

Decolonising Knowledge Production

An Action Research Framework for African Studies in Senegal (2000–2026)

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ABSTRACT

{ "background": "African Studies as a discipline has historically been shaped by Eurocentric epistemologies and institutional structures, creating a disconnect between academic knowledge production and local community needs. This is particularly evident in post-colonial contexts, where the field often fails to centre indigenous knowledge systems and address contemporary socio-political priorities.", "purpose and objectives": "This action research study aimed to develop and test a practical framework for decolonising knowledge production within African Studies. Its objectives were to identify systemic barriers to epistemic justice, co-create alternative methodologies with local scholars and communities, and evaluate the framework's efficacy in fostering more relevant and autonomous research praxis.", "methodology": "The study employed a multi-cycle participatory action research design, conducted over an extended period. It involved iterative phases of planning, action, observation, and reflection with a core group of university researchers, postgraduate students, and community stakeholders. Data were generated through collaborative workshops, reflective journals, and participatory analysis of research outputs.", "findings": "The co-developed framework significantly shifted research priorities towards community-identified themes, with over 70% of subsequent participant-led projects focusing on indigenous governance systems and vernacular archives. A central finding was the critical role of sustained 'epistemic dialogue' in dismantling hierarchical researcher-community relationships and legitimising non-Western methodologies.", "conclusion": "The study concludes that decolonising African Studies requires a fundamental restructuring of research processes, not merely topical diversification. The proposed framework offers a viable pathway for institutionalising epistemic pluralism and enhancing the social relevance of academic work.", "recommendations": "Academic institutions should integrate mandatory community partnership protocols into research ethics and funding criteria. Furthermore, postgraduate curricula must be revised to include training in participatory action research and the critical historiography of the discipline itself.", "key words": "decolonisation, epistemic justice, participatory action research, knowledge sovereignty, indigenous methodologies, research praxis", "contribution statement": "This paper provides a novel, empirically tested action research framework that operationalises the decolonisation of knowledge

Keywords: *Action Research, Decolonisation, Knowledge Production, African Epistemologies, Senegal*

Article Highlights

- Co-developed framework shifts 70% of research to community-identified themes.
- Sustained 'epistemic dialogue' dismantles hierarchical researcher-community relationships.
- Action research design integrates planning, action,

Core Contribution

Provides a novel, empirically tested action research framework that operationalises the decolonisation of knowledge production in Senegal.

This study outlines a practical pathway for institutional change in

<p>observation, and reflection cycles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposes institutionalising epistemic pluralism to enhance social relevance.	<p><i>research praxis.</i></p>
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