

## Knowledge Gap: The Magic behind Knowledge Expansion

ULE, PRINCE ALAMINA<sup>1</sup>, IDEMUDIA, SUNDAY ALIYU<sup>2</sup>

*Doctoral Scholars, Department of Business Administration,  
Niger-Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Amassoma, Nigeria.*

**ABSTRACT:** As the world moves to a global knowledge based economy, the idea of knowledge expansion becomes cardinal to the growth and development of depressed economies and in expanding these knowledge frontiers individuals and organizations need to continually interact with each other to enhance knowledge. The study therefore, seeks to evaluate the concept of knowledge gap as the magic behind knowledge expansion. In meeting theoretical expectations and needs, the study interrogate the nature and concept of knowledge showing vividly the functionality of social interactions as a device for acknowledging epistemic authority where valuable information can be shared since social interactions provide enabling ground for the development of common identity. In identifying the factors hampering knowledge expansion among developing economies, the study came up with the pore model of knowledge gap which acknowledges the fact that political power and lack of access to financial resources has corrupted knowledge seeking behaviour in developing economic settings thereby creating a gap between the low and high advantaged segments of the economy. We therefore conclude that in closing these identified gaps, depressed economies should liberalize their educational sector at all level to encourage active and more knowledge seekers.

**KEYWORDS:** *Epistemology, Knowledge Expansion, Knowledge Gap Model, Knowledge Seeking Behaviour, Social Interactions.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The world is moving in an unimaginable speed when it comes to knowledge expansion such that, knowledge is gradually becoming the resource to acquire commodity of all kinds and as such only knowledge driven individuals and organization can stand the test of time. As a strategic resource to acquire commodity, knowledge is considered the major resource which organizations need to sustain competitive advantage in the ever changing business environment (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). The situation is propelling individuals to seek for knowledge that will drive economies, societies and organizations to attaining grater height. These knowledge seeking behaviour has brought to the fore, individual quest for daily knowledge expansion to solving societal problems emanating from class difference. In order to solve societal and organizational problems, individuals are continually seeking for knowledge to expand their scope, since knowledge application cannot function without seeking behaviour (Carro, Ocon and Lindemann, 2017).

With the spite of inequality among individuals in society as a result of class difference, the need to revamp the situation gave rise to the concept of knowledge gap. The knowledge gap hypothesis as proposed by Tichenor and colleagues denote a particular challenge to addressing social phenomena (Gaziano, 2017) resulting from inequalities. The perspective here provides a compelling vehicle for understanding cognitive effects of media through a theoretical framework (Leo, David and Hanlong, 2011). The basic challenge confronting knowledge seeking behaviour or knowledge expansion as the case maybe is what some scholars attribute to socioeconomic status (Tran, 2013; Gaziano, 2017). Socioeconomic status in the sense that, the digital divide between those who can access information and those who cannot has created a huge gap emanating from socioeconomic background such that improving the quality of decision making becomes inevitable (Van-Dijk, 2016). Though the relevance of knowledge gap identification and closure has been recognized as an ardent factor to the growth and survival of alliances (Haider and Mariotti, 2010). That is to say, if the gaps between the class struggle are not bridged, knowledge expansion will be hampered to a reasonable extent. This paper therefore, seeks to examine the concept of knowledge gap as an elixir to expanding knowledge frontier with the aid of a model to explaining the factors beleaguering knowledge expansion among developing economies of the world.

### II. NATURE AND CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

In understanding the social world and the phenomena around it, knowledge becomes ineluctable and the possession of it contributes to transforming individual cognitive practices within the organization, social and

cultural niche. Knowledge as perceived by Gaziano (2017) is information gained and remembered through a learning process. Nonaka (1994) in his opinion asserted that knowledge and information are two distinctive concepts with the latter representing the flow of messages and the former representing a justified true belief. The implication is that knowledge is created and organized by the very flow of information (De Haan, 2013). If knowledge is created it means that it cannot be transferred but generated in action and takes on the character of the process of knowing (Haider and Mariotti, 2010).

Furthermore, Wang and Noe (2010) perceived knowledge as information processed by individuals and this processed information includes facts, judgment, ideas and expertise relevant for organizational as well as individual performance. Louis, Lawrence and Keith (2007) argued that in grasping the concept of knowledge, basic epistemological assumptions should be considered. These assumptions concern the very bases of knowledge which focus on how knowledge can be acquired and communicated to others for better understanding. How individuals understand this position profoundly affect how they go about uncovering the knowledge of social behaviour. The prospect of elucidating the very nature of knowledge by conceptual analysis has overtaking the analytical project in epistemology (Encabo, 2016).

Epistemology as the fundamental principle of knowledge creation tends to raise the epistemic question on the very nature and possibility of knowledge generation. As the first fundamental philosophical principle of knowledge, Eketu (2018) contended that epistemology is critical to advancing knowledge in any discipline but in understanding the concept (knowledge). Encabo (2016) accentuated on what it will do for humanity and what the concept is all about. The essence of these interrogations was to give credence to a more functional understanding as a device for acknowledging epistemic authority in a social and normative space where valuable information can be shared. Edward (1990) proposed to refocus the traditional concern in epistemology and move from the analytical projection towards a new synthetic way in which the focal point on the concept of knowledge will play the main role. The concept of knowledge is an expressive tool to make implicit and explicit epistemic claims within a social space of practical attitude (Encardo, 2016). In making these claims, individuals are performing speech act of assurance of whose performance goes with series of commitment and responsibilities. These responsibilities and commitment contributes significantly to corporate performance.

As the knowledge base becomes more complex and dispersed, individuals as well as organizations no longer rely exclusively on their internal competencies and capabilities instead, in order to develop and maintain competitive edge, firms need to form alliances with external actors (Haider and Mariotti, 2010; Powell, 1998; Powell, Koput and Smith-Doerr, 1996). This coalition will provide access to complementary pool of knowledge that will improve organizational strategy, skills, operation and competencies (Inkpen, Dinur, 1998; Mowery, Oxley and Silverman, 1996).

### III. KNOWLEDGE GAP

Several studies conducted worldwide tend to find knowledge gap (Gaziano, 2017) and how individuals and organization define and cover issues is instrumental to the development and or closure of these identified gaps (Kwak, 1999; Jerit, Barabas and Bolsen, 2006). The knowledge gap hypothesis was developed by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien in 1970 as an infusion of mass media information into social system. Tichenor and colleagues believed that segment of the population with higher socioeconomic status tend to acquire information faster than individuals with low status such that the gaps between these segments tend to increase than decrease. The contention to whether the gap between the segments are increasing or decreasing is still contested as Bonfadelli (2002) identified some causal mechanisms for the effect of media on knowledge which he attribute to poor knowledge, media structure, communication skill, relevant social contracts, selective use, acceptance and storage of information. As a result of Bonfadelli's position, Xenos and Moy (2007) categorized media effects on knowledge into spectrum which include psychological and instrumental approaches. The psychological approach concerned itself with the motives and characteristics of individual having greater impact and the instrumental focuses on the cost and availability of information as key determinant to acquiring information (Jantti, 2014; Xenos and Moy, 2007; Bimber, 2001). In the context of this paper, knowledge gap tends to shift grounds from the media perspective of Tichenor and colleagues to that of the organizational research. In a bid to narrow knowledge gap to the above strand, a more concise definition is needed to identify the factors hindering knowledge expansion among developing economies.

Knowledge gap in this context is seen as the knowledge an individual or organization lacks which is identified to be critically relevant in improving or enhancing the body of knowledge for the benefit of mankind and society, hence the need for it to be bridged. In filling these identified gaps, different approaches can be adopted depending on the kind of gap identified or needed to be filled. In the case of an organizational knowledge gap, Haider and Mariotti (2010) signify developing and forming interpersonal linkage between alliance partners in the form of social interactions among workers of a particular organization and colleagues in another organization in order to create common ground for sharing knowledge across firm boundaries whereas the identification of lack in knowledge and scholarly contributing to filling it through rigorous study becomes an academic knowledge gap. In achieving this objective, the study explains factors hindering knowledge expansion among developing economies.

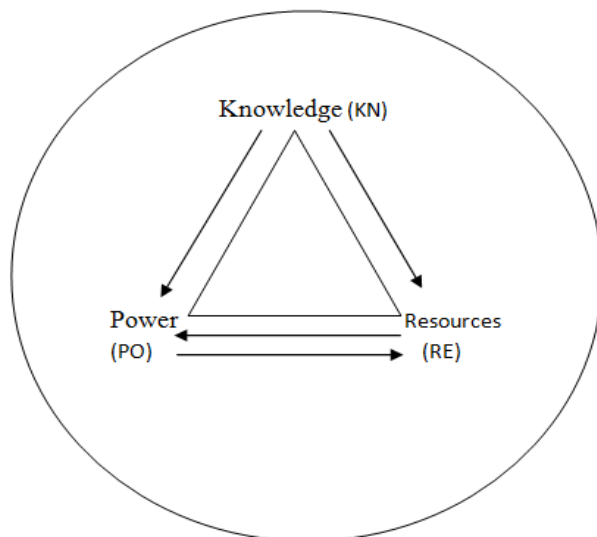
#### IV. HINDRANCES TO KNOWLEDGE EXPANSION IN DEPRESSED ECONOMIC SETTINGS

As the world moves to knowledge based economy, the idea of knowledge expansion becomes cardinal to the growth and development of depressed economies. In expanding these knowledge frontiers, individuals need to continually interact with each other to enhance knowledge. Haider and Mariotti (2010) believed that knowledge seeking behaviour and expansion comes in the form of socialization and interaction among individuals. Social interactions among key actors provide an enabling ground for the development of common identity. As social elements, individuals act within their social and physical world and since knowing is an aspect of action; it becomes expedient that interaction with that world which is characterized with high level of trust, mutual respect, shared behavioural, etc among individuals has direct bearing in the exchange and creation of knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Haider and Mariotti, 2010).

The gaps in knowledge expansion especially in developing economies are enormous as a result of the dichotomy created by the socioeconomic status as posited by Tichenor and colleague in their earlier study on mass media which denote the level of interaction and access to information between the high and low status segment. Tichenor, et al (1970) believed that the less advantaged citizens would gain knowledge but the more advantaged would gain more knowledge faster. Gaziano (2017) argued that the knowledge gap hypothesis appeared in a time of great social change in the United States in which discrimination and prejudice against minority and other groups were disparaged and that is why some scholars viewed their proposition as been biased as well overlooking the abilities of the less advantage citizens.

In the African context for instance before the advent of civilization, a word used to reduce Africans ability, the issue of class difference was not too pronounced as perceived in the contemporary time due to Africans collective life style as practiced then; hence the issues of gap was not too clear as the situation has now grown wings. Since the knowledge gap hypothesis proposed by Tichenor, et al (1970) concern itself with how different socioeconomic groups acquire knowledge from the media and social world, it would be of utmost interest to adopt a model to explaining factors hindering knowledge expansion among developing economies.

##### Pore model of knowledge gap



Source: Researchers Conceptualization, 2018.

The model is derived from knowledge seeking, power and resources at individual's disposal as a way of deepening the understanding of knowledge acquisition in the era of digitization within the social context. Social relationship involves a reciprocal social awareness on the part of several people (Lessnof, 1976) such that the action of one takes account of others which involves the fulfillment, avoidance and or the denunciation of an agreement, economic or other forms of competition (Hamilton, 2017). The Pore model of knowledge gap depicts the way individuals embedded with knowledge are prone to seeking for resources and power to address societal issues resulting from socioeconomic status (low and high advantaged) seen to be critical whereas those in political positions with little or no knowledge seeks for fame and more power that would enable them acquire more resources to keep them going thereby creating more gaps.

The resources of interest here is concerned with the financial resources. The case of the wealthy in society is not different from those in political offices as most wealthy individuals resolve to seeking for more financial resources and power rather than knowledge to solving practical problems in societies. In addressing the issues of power and resource among developing economies, knowledge seeking behaviour will definitely increase to enhance growth and development but if these critical issues are down played, knowledge seekers tend to suffer. The concept of knowledge gap as proposed by Tichenor and colleagues unleashed a movement in the media research which focused on political arena (Leo, et al., 2011). The tradition examined individual difference and how they process media messages (Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 1973; Tichenor, et al., 1970). Given the bulk research on knowledge gap in the mass media concerning the segment (low and high advantage) access to information based on socioeconomic status, our interest is on how power and financial resources are perceived as factors underscoring knowledge expansion among developing economies.

Depressed economic settings are characterized with so many uncertainties as a result, knowledge seekers suffer due to unfavourable environment. These environment are mostly dominated by weak individuals who perhaps are in political position with enough financial resources but lack knowledge to solve practical social problems thereby leaving the gaps unfilled. In Nigeria for instance, there is the gap between leadership and knowledge such that knowledge seekers suffer wants to acquire the needed skill and capability to solve organization and societal as well as individual problems. Bridging this gap becomes a challenge as most of these shortfalls come from foreign influence whereas in their environment, knowledge seekers are aided to acquire knowledge in order to solve societal problems but the reverse becomes the case as developing economies have sold their rights and values.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION

As the world gradually moves to knowledge base economy, individuals and organizations continually seek for knowledge that will enable them drive society and organizations. These knowledge seeking behaviours has identified a gap resulting from inequalities among individuals in society as well as organizations. The inequality has created a digital divide between those who can access information and those who cannot due to socioeconomic status (Tichenor, et al., 1970; Van Dijk, 2006). In understanding the phenomena, knowledge becomes relevant to give credence to a more functional position where valuable information about these gaps can be addresses and filled. Knowledge gap in essence does not denote hopelessness because even as they exist, less advantaged individuals still learn information that benefit them in all ramification (Gaziano, 2017). Though the concept of knowledge gap may prove to be an important construct in trying to describe situations when applied in environment where distinction are available, yet it contribution to knowledge expansion stand to be a mystery.

The study has demonstrated how social interaction among key actors in any economic setting provides enabling ground for the development of common identity and how dichotomy created by socioeconomic status create gaps in knowledge expansion. Considering the relevance of knowledge in any economic setting and the role knowledge seekers play in the growth and development of societies, we conclude that States in depressed economic situations should allow full liberalization of their educational sector in order to encourage knowledge seekers at all levels.

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