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# Exploring Knowledge Gaps: The Knowledge to Knowledge Process

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**Abstract** – Expanding knowledge frontiers through scientific procedures and methods is central to knowledge acceptability. It starts with identifying gaps in existing body of knowledge so far and considering this critical aspect, this paper attempts to examine theoretically the processes required for establishing knowledge gaps. Establishing knowledge for research inquiry and theory building involves a critique, review and evaluation of knowledge level so far, in addition, analytical interrogation of existing knowledge exposes gaps that are further explored. The different methods of knowing and acquiring knowledge were examined and these includes authority, tenacity, apriori and scientific. Their capacity to ensure valid knowledge creation through existing gaps vary accordingly but the scientific methods has identifiable, unbiased and objective thoroughfare to identifying knowledge and subsequent knowledge building through evengence of new theories there-of. The review here equally assert the seamlessness of the knowledge gaps building as new theories (knowledge) arising from previously identified gaps provides a platform for new critiques, review, evaluation and analysis for establishing new knowledge gap.

**Keywords** – Knowledge Gap, Critique, Review, Evaluation, Analysis.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The place of knowledge in every human endeavour is interestingly significant and assertive. Indeed, Clarke & Rollo (2001) acknowledged it as an all time resource that constitutes the essence of man's existence. Knowledge exploration and exploitation has age long history and has remained the nutrient that nurtures the emergence of science, technology, arts, metaphysics amongst others providing the pedestal that anchors all forms of breakthrough. No doubt, knowledge in whichever form tacit or explicit evolve through a tortuous exercise that can be aptly described as formal and informal. Alaska (2012) argues that knowledge, as a resource is seamlessly explored and continually refined to fit into any context of applicability. Although knowledge can be intuitively produced, it requires mental processing that, it is in itself informed by knowledge available therefore, its multiplicity is stemmed by its availability abinitio noted Kiessling (2009). This simply suggests that knowledge creation results from the apparent need to explore and push further knowledge boundaries with a view to adding value. It is stemmed by understanding knowledge so far and culminating to knowing that a gap exists. Expressly, the seemingly terminal knowledge point (contextualized) provokes and activates formally a scientific venture and guided inquisitiveness that ultimately provides for new knowledge. This write-up therefore examines knowledge gaps. It will in addition discuss different knowledge sources and their implication on identifying knowledge gap.

### *Meaning of Knowledge and Knowledge Gap*

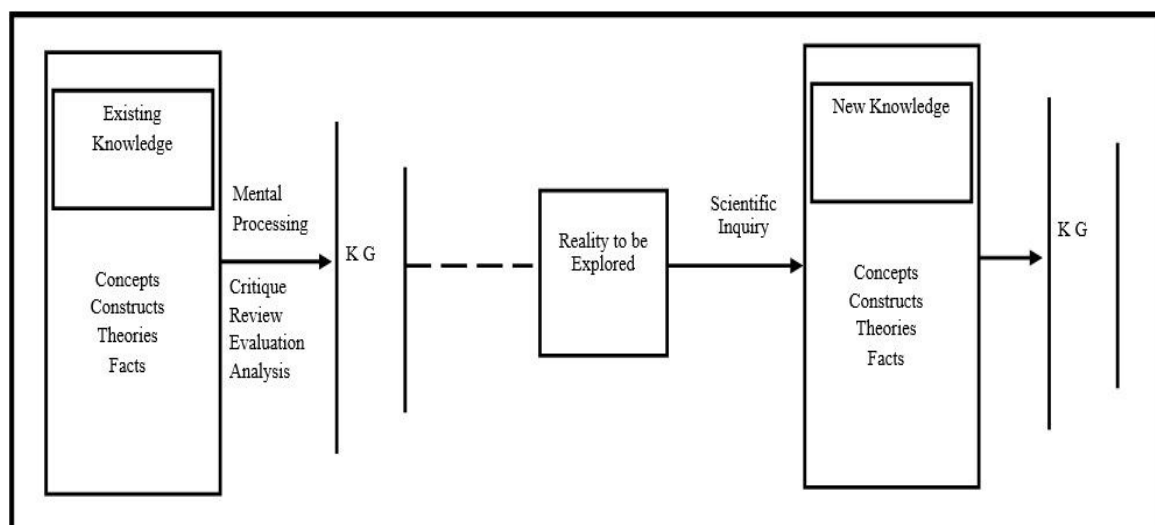
The concept of knowledge has been variously defined across disciplinary spectrum. (Polanyi, 1974; Nonaka, Takenchi 1995; Davenport & Prusak, 2001; Newton & Pfeffer, 2003; Lee & Cole, 2003; King, 2006, 2008). Knowledge, simply put, is what we know. It involves mental process of comprehension, understanding and learning that go in the mind (Dickwell 2007). Ingwerson (1992) defined knowledge as internalized information

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and understood as a blend of tacit and explicit elements (Nonaka, 1994). At the organizational level, Bensoussan (2013) viewed knowledge as a resource that guarantees competitiveness and perhaps this accounts for why it is viewed as a strategic resource for gaining competitive advantage (Porter, 1985; Wernefelt, 1989; Barney, 1989, Koruna, 2004).

In his taxonomical analysis of knowledge, Polanyi (1974) identified two forms of knowledge; the tacit and explicit. Tacit knowledge according to the author is hidden knowledge that is consistently sought, acquired, and expressed in explicit form for all purposes. The hidden nature of tacit knowledge requires that knowledge be explored and tapped for common usage. Greiner, Bohmann & Kremor (2007) emphasized the development of new knowledge through established communities of practice that share tacit knowledge and developing it. The whole idea of such practice according to Wenger is borne out of the realization that knowledge frontiers though implicit needs to be advanced regularly and creating new knowledge areas. This imply identifying knowledge gaps which according to Kidwell (2000) is the yet to be explored but desired knowledge areas in the mind of the researcher. It activates inquisitiveness and mental agitation that in turn lays the process of creating new knowledge. Jarrat and Zairi (2002), further espoused that in knowledge, gaps channel knowledge building through planned scientific processes amongst others and described it as laying the foundation for research inquiries. In other words, it is the untapped knowledge that exists in the realm of reality and is explored by researchers. Exploring to identify gaps entails deliberate, focused and unbiased critique of existing body of knowledge whether contextualized or generalized. It entails a robust re-examination of established knowledge (concepts, theories, constructs and facts) which would have hitherto conform to conceptual validity (???). The knowledge gap seeker (researcher) in this circumstance is expected to sufficiently exhume evaluative and analytical capacity to perforate and view through existing knowledge with a view to identifying knowledge gap as a basis for further exploration and establishing new knowledge. Finding knowledge gaps is no doubt a rigorous mental provoking exercise but create the path to qualitative knowledge building and eventual expansion of knowledge frontiers. It has had the approval of procedures that serves as premise for knowing which will be examined in this write-up in the next part. Seeking knowledge gaps is diagrammatically represented thus;

*Conceptual Framework on Knowledge Gap (KG)*



Source: Authors Conceptualization, 2018

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*The Way of Knowing*

It has been well acknowledged that when we lay claim to some knowledge, it must have been acquired in a particular way (Edvinsson, 2000; Grover & Davenport, 2001; Stan Kosky, 2004). Agbonifoh and Yomere (1999) posits that, four knowing methods exist and they include authority source, tenacity, apriori and scientific approach. Takeoradi (2002) position validate their conceptual focus on knowledge methods but showed more commitment to the scientific method of knowing. They adduced that the scientific method bothers itself with knowing what knowledge exist and through a critical analyses establish a gap for further inquiry. Alperiodic evaluation alongside contextualization of knowledge content will also serve this purpose of knowledge gap identification and expansion of knowledge frontiers.

*Finding Knowledge through the Authority Approach*

Relying on this method, knowledge is accepted as true because a respected source says so (Agbonifo & Yomere, 1999). For instance, many people accept the Bible and Koran as infallible sources of knowledge. Thus, if knowledge is drawn from the Bible or Koran as the case may, it is believed with its veracity. There is also an extended perceptual societal attachment to some placed individuals whose knowledge is considered as valid (Gabriel, 2009, Adeoye & Latti, 2014). For instance, student will take knowledge from a Professor or the Vice Chancellor as concrete within the educational context. Indeed, there is a general feeling of truism when knowledge is extracted from one considered as authoritative. Gujaransoun (2009) argues that though knowledge acquired from authority stands, it is hacked largely acceptability authority method of knowing is viewed as reliable, it acceptability can be a matter of context and level of which stand, it is hack many likely detract from its veracity and validity overtime. Kalid & Wu (2013) posits that cultural variance has critically discredit; some authority claims and these have intuitively validated such bodies of knowledge that would have been accepted ordinarily.

Levis & Manders (2010) have suggested that for anyone to be accepted as an authority and a dependable source of knowledge, that person should be identifiable, recognized, living and not biased. While it is questionable whether indeed the authority must be living to be accepted, the other conditions are helpful in ensuring some measure of acceptability. This notwithstanding our position is interestingly assertive on the sublime nature of the authority method. Primarily it does not seem to recognize the seamless character of knowledge which Polanyi (1974) acknowledged. Going by this, it simply means that once knowledge is linked to an authority it cannot be critiqued, evaluated or reviewed to find a gap.

*Finding Knowledge through the Tenacity Approach*

Kaltz (1991); Belana and Mietaz (1995); Nehemaiah (2001) have argued that knowledge through tenacity once assumed monumental dimension as society was led to believing and accepting body of knowledge based on what has been ancestrally known. In other words people accepted such knowledge without interrogating its validity. Of course, it has its far-reaching dysfunctional capacity to obscure new knowledge through its inability to encourage knowledge critique and evaluation. It is viewed as fastidious and holding tenaciously to established knowledge realm that makes it difficult to believe existence of gaps (Lanre & Laure, 2009). Belana (1997) noted that knowledge at this level was at best seen as superstitious and lacked long-term evidence for general acceptability. A point of note is that the evolutionary approach of this knowledge type sufficiently indicates that

gaps are inherent in this method of knowing which should ordinarily require deliberate inquiries to substantiate and validate. Uti & Kolevz (2011) believes that knowing through tenacity lacks conformity with episteme logical process that helps to validate and substantiate knowledge therefore do not have a basis for gap exploration in knowledge building. There is also the implication of making deductions from unapproved beliefs that might be misleading despite empirical evidence that would have arisen from other reliable knowledge source.

### *Finding Knowledge through the Apriori Approach*

Apriori is a latin word that connotes thinking towards something and arising from what existed previously. It is characteristically chronological or logical and sharing a sequence of actions (Agbonifoh & Yomere, 1999). It simply means that there exist a cause that preceded the outcome (effect). For instance if there is a drop in sales over product whose raw material has policy constraint, it would be simple to deduct that government policy is the cause for drop in market share of the firm. Chronologically, the policy action of government proceeds the drop in sales and reduction in market share. Creswell (2000) argues that apriori method could also mean reasoning from general principles to specific cases. Therefore, it involves deploying logical reasoning. Logical reason according to Jisu (2010) is owed to the individual prison and mental focus that guides inferences and conclusions. Angel (1997) had contemplated that apriori knowledge can be confusing due to the fact that logical reasoning is likely to be controverted based on individual sense of logical reasoning. In other words, the concreteness of knowledge is owed to the extent the individual can make meaning out of the logic. This method of knowing like the others except scientific has the challenge of validity, veracity, and reliability. It is likely to experience experimental mortality and contextual acceptability (Nararan, 2013). Interestingly, the logical character of the apriori has inherent belief in knowledge gap that is expectedly explored and should be filled with the knowledge resulting from eventual inference.

### *Finding Knowledge Scientifically*

A huge body or knowledge exists to give meaning to science (???). To some, science connotes a body of true knowledge; to others, it means objectivity in the investigation of empirical phenomena; to others still, science denotes a tradition, a way of thinking an attitude, a methodology. Indeed, science is all of these and this write up is guided by all of these conceptualization on science. The term “scientific” implies a commitment to a systematic approach to investigations at natural phenomena. It involves the collection and analysis of data using a systematic and a unbiased procedure. The scientific methodology is thus a system of explicit rules and procedures against which claims to knowledge are evaluated. One basic characteristic of the scientific methodology is that it is self-correcting. Accepted scientific research procedures have in-built checks and controls aimed at minimizing errors and bias. Those checks are so conceived and used that they constitute a set of checks on the activities of the scientist. Thus, the checks used in scientific research are anchored as much as in reality, which lies outside of the scientist; this precludes his personal beliefs, perceptions, biases, values, attitudes and emotions from interfering with his research findings. Perhaps, the best single word to express this is “objectivity”. (Agbonifo and Yomere, 1999). If scientificity expresses objectivity as acknowledged by Cresswell (2000), Takoradi (2002), Quay & Dickwell, (2011) it provides a concrete approach to finding out gaps in knowledge which is seeks to create and recreate. The aspect that is made clear here is that scientific approach does not only provides the clear path to exploring reality objectively, it provides the critical

approaches to finding out gaps as shown in our conceptual model. It is far from criticism and personal idiosyncrasies rather it is premised on critique, evaluation and analytical perspectives that are themselves driven by scientific prescription.

## II. CONCLUSION

This write-up has the primary focus of examining knowledge gap, which is considered as central to knowledge building and expansion. Though knowledge is viewed as that which is contained within the knower, explaining concrete knowledge requires knowing its extent so far. What has been ostensibly established in this discourse is that knowledge gap results from the researchers cursorily to inquire into the reality that exist within his mind and mental domain. Explaining this reality is essentially fast tracked by capacity to examine indepthly existing body of knowledge or critical observation of phenomena. Commonly, knowledge has shown to be a borderless item that has the propensity to instigate a search therefore, researchers insists on critique of what exist as knowledge which in turn produce the platform for further search. Searching further in this circumstance result from identified gap (extent so far) and through a scientific process the seeming endpoint is matched with perceived reality. The researcher in this circumstance expectedly traverse the existing knowledge latitude which is a build-up from hitherto contributions of scholars who have through positivist or subjectivist epistemologies and philosophical leaning created knowledge. What is brought to the fore in this write-up essentially is that scientificity is endless as a means of filling gap identifiable from limits of yesterday's theories, facts, concepts and constructs which constitute body of knowledge.

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**Christopher Akpotu** is an Associate Professor of Management with a portfolio of scholarly works in the many parts of the field of management. He has contributed to research efforts in organizational behavior, organizational development, entrepreneurship and strategic management. He is a member of the prestigious Academy of Management, Nigeria and other International Institutes. He currently lectures in the Department of Management of the highly rated Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, and a visiting scholar to other Nigerian Universities.