

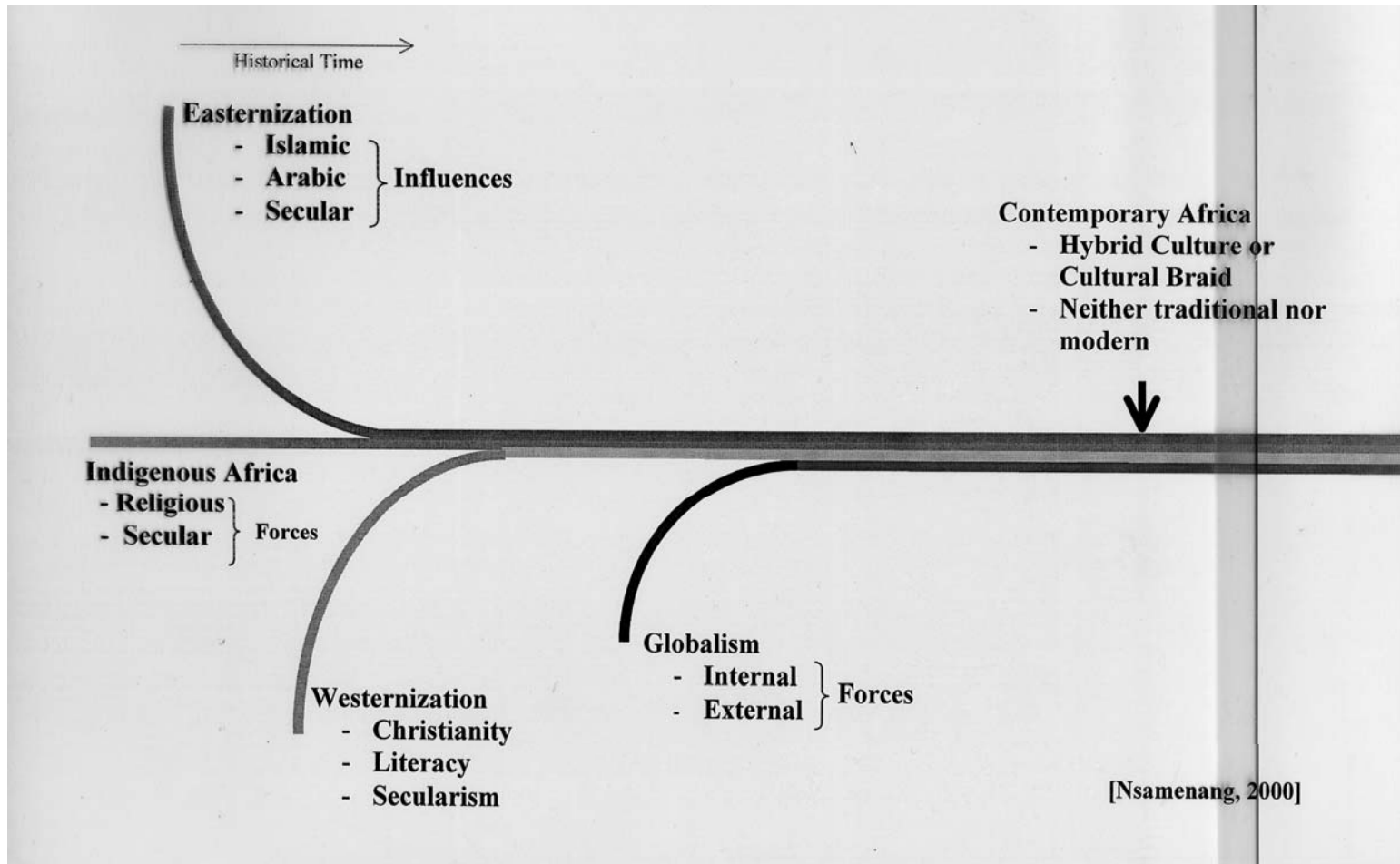
# **Meaning & role of measurement in ecd: Problematizing an Africentric glimpse**

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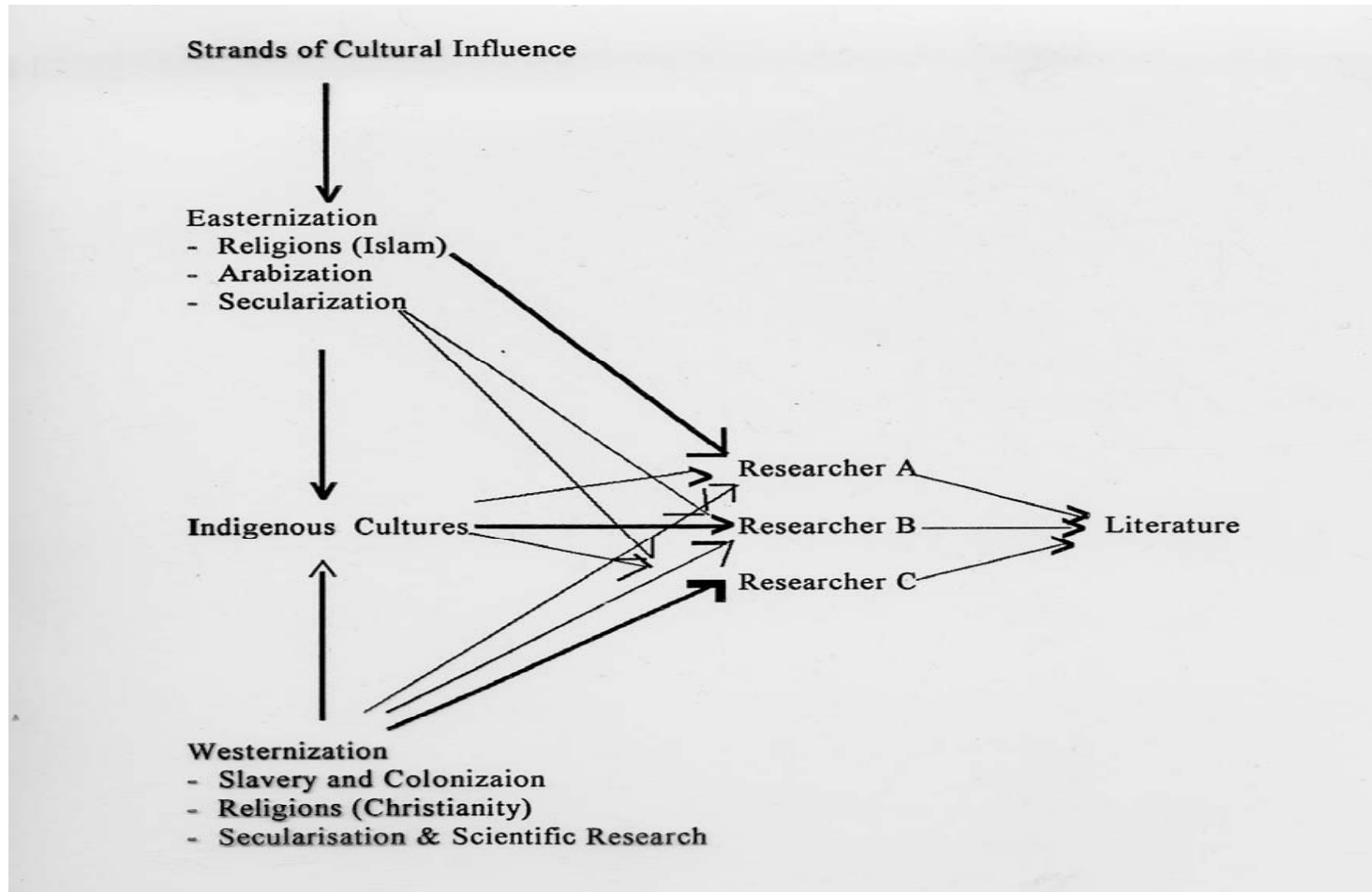
# Measurement / Assessment: A 'Good Thing' --- Indispensable!

- Measurement is for a variety of purposes:
  - School Readiness
  - Academic Achievement
  - Early development – Videotape of mother-infant interactions
  - Research tools
- Adaptation/Translation = Transcreation?
- Comparison across contexts/cultures?
- Problematizing measurement in Africa!

# Africa's Multiple/Shifting Layers of 'Reality' (Nsamenang, 2002)



# Differential Acculturation of Africa's Experts and Professionals



# A Question?

- **Is it plausible or rogue to raise the concern whether Africans have a right to react to “those things that are given to” their “present experience as if they were timeless, natural, unquestionable” (Rose, 1999, p. 20)?**

# The hub of ecd measurement

- **Measurement conjures 3 interconnected issues:**
  - **Conceptualized/theorized reality: Who? Within which ideology or worldview? Why?**
  - **Existential reality – What's experienced by who?**
  - **Perceived reality – Who perceives it and why?**
- **These interconnections are philosophically, theoretically and experientially problematic.**
- **Hub of the ECD measurement: Which of these realities is in focus? For what purpose? For whom? More questions than answers can be raised!**

# Multiple sources of ecd data

- **Different stakeholders input differentiable motives, interests, readiness and commitment to ecd. Which set of motives or interests or ways of ‘seeing’ become the acceptable ones and why?**
- **It is essential to be aware that what is acceptably noticed and intervened is a fraught matter because governments, donors, professionals, experts, civil society, and the clientele ‘see’ or interpret the same ‘reality’ differently (see Nsamenang, 2005; Scott’s 1998).**
- **Multiple ecd data sources : Which one to measure?**
  - **(i) The parents’**      - **(ii) Children’s**
  - **(iii) Experts’**      - **(iv) Donor agencies’**
  - **(v) Advocacy**      - **(vi) The context’s**

# Diversity breeds plural / shifting realities

- Diversity, particularly Africa's unappreciated differentness, breeds ambiguity and plural realities, which are often difficult to tolerate, much less easily subsume and fit into a single set of measurement criteria.
- The core measurement problem: How to handle many "shifting" realities.
- Temptation: Simplify, standardize, homogenize diversity into a single Euro-American referential frame and standard to the detriment of Africa's differentness and stark realities.



# **Does culture distort / blind?**

- A distinct mark of humanity is cultural diversity, which breeds ambiguity and shifting realities (Chambers, 1997).**
- The hardest culture to analyze is own culture, because it is invisible like the air we breathe; it permeates everything we do (WestEd, 2003).**
- By shaping mentalities and sharpening human action in ways that appear like second nature, culture distorts or blinds the recognition of other people's cultural realities.**
- How, then, can researchers, experts, and advocates who intervene or evaluate the ecd of others realistically transcend their own cultural sensitivities to genuinely and dispassionately do so.**

# Professional/expert niche or toolbox

- **Chambers (1997): A professional cult combines with a culture of means-ends logic to create and place experts and professionals in a prison or niche that blinds and distorts the learning of whatever diverges from or lies outside the expert or professional box.**
- **Professionals and experts value correct posture or accurate procedure over the people they measure. They focus on measurable indicators and pre-defined outcomes rather than on process and judgments.**
- **Realities outside the prison walls, expert niche or professional box are not perceived or recognized.**
- **Professional views “are often privileged, supposed to be empirically true and morally right” (Chambers, 1997, p. 77), even in the face of contrary evidence.**

# **Stunting impact of received knowledge on local knowledge and skills**

- **By providing the evaluative criteria and indices to judge Africa's ecd, imported ecd asserts superiority over, and forcibly denies equity to, even recognition of, Africa's ecd wisdom, thereby disempowering the Continent and depriving it of the authority inherent in own knowledge systems.**
- **A rights-based position does not formulate policy and programs to replace or intervene into informality or extinction a people's ecd. It should instead envision and put in place a 'liberal' health project that enhances and guides African societies to understand their differentness and improve their ways of ensuring wholesome development.**
- **If the development community and rights advocates could, for instance, "listen to, and learn from, the African worldview, seeing a holistic and integrated way of looking at the family and the universe, we might see" and measure ecd in Africa "in a new way" (Callaghan, 1998, p. 32).**

# Best practices

- Best practices in ecd is couched in theory that is an invisible element; it is draped in unrevealed ideology that blankets all other facets but “prescribes” a functional standing position.
- A taken-for-granted more publicly voiced aspect of “best practices” is quality, which connotes specific assessment criteria.
- “Quality” is a ‘messy’ concept, which challenges the field to transcend Eurocentric gold standards to evolve measurement or evaluation criteria that apply across diverging ecologies and cultures.

# What criteria for differentness?

- **African parents focus on children's participation in responsible and productive livelihood activities as the primary principle in their development and learning (Nsamenang, 2004). How can we capture this?**
- **This narrative, according to Moss (2005), differs from the dominant 'western' narrative, which constructs children as "reproducers, to be filled with knowledge and values and made 'ready to learn' and 'ready for school'; and as redemptive agents, appropriate vehicles for solving social and economic problems in society if subjected early enough to effective technical interventions"**

# Appropriate Africentric ecd?

- **Globalization is real but we feel that relevant and serviceable ecd theory and best practices “must be rooted in African cultural codes and meaning” (Airhihenbuwa, 1995).**
- **Necessity for respectful interaction, cross system learning, insight and interstimulation from indigenous and imported ecds, which have their respective knowledge-holders and ‘protected’ niches and borders.**
- **How may the two systems become respectful partners?**

# **Africa's difficulties!**

- **Awareness of own realities /  
Misunderstanding of its own condition**
- **Lack of expertise**
- **Proclivity to copying, without reflection**
- **Twin Forces: Globalization and  
localization – How does this translate  
into measurement models and  
interpretive frames, given the multiple  
layers of reality?**