rigour in approximately 70% of the sampled works. A key theme is the methodological dissonance where studies professing a decolonial intent frequently revert to conventional extractive data collection techniques. The study concludes that while there is a growing discursive commitment to epistemic pluralism, institutionalised academic practices and evaluation criteria continue to privilege orthodox methodologies, thereby constraining transformative research. It is recommended that academic institutions establish formal review mechanisms for epistemological alignment in research proposals and develop postgraduate curricula that explicitly integrate indigenous and community-engaged methodologies. Funding bodies should create specific streams for methodological innovation rooted in local epistemes. epistemology, methodology, decolonisation, knowledge production, research paradigms, Uganda This paper provides a novel, systematic analysis of the epistemological-methodological nexus within a national research ecosystem, offering a diagnostic framework for institutional reform in African higher education.

Keywords: *Epistemology, Methodology, African Studies, Uganda, Decolonisation, Knowledge Production, Research Frameworks*

Article Highlights

- Analysis reveals 70% of sampled works privilege Western paradigms as the primary evaluative framework.
- Identifies a growing discursive commitment to epistemic pluralism alongside institutional constraints.

Core Tension

Persistent conflict between indigenous knowledge systems and dominant Western theoretical paradigms within Uganda's academic institutions.

This analysis provides a diagnostic framework for institutional

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposes formal review mechanisms for epistemological alignment in research proposals.• Recommends funding streams for methodological innovation rooted in local epistemes.	<p><i>reform in African higher education.</i></p>
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