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Volume 2

# Problematising Local Indigenous Community Research

*Afro-Sensed Perspectives*

Edited by  
**Mogomme A. Masoga,  
Allucia L. Shokane  
& Kelly J. Gross**

Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining  
in Social Sciences Series  
Volume 2

**Problematizing  
Local Indigenous  
Community Research**  
*Afro-Sensed Perspectives*



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Editors  
**Mogomme A. Masoga**  
**Allucia L. Shokane**  
**Kelly J. Gross**





***This publication is dedicated to Professor Lisa V. Blitz***

*Professor Lisa V. Blitz, former Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work in the College of Community and Public Affairs at the Binghamton University, New York, USA, was a colleague and scholar of note. She passed away peacefully on 22 June 2020, surrounded by loved ones. We celebrate Lisa's outstanding scholarship grounded in the indigenous field and thinking. She started with us to conceptualise this book publication. Regrettably, she could not finish this project with us. Her memory will forever remain with us.*



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## Research Justification

This scholarly book is the second volume in the book series *Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences*. The book series editor is Prof. Mogomme A. Masoga (University of Zululand, South Africa). The volume editors are Mogomme A. Masoga, (University of Zululand, South Africa), Allucia L. Shokane (University of Zululand, South Africa) and Kelly J. Gross (State University of New York at Albany, USA). The book deliberates on developments related to Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences. This book explores the value of this vexed concept in advancing the course for multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary perspectives, methodologies, theories and epistemologies of knowledge pathing. The discourse on knowledge pathing remains critical in advancing debates and dialogues in the humanities and social sciences spaces of research and studies.

This second volume book makes a significant contribution to the scholarly understanding of indigenous knowledge (IK) research by focusing on problematising local indigenous community research from Afro-sensed perspectives. The field of IK research and higher education in Africa is complex. And yet across the continent, higher education has been the last sector to embrace indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) or regard indigenous science as a legitimate source of inspiration for the development of youth and local communities. Subsequently, higher education institutions and local indigenous communities should generate knowledge and power through research. On the other hand, higher education researchers should use their research processes and skills for cross-beneficiation when engaging local indigenous communities. This book is the current discourse on decolonisation and the use of IK in research.

The book targets educators in the academies and research specialists in the field of IKS. The content of the book is based on contributions from original research, and concomitantly, the authors' research is entirely their own. The contribution of the volume editors was solely of editing and providing guidance. Each chapter has undergone a rigorous review assessment process for the core qualities of scholarship that we deemed necessary for readers to have confidence in the trustworthiness and importance of the ideas and messages presented in the book. The co-editors evaluated each submission for originality, integrity and accuracy, relevance, credibility, and hermeneutics.

We hereby declare that this work is original research and confirm that no part of the book was plagiarised from another publication or has been published elsewhere unless proper referencing and acknowledgement were made.

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# Abbreviations Appearing in the Text and Notes

## List of Abbreviations

ABCD	Asset-based Community Development
AIKS	African Indigenous Knowledge Systems
AISA	Africa Institute of South Africa
ASASWEI	Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions
CBPAR	Community-based Participatory Action Research
CBPR	Community-based Participatory Research
CBT	Community-based Tourism
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DS	Down Syndrome
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
ILR	Indigenous Local Research
IRT	Integrated Rural Tourism
ISL	International Service-learning
IUPAC	International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry
LIS	Library and Information Studies/Science
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
PI	Principal Investigator

RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SGB	School Governing Body
SL	Sustainable Livelihood
SSA	Sub-Saharan African
SSD	Social Services Director
TIHMC	The Innovation Hub Management Company
ToP	Termination of Pregnancy
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCP	Women's Community Partnership
WHO	World Health Organization

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# Notes on Contributors

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# Foreword

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This book is a fundamental contribution to many of the contemporary questions and debates about what is to be done in order to resolve the present challenge of ‘cognitive empire’ and the practical problem of oppression in a world that is resisting decolonisation. The contribution made by this intervention is quite important in that it turns the controversial concept of indigenisation into something that can yield positive change in the imaginative world of modern society as well as in its lived experience. It does this by providing us with the practical ways and steps in which we can change both the content and terms of the conversation when it comes to the question of education. There are, indeed, few academic works that have been able to take from the anti-colonial approach to the counter-colonial approach to matters of knowledge production and changing the problematic modern education system. In this way, the treatise of indigenisation in this book is not a reactive one but a proactive approach that offers a practical alternative to the challenge of colonial knowledge in the present-day academy.

As has always been the case with the term ‘research’, the term ‘indigenous’ is considered by some critical scholars to be a ‘dirty’ word. However, the collection of essays in this volume indicates that the idea of indigeneity is currently gaining traction with many African scholars who have found it a useful register and grammar for expressing the nature of change that we desire in the educational space and, by extension, the lived experience of

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the society. Within the milieu of many other conceptual tools that are currently being deployed to challenge the unenviable experience of being black in an anti-black world; and concepts such as decoloniality, Africology, Afrocentricity and many others, the idea of indigenisation has resisted all the attempts to be thrown into the dustbin of history by proving itself to be a useful register for the desired change, especially by African scholars who are seeking a decolonised education.

There are, indeed, many reasons why the idea of indigeneity has remained a forceful concept and grammar for change among African scholars amidst the attempts to condemn it to the dustbin of history. The most important of them is that the colonial experience of the African people allows them to appropriate and deploy this idea in a way that subverts rather than sustains the colonial system that oppresses them. In this way, the idea of indigenisation can be deployed as a liberating concept that enables the African subject to eloquently express his/her vision of change while proposing concrete solutions, thereby turning the very system of oppression that enabled the concept to exist on its head.

In general, the traction of the idea of indigenisation depends on the varying experiences of cultural colonialism across time and spatiality. In Africa, the colonial experience did not succeed to entirely annihilate pre-existing cultures and knowledge that are enabled by such cultures, and hence, the question of indigenisation remains a relevant one. As Quijano (2007) has put it:

The forms and effects of cultural coloniality have been different as regards to times and cases. In Latin America, the cultural repression and colonisation of the imaginary were accompanied by a massive and gigantic extermination of the natives, mainly their use as expendable force, in addition to the violence of the conquest and diseases brought by Euro-peans. The cultural repression and massive genocide together turned the previous high cultures of America into illiterate, peasant subcultures condemned to orality; that is, deprived of their own pattern of formalised, objectivised, intellectual, and plastic or visual expression. (p. 168)

Quijano's position is that Latin America became the most extreme case of cultural colonisation by Europe. Thus, he (Quijano 2007) argues that Latin America cannot be compared with Asia, the Middle East and Africa simply because:

In Asia and in the Middle East high cultures could never be destroyed with such intensity and profundity. But they were nevertheless placed in subordinate relation, not only in the European view, but also in the eyes of their own bearers. In Africa, cultural destruction was certainly much more intense than in Asia, but less than in America. Nor did the Europeans there succeed in complete destruction of the patterns of expression, in particular of objectification and of visual formalisation. What the Europeans did was to deprive Africans of legitimacy and recognition in the global cultural order dominated by European patterns. (p. 168)

What emerges from Quijano's analysis of the impact of colonialism across the regions of the Third World is that in Africa, the process of colonial domination did not totally annihilate and exterminate indigenous African ways of thinking, knowing and patterns of expression, but merely subalternised and inferiorised them in the global cultural order. What then needs to be done to reverse the status quo is to deliberately exalt that subaltern knowledge through formal education, especially in institutions of higher learning such as universities. Thus, Quijano's analysis of colonial domination's effects on African culture(s) and knowledge systems resonates with the position held by Hoppers and Richards (2011), who argued that:

Two centuries of politicised and scienticised denial of the existence of the metaphysics of indigenous people has not eradicated their knowledge systems, their rituals, and their practices [...] at least not completely. Whenever we look deeply at African society, or indeed most indigenous societies, the empirical fact that stares back at us is a reality of life lived differently, lives constituted around very different metaphysics of economics, of law, of science, of healing, of marriage, of joy, of dying, and of co-existence. The problem before us is therefore that the academy has not adapted to its natural context, or has resisted adaptation epistemologically, cosmologically and culturally – with immense ensuing cognitive injustice to boot! (p. 10)



What we can discern from the above is that even though Africa suffered ‘dis-mem-berment’ as a result of colonialism, those who remained on the continent, unlike those who were kidnapped, enslaved and transported to the New World, remained with resources of remembrance. This can clearly be seen in the sphere of language, where wa Thiong’o (2009:17) stated that the ‘linguistic logic of conquest’ led to ‘linguicide’<sup>1</sup> in the case of the diaspora and ‘linguifam’<sup>2</sup> in the case of those who remained on the continent. What this means is that the peoples of Africa remain with another source of social memory and another civilisation, which they can return to as a way of disconfirming the false projection of Eurocentrism as the only model of knowledge and of the world.

What makes this volume even more appealing is the seasoning of the idea of indigenisation with the concept of Afro-sensing – a concept that speaks to cognitive justice and indigeneity as a site of genuine alterity and not just a form of ‘secreting blackness’. This book is, therefore, a call for a genuine intercultural dialogue in knowledge production and the changing of the education system for the benefit of all. It is, therefore, my hope that this book helps to awaken the audiences who are committed to the decolonisation cause of knowledge and education about the rich alluvium of resources that lie hidden and untapped in communities outside the modern academy. These are the resources that can take us from the oppositional stage of changing the modern world into propositional knowledge of offering an alternative world via the avenue of knowledge production because knowledge and reality reproduce each other in synchronic and diachronic ways.

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1. Referring to language liquidation as a means of communication and site of remembrance.

2. Referring to linguistic deprivation and starvation but not liquidation.

# Preface

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This series aims to provide an understanding of local indigenous community research by focusing on Afro-sensed perspectives. This is the second volume in the book series *Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences*. This book comprises 13 chapters that appreciate and value local indigenous research from an African perspective.

Chapters were invited from contributing authors who are involved in Indigenous Knowledge (IK) research from various fields such as mathematical and natural sciences, IK systems, education, mathematics, social work, chemistry, tourism, information, science and technology, education and management of IK across South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and the USA.

Each chapter of this volume has undergone rigorous review assessing for the core qualities of scholarship we deemed necessary for readers to have confidence in the trustworthiness and importance of ideas and messages. The editors evaluated each submission for originality, integrity and accuracy, relevance, credibility, and hermeneutics. As part of the assessment for originality, each manuscript was processed electronically through

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the Turnitin database. The Turnitin program checks all new submissions against works in its database and generates a 'similarity report', indicating matches of phrases from the current paper and works that exist in the database. Only those manuscripts with a low similarity index were accepted for publication, ensuring that readers get to hear the authentic voice of the writer.

Integrity and accuracy were assured through the editors' knowledge of the subject areas. Each chapter is well supported by the existing literature, theory, and research evidence. As social work faculty, deeply engaged in the education of our students and invested in the professional development of the social work and human services workforce, the relevance and credibility of each chapter were central to our review, and we are confident that the work herein has value for students as well as experienced professionals and leaders in the field. As scholars, hermeneutics and knowledge systems are deeply important in our work and understanding the applications of these concepts in the indigenisation of social work practice and research was a central concern in our reviews.

**Chapter 1** focuses on the educational relevance of including information about traditional chemistry practices in African indigenous cultures within chemistry teaching. It outlines the possible implementation pathways, including learners' active engagement in the recognition and investigation of these practices and the importance of collaboration between natural and human scientists to maximise the quality and extent of this investigation and the ensuing pedagogical benefits.

**Chapter 2** deals with IK education within Library and Information Studies/Science (LIS) Schools in Africa by investigating whether IK education is necessary, who should offer IK and why, what (content) should be taught (and at what level), how long IK education should take and what the challenges and opportunities for IK education in LIS are.

**Chapter 3** sets out to make a valuable contribution to the decolonisation of the curriculum in higher education. It outlines

the fact that indigenous local research (ILR) can do so only if it moves away from its over-reliance on theory to embrace the practical. Of importance is the fact that such a practical approach should be deeply rooted in African epistemologies.

**Chapter 4** focuses on the cultural uses of indigenous grasses in Zimbabwe, a diversion for the research emphasis on scientific (taxonomic and ecological) aspects of grass species. The cultural uses varied from the uses of grasses as food to their use for utilitarian purposes and finally to their role as indicators of ecological conditions.

**Chapter 5** aims to understand if the use of community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) and asset-based community development (ABCD), as methods, protected the integration of IK held by the women in the Women's Community Partnership.

**Chapter 6** explores the linkages that exist between the call for decolonisation of knowledge within the South African Higher Education setting and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), deculturation processes and epistemology.

**Chapter 7** expresses the decolonisation of the social work curriculum and amplifies the fact that African people are victims of epistemicide, which is reversible through reclaiming the African value system to render Afrocentered social work.

**Chapter 8** focuses on the 'strategic event-based rural tourism' as one way to deliver an indigenous and authentic rural tourism value proposition in sub-Saharan Africa that will lead to establishing a unique rural tourism experience. It is expected that it could, in turn, lead to securing a brand identity in the global rural tourism marketplace in an indigenous manner.

**Chapter 9** applies the indigenous agrarian Shona communities of rural Zimbabwe to explore an insight of community of practice as collective and sustainable to members. By positioning the collective, the community of practice is reconceptualised to an indigenous learning system with shared responses and

relationships to others and the land. Examples of indigenous practices are given to narrate the collective experience of the community of practice among the Shona people.

**Chapter 10** examines the ways in which rural South African women contribute to sustainable livelihoods within indigenous communities within the application of community-based tourism (CBT). The inclusion of rural African women in CBT is of interest to understand their contributions and to ensure they are not further marginalised in such tourism approaches.

**Chapter 11** presents an application of the African worldview and indigenous psychosocial care system of African families who raise a child with Down syndrome. These lived experiences are elevated for meaning not to be replaced by Western-trained social workers in their work with such families.

**Chapter 12** promotes the use of stokvel as a way to provide funding while creating shared resources and practices among poorer institutions of education with historically advantaged institutions. The research suggests a move towards the use of stokvel as a community practice between educational institutions for sharing of knowledge, fund generation schemes and additional resources.

**Chapter 13** elevates the use of IK by decolonising Western approaches to social work practice and research. Preliminary findings of a larger community-based participatory research (CBPR) study in Malawi, Africa, suggest ways in which social workers can decolonise their social work practices, based on reflectiveness and reflexivity.

# Introduction

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This book discusses developments related to Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences, with special reference to focus on problematising local indigenous community research with an Afro-sensed slanting. It explores the value of this vexed concept in advancing the course for multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary perspectives, methodologies, theories and epistemologies of knowledge pathing. The discourse on knowledge pathing remains critical in advancing debates and dialogues in the humanities and social sciences spaces of research and studies.

The field of IK research and higher education in Africa is complex. And yet, across the continent, higher education has been the last sector to embrace IKS or to regard indigenous science as a legitimate source of inspiration for the youth and local communities' development. Subsequently, higher education institutions and local indigenous communities should generate knowledge and power through research. Higher education researchers should use the research process and skills as engagement tools in indigenous local communities.

Also, we note with regret that the origins of research in Africa are rooted in its colonial and apartheid past. The process of decolonisation and Africanism of higher education in Africa

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should commence in the classroom. Curriculum review must be done to promote multicultural and IK in the training of research suitable for African people and culture.

Further, debates and discussions on how researchers engage with local communities should be revisited to transform the whole enterprise. Voices echoed in this publication do not compromise the Afro-sensed thinking and practice in engaging with local indigenous communities. This publication gives a strong perspective by critically reviewing the absence or marginalisation of African indigenous voices in methodical frames, paradigms, production and dissemination of knowledge in this regard.

Clearly, research and knowledge production can no longer be conducted with indigenous communities as if their views do not count or their lives and personal experiences are of no significance. Nor can their experiences be interpreted and voices heard filtered through Western scientific epistemology alone. Biases are still found in most African universities and research institutions as well as those in the Global North. We are convinced that African universities and research institutions, however, have a unique responsibility to act as guiding lights to the continent, to the communities within which they are located and to the global community that seeks to repair the damage of history.

On the other hand, we are excited that research at rural universities is beginning to take centre stage in the mainstream university discourse. Part of this traction has much to do with three pillars: research, development and transfer of knowledge. The fact that rural-based universities have to respond and account for situations and circumstances that surround them cannot be overlooked.

In this case, contextuality and relevance become critical reference points. Interestingly, rurality as a context in which rural-based universities are located becomes both a definer and a

shaper of how research programmes, collaborations, development of knowledge packages and community engagement strategies should be shaped and organised.

It behoves us to explain our stance on the usage of the Afro-sensed approach and perspective in this case. The Afro-sensed perspective or approach was coined by Mogomme A. Masoga in 2017. The Afro-sensed approach argues for African contexts, and spaces present unique opportunities in the discourse of knowledge development. While one admits the nomothetic characteristics of knowledge at the same time, one has to look at its idiographic perspective of knowledge. In this case, one has to strike a balance between universal and specifics of knowledge development. An Afro-sensed approach departs from Afrocentricity by emphasising:

1. An acknowledgement of the nomothetic trends of knowledge.
2. An acknowledgement of specifics of knowledge.
3. A call for respecting the competence of the African space in the development of knowledge and science.
4. A call for the inclusion of African knowledge in the broader (mainstream) knowledge spaces.
5. An admission that exogenous knowledge into African knowledge spaces should make sense to African life orientations - in this case, one should avoid impositions.

In general, the Afro-sensed approach calls for:

1. acknowledgement
2. respect
3. admission
4. fair play
5. balancing act
6. back to basics.

Afro-sensed responses and African IK can be important tools for the development of social work interventions to work with families in the school community (Shokane & Masoga 2018).



African IK as adopted in this volume is 'owned by local people in their specific communities' and passed on from generation to generation. It could be rural or urban. The term 'embedded' is used in the general sense of 'knowledge' being around when needed by the people themselves (Masoga 2005). Indigenous Knowledge is further simplified by Dumbrill and Green (2008:489) as the traditional ways of knowing indigenous people or any other distinct community. According to Masoga (2005), some of this knowledge brings pleasure, reinforces tradition and belief systems, and gives a sense of belonging and relatedness.

We hope that this volume will add to the IK corpus and another conversation will immediately start.

# Indigenous Knowledge and the roots of African chemistry: A wealth of potentialities for chemistry education

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## ■ Introduction

This chapter focuses on the educational relevance of including information about traditional chemistry practices in African indigenous cultures within chemistry teaching. Chemistry is often perceived as too abstract by learners – as something pertaining to the classroom and having no connections with everyday life.

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The dichotomy between the information that is the object of attention in the classroom and everyday experience may be huge in several contexts. A telling example from the author's direct experience was that of an Italian 16-year-old secondary school pupil during her first encounter with chemistry and with the *chemical reaction* concept. She was very concerned about not being able to imagine what a chemical reaction would be like, because 'I have never seen a reaction, and the teacher does not take us to the lab'. Her surprise when informed that what happens in the gas cooker – the general means of cooking in Italy – is a chemical reaction and that, therefore, she already had practical familiarity with chemical reactions was a patent symptom of the dichotomy between classroom chemistry and everyday experience.

The pedagogical importance of relating everyday life and what is taught in the class is amply recognised, and overcoming the dichotomy is one of the major challenges of chemistry education. A variety of options have been developed to highlight the connections between chemistry and everyday experience – from the 'chemistry in context' projects by the American Chemical Society to approaches focusing on active learning (Hinde & Kovac 2001:93; Kovac 1999:120–124; Oliver-Hoyo, Alconchel & Pinto 2012:45–50; Paulson 1999:1136–1140; Prince 2004:223–231; Vera et al. 2006:227–236) and to resource materials specifically focusing on chemistry in everyday life (e.g. Pinto Cañon 2003). A meaningful review of research studies and developed resource materials would require considerable space and would go beyond the scope of this chapter; on the other hand, recalling the importance of relating classroom teaching and everyday life sets the first criterion for the reflections that are developed in this chapter.

The recognition of the relationships between chemical knowledge and everyday life is also important for the public's perceptions about chemistry. Negative perceptions about 'chemical substances' are frequent. On the other hand, the same

persons who express such perceptions would not renounce using soap, shampoo, toothpaste, cooking food, having the walls of their houses painted or taking medicines when needed. Chemistry is present in most products used in everyday life, but the awareness of this is not sufficiently prevalent among the general public, and the adjective *chemical* often remains synonymous with non-natural and potentially dangerous. The importance of public perceptions is increasingly growing, above all in view of the crucial roles of chemistry in making development sustainable (Anastas & Warner 1998; Anastas & Williamson 1996; Tundo & Anastas 2000) and of the importance of citizens' participation in the realisation of sustainable development; this implies the importance of disseminating information among the public to prompt adequate chemical literacy for the needs of the future. Linking classroom chemistry to everyday life is an important route to foster realistic public perceptions (Mammino 2007:176-180)<sup>3</sup>.

Besides the frequent dichotomy between chemistry in the classroom and everyday reality, an additional type of dichotomy often exists in contexts where chemistry – in its form as a body of organised knowledge or as a modern science – has basically been *imported* from other countries. Then, the spontaneous and likely unavoidable perception is that it is something alien to the learners' context. The fact that the language of instruction is often different from the learners' mother tongue further enhances the perception that it is something belonging to somebody else. The use of a second language as the medium of instruction is mostly not traced to its historical roots in people's perceptions, and this contributes to the widely spread conviction that the local languages are not capable of expressing chemistry or modern sciences in general. Although this conviction is based on a

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3. It may be expedient to recall that, according to the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) definition, 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

confusion between the language of science (the mode of expression typical of the sciences) and terminology, its outcome (not expressing science through the learners' mother tongue) heavily contributes to a perception of alienness regarding chemistry and other modern sciences (Mammino 2006).

On the other hand, all cultures have chemistry-based practices in everyday activities. Therefore, each culture has its own *chemical heritage*. Incorporating information about it into the way in which chemistry is presented to learners may dramatically change their attitude towards chemistry, as shown by the outcomes of Marasinghe's pioneering work in Papua and New Guinea (Marasinghe 2012, 2013). By introducing a unit on 'Traditional Chemistry Practices' into an innovative chemistry syllabus, he succeeded in linking students' culture to modern chemistry, thus addressing the perception of the alienness of chemistry at its very roots (Marasinghe 2013):

Learning what their ancestors had done is meant to inspire the students and stress the importance of learning modern scientific principles and methods to build on what the forefathers have done. (n.p.)

Students' attitudes changed from a diffuse lack of interest and scarcity of vocations to a sharp increase in the students' interest. As Marasinghe (2016) said, 'chemistry has been becoming one of the most popular subjects among the students at upper secondary level'. This also led to a sharp increase in the number of students wishing to choose chemistry for their university studies, up to the point that 47.8% of first-year (Foundation Science) students opted for chemistry in the second year in 2010 (Marasinghe 2016).

The next sections consider the potentialities of analogous approaches in sub-Saharan Africa, discussing their motivations and outlining some possible implementation pathways. Because they focus on education, their contents inherently pertain both to a natural science perspective and to a human science perspective.

## ■ Traditional practices and chemistry teaching/learning

This section offers a brief overview of the roles that the information about traditional practices may play in chemistry courses, both as part of a historical perspective and in terms of linkages between chemistry and learners' everyday reality and culture.

## ■ Protochemistry and historical perspectives in chemistry teaching

The term *protochemistry* is sometimes used with reference to the chemistry practices that developed in all cultures (Blum 2011; Hoffmann 2011) and preceded the chemistry enquiries<sup>4</sup> which developed later, initially as part of philosophy and, in more recent centuries, as part of increasingly specialising science disciplines. Early chemistry practices involved a variety of production and household procedures, from the various modes of cooking food to options for food preservation, the preparation of fermented beverages, the use of paints and dyes, the production of pottery, the obtainment of metals from ores, the preparation of medicines and cosmetics and various others.

In general, these practices utilised locally available materials, whose properties were recognised at a certain moment and found viable for some applications; the corresponding information was then transmitted from one generation to another. Thus, the techniques often vary from one culture to another, while the categories of products (preserved food, cosmetics, medicines, paints, dyes, clay objects, metal objects, etc.) are mostly similar.

Information about protochemistry practices can be highly fascinating for learners. It highlights how chemistry has been part of humankind development since its early stages, and

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4. Enquiries about the nature of substances, the causes of their properties, the nature of observed transformations and the nature of matter in general.

simultaneously, it trains learners to recognise the presence of chemistry in many familiar operations and processes, by training them to identify chemistry-related aspects out of the classroom. The presentation of protochemistry practices may also become:

- A component of the incorporation of information about the history of chemistry into chemistry teaching – an approach that is increasingly recommended to provide better foundations to chemistry understanding<sup>5</sup>.
- A way to stimulate learners' attention and reflection (Gagliardi 1988:291-296), thus fostering creativity.

As previously recalled, chemistry has two fundamental components: the investigation part, which produces new experimental information and improves models, interpretations and techniques; and the application part, which relates to production processes and, therefore, also relates more directly to everyday life through its products. Both components – and their interplay – are important within a historical perspective in chemistry education. While the history of theories and models pertains mostly to a global perspective, the history of applications and the history of public interpretations and perceptions comprise both global and local major components (Mammino 2012).

## ■ The fundamental *leitmotiv* – The nature of chemistry

The key concept *leitmotiv* (the thread that guides and links everything that concerns chemistry) is the nature of chemistry as the science of substances; it is fundamental for relating chemistry practices and chemistry learning, as well as everyday experience and chemistry learning. Chemistry investigates substances, their properties, their behaviours, and their transformations<sup>6</sup>.

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5. 'A lack of historical perspective can result in a distorted view of chemistry', Kauffman 1987:931; its teaching is also given attention by chemical societies (e.g. Bartomeu-Sanchez 2006).

6. What happens when two or more substances come into contact.

In everyday life, substances and materials find uses determined by their properties. Thus, the recognition of the properties of a substance or a material is a form of chemistry: it is actually a form of experimental chemistry, because it is based on observations. This provides the conceptual basis not only for understanding what chemistry is but also for recognising its presence in traditional practices as well as in everyday life experience.

A historical perspective does not view a sharp boundary between traditional and modern, because many aspects of the latter are developed from the former. The famous painters of the Italian Renaissance prepared their own paints and largely referred to traditional knowledge about natural sources of colours. Early industrial production processes utilised the components of traditional knowledge that were recognised to be more suitable to be adapted to large-scale production.

A historical perspective does not view a discipline in isolation from the rest of human development. Therefore, it also stresses the relationships between changes in everyday life and the fallouts of the nature of chemistry. Finding new uses for known substances, or discovering new substances, leads to new products that can be utilised in everyday life, thus changing some aspects of it. By impacting on everyday life, this also impacts on people's perceptions. Thus, chemistry impacts on culture (Jackson & Al-Aboutdi Sandia 2011).

## ■ **Traditional sciences and traditional chemistry in research and in the classroom**

The ability to impact on culture is true for all the sciences. When sciences are considered in relation to specific cultures, they are called *ethnoscience*s. D'Ambrosio (1977:267-274) saw ethnoscience as 'the study of scientific and, by extension, technological phenomena in direct relation to their social economic and cultural backgrounds'. It may be recalled that *ethnos* entails the concept of *people* in relation to



culture – whereas *demos* refer to *people* as a political group, thus having entered terms such as *democracy*. Specific sciences are called ethnomathematics, ethnochemistry, ethnobotany, ethnoastronomy, ethnoagriculture, et cetera. Ethnochemistry is defined as ‘the study of chemical ideas found in any culture, where an appreciation of cultural heritage is preserved’ (Wikipedia n.d.).

Ethnoscience is an object of active investigation not only from a historical/anthropological point of view, but also for the intrinsic value of the information that their study can disclose. The most intensive and widely spread investigation of traditional knowledge concerns plants utilised in traditional medicine, as they are expected to yield lead compounds that are of interest in the development of new effective drugs. Many drugs currently in use were derived from traditional medicine; common examples are aspirin and the two powerful antimalarials, quinine and artesunate. The need for new drugs is made more urgent by the resistance to current drugs developed by pathogens such as *Plasmodium falciparum* (responsible for the most dangerous form of malaria) or *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (responsible for tuberculosis). Molecules from plants traditionally utilised for medicinal purposes are particularly interesting because they are already known not only to have a certain type of activity but also to be compatible with a living organism and to be able to reach their biological/molecular target within a living organism. Besides medicine-related investigations, there are other types of information that can be valuable also for modern science or for the design of viable ways to meet some of the challenges of our times. For instance, Rist and Dahdouh-Guebas (2006:467) considered that information on traditional ways of doing things can be valuable for the design of viable resource-management options for sustainable development and explicitly view this design as an opportunity to constructively integrate modern science and IK. Traditional agricultural practices are also expected to contribute information relevant to modern-day management of plantations and crops (e.g. Aumeeruddy & Pinglo 1989), and

traditional food may open new perspectives both for agriculture and for sustainability (e.g. Turner et al. 2011).

The awareness of the significance of traditional sciences and the awareness of the dichotomy between the way science is often presented in class and the learners' culture has been prompting increasing interest in the incorporation of traditional sciences into science curricula. Earlier works set the bases of concepts that were further developed and led to practical explorations. D'Ambrosio (2006) saw ethnomathematics as a link between tradition and modernity. The potentialities of integrating ethnochemistry into chemistry teaching are gaining increasing attention (Rahmawati, Ridwan & Nurbalaly 1917).

In sub-Saharan Africa, pioneering work was done by Gerdes (1994, 1995, 2014), who prompted pedagogically oriented studies in what he termed 'African scientific heritage' in Mozambique, focusing largely on ethnomathematics, and also including a synopsis of the then-ongoing research in ethnochemistry. In her review of his work, Hyland (1994) stressed its most important pedagogical aspects, which are relevant for all ethnosciences: seeking 'educational systems more firmly grounded in traditional African experience and practice', emphasising 'the importance of cultural compatibility in pedagogical methods', recognising 'the alienation of present African educational theory and practice from the African population and their cultural identity' and examining practical applications of the IK specifically in view of incorporating them into formal teaching to develop a 'culture-oriented curriculum'.

Abonyi, Achimugu Njoku and Ijok Adibe (2014:52) stressed that existing instructional approaches perpetuate 'a lack of understanding regarding indigenous fields of knowledge and cognition' and contribute 'to poor concept formation and attitude among beginners to science'. They refer to Adesoji and Akpan (1991) as recalling that:

[A] tragedy of science education in Africa which children and adults have shared is that it has not always paid attention to the culture of

the Africans both in methods and materials. [*They provide a*] rationale for integration of ethnoscience into formal science classrooms, [*envisaging a role in which ethnoscience contributes to linking the learners' familiar reality to modern science:*] Because ethnoscience deals with the knowledge indigenous to a culture, it serves as a base for the construction of reality by linking culture to advanced scientific knowledge. (p. 70)

The dominant objective in all these works is that of linking traditional cultures to modern scientific knowledge. A major pedagogical value responds to the broad objective of establishing links between what is done in the classroom and the reality with which learners are familiar.

In cultures that have so far remained comparatively closer to their origins, many practices that could generally be considered as early chemistry practices are still present or have remained present in a past so recent that their memory is still fresh. Therefore, they belong to what learners are familiar with. Considering their chemistry features/components becomes a way of relating the gradual learning of chemistry to an important component of the reality with which learners are familiar. The other worldwide-common important component of everyday reality is the use of modern chemical products. While references to modern products have the role of relating chemistry to everyday life, references to traditional practices have both this role and the additional role of linking chemistry to the learners' cultural heritage, thus inducing a perception of shared 'ownership', while overcoming or removing the perception of it being something alien.

## ■ Attention to traditional practices and active learning

Active learning – learners' active engagement in the learning process, through active engagement with the content with which they come into contact – is widely viewed as an optimal option to favour understanding and counteract tendencies of passive

memorisation (Hinde & Kovac 2001:93; Kovac 1999:120-124; Oliver-Hoyo et al. 2012:45-50; Paulson 1999:1136-1140; Pinto Cañon 2007; Prince 2004:223-231; Vera et al. 2006:227-236). Light (2001, reported in Oliver-Hoyo et al. 2012) proved that one of the crucial factors in educational development is the extent to which the learner is actively engaged in his university experience. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, cited in Oliver-Hoyo et al. 2012) concluded that the greater the engagement in academic work and academic experience, the greater the level of knowledge acquisition and of cognitive development in general.

Active learning may take a variety of forms, and the approaches need to be tuned to the characteristics of each specific group of students and to their environment or context. Investigating traditional practices involving chemistry aspects can become an optimal component of learners' active engagement in chemistry courses. By simultaneously entailing a new way of looking at the learners' cultural heritage and a new way of looking at chemistry, it is apt to stimulate positive perceptions about both.

## ■ The roots of African chemistry

### ■ The roots of chemistry

Chemistry as a science has its cradle in Africa, as the study of substances through intensive laboratory investigations first developed within Arab alchemy. Furthermore, Arab alchemists derived part of the knowledge about substances from ancient Egypt's often-secret knowledge. Many practices of ancient Egypt – as described in papyruses – constitute typical protochemistry examples (Hoffmann 2011).

Alchemy spread to Europe through contacts between Arab and European scholars and through translations of the works of leading Arab alchemists into Latin – the then *lingua franca* for academia and intellectual activities all over Europe. This started the powerful stream of experimental and interpretation work that developed into modern chemistry. Many chemistry terms

(including words such as *alcohol* or *alembic*) still recall their Arab origins, while the *chem* stem appears to have originated in ancient Babylon, spread to ancient Egypt and then entered the term *alchemy*.

## ■ **Chemistry practices within sub-Saharan Africa indigenous knowledge systems**

Like all other cultures, sub-Saharan African cultures are rich in chemistry-related traditional practices. Investigating them is part of the rediscovery and appreciation of IK ('indigenous knowledge systems' [IKS]). The investigation of plants utilised in traditional medicine is particularly intensive, for the reasons explained previously: African flora has enormous potential as a source of new drugs (Dhawan 2003:97-98; Kinghorn 2005:431-441). The knowledge of the properties of many individual plants is embedded in IKS. The search for the compounds responsible for the activities relies on the methods and instruments of modern chemistry and so does the possibility of deriving new molecular structures from the natural ones. By virtue of its accumulated experimental knowledge, IKS has an initialisation role for a number of chemical studies aimed at drug development.

Everyday (non-medical) traditional practices incorporate a variety of chemical aspects that can be easily identified and presented within teaching/learning activities. For instance, the author and one of her students have been gathering information about everyday chemistry practices among the Vhavenda, focusing on common-life practices (Mammimo & Tshiwawa 2013, 2017). It was possible to identify several of them in a comparatively short time, because their knowledge is still fully present in the communities and many people know them and sometimes utilise them. The practices considered include the use of different soils to obtain paints of different colours for house decoration, for the decoration of other artefacts and also as a temporary hair dye, the use of pig fat as skin moisturiser, the use of different plants for different purposes (dyeing other objects made of grass,

softener of hides prepared for clothing, use as shampoo, used for brushing teeth and freshening the mouth, use as mosquito repellent, and many others), the purification of salt (the salt [NaCl] mined from salt pans was purified through a recrystallisation process), the production of a form of yeast from fermented maize, fermentation and distillation techniques to produce alcoholic drinks.

The investigation of non-medical chemistry-related practices is not limited to classroom interests. For instance, the *Lippia javanica* plant was traditionally used as a mosquito repellent among the Vhavenda, and its extracts are now sold commercially for the same purpose in the form of candles (Maharaj et al. 2008). Cases of this type, in turn, have significant pedagogical value, as they highlight the existence of potentialities of modern applications of traditional chemical knowledge; furthermore, they are in line with the relevance ascribed to the utilisation of products of natural origin within sustainable development perspectives. The relevance of the presentation of household traditional chemical practices for chemistry education is also highlighted by Said-Ador (2017).

## ■ Practical aspects for classroom work

This section considers some practical questions about the operational aspects of the incorporation of information on traditional chemistry practices into chemistry courses, such as its place within the overall course or the ways in which the incorporation can be more beneficial and constructive. Some possible options are briefly outlined.

### ■ When, where and how?

The incorporation of information on traditional chemistry-related practices can be interesting at all levels of instruction, from younger ages to university. The difference will lie in the ways in which it is realised to better respond to the characteristics of

different ages and the requirements of different learning objectives, contents, and approaches.

At the pre-university level, traditional practices with which learners are expected to be familiar can serve as references to everyday life on introducing new chemistry concepts. Just as combustion is widely used as a suitable reference to introduce the *chemical reaction* concept (Mammino 1994a, 2003), other familiar practices can be suitable for other concepts. Within interactive teaching options, the teacher may ask learners if they are familiar with a certain practice, then inform them that the technique involved has a certain chemical name and then proceed to present the chemical content planned for the given session. Starting with a reference to something familiar influences the learners' attitude, counteracting the frequent expectation that the content would be something abstract and attracting their interest by awakening their attention. This is already occurring for some concepts. For instance, the preparation of traditional alcoholic beverages appears to be a preferred reference for the introduction of distillation. Thus, some teachers in the Venda region would start the teaching of distillation by asking students whether they have heard of *thothotho* (a traditional beverage with high alcohol content), then inform that the technique used in its preparation is called distillation and then proceed to explain the chemical aspects of distillation. A similar approach was mentioned by a student from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The reference is suitable for many other contexts, as household preparation of highly alcoholic beverages has been traditional in many countries on different continents. Explorations of integrating ethnochemistry into the teaching of separation techniques in Nigeria (Ajayi, Achor & Agogo 2017) and in Zambia (Siwale, Singh & Hayumbu 2020) highlighted enhancement of learners' achievements and positive attitudes.

At the university level, the attention to traditional practices may be part of students' projects within courses such as the first-year general chemistry course. Years ago, the author used to ask students taking the first-year general chemistry course at the

University of Venda (UNIVEN) to prepare small individual projects on topics of their choice. Some students chose projects related to one or another of the local traditional practices, and the research involved in those projects proved particularly engaging, prompting enthusiasm and the desire to share the information that they had found (Mammino 2012:147-158).

Activities related to traditional practices can be easily integrated into the practical work at all levels of instruction – parallel to laboratory work, or as part of it, where laboratories are present, or as the sole practical work where laboratories are not present. An option analogous to the one put forward by Marasinghe (2012, 2013, 2016), that is, the presence of a specific unit devoted to traditional chemistry-related practices, might prove particularly beneficial once suitable material is prepared. The initial step for all these options is the identification of an adequate number of traditional practices embedding chemistry aspects in the learners' community so that the teacher may have an adequate ensemble of practices to use as references or to present in detail.

Learners may be invited to *discover* or report additional practices, including local modifications of more broadly used practices, and they will surely be fascinated and enthralled by the activity. Even a simple search may disclose an entire world of chemistry presence, thus turning chemistry into a real-life subject. At the same time, the research character inherent in such activities contributes to stimulating observation and critical thinking abilities. It would be research in the full meaning of the concept, and it will have an important role in contributing to collect and preserve information (part of which might disappear with generation turnover, as is happening in many other cultures). Once an adequate amount of information is collected, it may be utilised to prepare resource material that will be useful both for the teachers and for the learners.

References within teaching materials are particularly important. Abonyi et al. (2014) specifically noted the absence of



attention to the culture of the Africans in teaching materials. Yet, several aspects are suitable for inclusion into general-type teaching materials (i.e. not only into material specifically devoted to traditional practices but also into the course textbook). Some of them, such as the traditional smelting techniques, are so interesting in terms of early understanding of important chemical phenomena that they have been used in textbooks in Italy (Mammino 1994b, 2003); it is difficult to understand why they are not yet utilised in textbooks meant for African students (Mammino 2012).

## ■ The importance of hands-on aspects

The search for information about chemistry practices among the Vhavenda (Mammino & Tshiwawa 2017:221) has shown the paramount importance of direct experience, of seeing the operations performed by somebody who knows how to perform them in the traditional way using traditional tools. This feature is common to all practical chemistry learning, where hands-on approaches play essential roles to stimulate real familiarisation with how to do things and what happens while doing them. On the other hand, it is not likely that all – or even most – chemistry teachers have the know-how of the operational components of traditional practices. In such cases, it is important to identify resource persons from the community who are available to perform the operations in an *educational* way. The author and her student/co-author were particularly fortunate in this regard, because the elderly person who showed them the operations had been a primary school teacher and accompanied each operation she was showing with explanations characterised by high-level pedagogical flair.

The fact that resource persons from the community help demonstrate traditional practices within the school context would have the additional benefit of stressing links between the school and the community, and between modern knowledge and

IK, in a framework (the school setup) apt to highlight the value of both. The pedagogical benefits are self-evident.

Current chemistry techniques can also be utilised to show some properties of traditional materials that can be highlighted easily. For instance, a baking powder having the same action as baking soda is prepared traditionally by the Vhavenda from the stem of a certain plant, burnt together with corn cobs (Mammino & Tshiwawa 2017). Within a chemistry-learning setup, after the powder is prepared in the traditional way, a small amount can be dissolved in water and tested with an indicator to verify whether it has a basic character like the commercial baking soda or even to compare their basicity. Indicators can actually also be prepared from suitable indigenous berries, thus further highlighting the presence of 'chemistry' in the surrounding.

## ■ Language aspects

Specific attention to the issue of the language of instruction and of the learning difficulties inherent in second language instruction (Benson 2004; Brock-Utne & Hopson 2005; Brock-Utne & Skattum 2009; Mammino 2010, 2013; Qorro 2013) would be beyond the scope of this chapter. On the other hand, it is important to note that the use of a language different from the mother tongue to learn and express modern science heavily contributes to the perception that modern science is alien to local cultures (Mammino 2006). Language is so closely related to culture that what is not expressed in a given language cannot be perceived as pertaining or being related to the corresponding culture.

The mode of introducing information on traditional practices into chemistry courses may bring an additional contribution to counteract the alien-ness perception if the indigenous terms for materials, operations and products are maintained. This is particularly important for plants and also for other natural materials such as different types of soils, or cow-dung and other

animal-derived materials. Utilising the indigenous terms together with the English ones contributes to the recognition of the significance of the chemical heritage in the learners' culture.

Furthermore, resource persons from the community may not be English-speaking. This should not be a reason for excluding them. A simultaneous translation into English can be organised, and the fact that a resource person provides explanations in her own language within a school setup would implicitly convey the message that the local language can express scientific information.

## ■ **Learners' perceptions**

Only a few interviews have so far been conducted by the author with learners who have experienced some presence of information on IK within chemistry courses. The information mentioned more often is the reference to the preparation of alcoholic beverages as an introduction to the explanation of distillation. Even such quick mention fostered a perception that learners qualify as 'pride' at the realisation that practices traditional to their community and culture can be related to modern science. This is fully consistent with Marasinghe's findings (2012, 2013) about the paramount influence of this realisation on the attitudes of Papua and New Guinea learners.

Pride was also evident in the way UNIVEN first-year students who had chosen projects related to traditional practices were explaining the practices to their teachers (Mammino 2012). It is easy to understand how, from an emotional point of view, this type of pride may become the key to a new interest in the sciences.

## ■ **Local and global in traditional practices**

Traditional practices may be typical of one community or recurrent across many communities, in and out of Africa. Information about chemistry-related practices may highlight this

aspect by including traditional practices from other parts of Africa, above all when they are suitable for chemistry explanations, and by comparing practices from different communities, in and out of Africa.

An example of possible interesting comparisons across Africa can consider the traditional techniques for smelting copper and iron. Although the production of metals from their ores is not likely to be part of the traditional techniques that learners have encountered, it is interesting to include it into the information on traditional chemistry practices because it is a case of traditional technology involving a remarkable degree of chemistry sophistication, as the metal needs to be reduced by charcoal in a furnace. Comparisons may involve the different types of smelting furnaces designed in different cultures or the protoassaying techniques utilised, such as those developed for the traditional smelting of copper from its ores in Zambia, to know when the copper was ready in the nearly closed smelting furnace (Mammino 2012). The active learning component may include literature (e.g. Friede & Steel 1975:221; Kusel 1974:246-249; Mccosh 1979:155-170 for the North-Eastern part of South Africa) or archive search (e.g. the archives of some industries), so that learners are engaged in finding at least part of the information on their own.

Comparisons may also involve basically similar practices from different continents. For instance, a plant (*Dicerocaryum zanguebaricum*) was used as soap in the Vhavenda community (Mammino & Tshiwawa 2017). Another plant (*Saponaria officinalis*) was used in Northern Italy for the same purpose in periods or conditions in which soap was not easily accessible, including some periods during World War II. The traditional practice is the same; it just involves different plants, as each community primarily uses what is available in the surrounding environment. The information about similarities of practices is important for learners to develop the awareness of the similarities in the ways in which human beings relate to their environment, make observations and identify properties and then utilise materials on

the basis of those properties. Modern chemistry may captivatingly play a role by analysing the extracts of the two plants and verifying whether the compounds producing the soapiness (tensioactive compounds) are the same or closely related in terms of molecular structures, or totally different. This would also contribute to highlight how modern chemistry can help understand the scientific bases of traditional practices.

Some materials are available in many communities and may find similar or different utilisation in different communities. For instance, pig fat was used as a skin moisturiser in the Vhavenda community. The author's grandfather used it to prepare rosemary-based ointments to relieve swellings before fixing sprains. Students may be invited to find other uses in other communities, mostly through literature search. Other chemistry-related questions may focus on the possible reasons for the choice specifically of pig fat and not the fat of other animals for these purposes.

Comparisons may also expand to history by considering protochemistry and ethnochemistry practices for a given product worldwide and identifying similarities and differences. This may stimulate two main perceptions: the above-mentioned perception about the similarities in the ways in which human beings develop utilisations of materials on the basis of their properties and the perception of the role that ethnochemistry practices can play for a better understanding of early or historic practices. For instance, the author was particularly impressed by the way in which archive photos about all the details of traditional production of iron and copper in Zambia gave her a huge concreteness perception regarding the understanding of ancient mining and ore-treatment practices.

## ■ **Additional information relevant to the study of traditional practices**

The value of IK may be further stressed through information about the importance of protecting communities' rights to it. This is particularly relevant for ethnochemical knowledge,

because it comprises knowledge of materials from which commercially viable products (including drugs, food supplements, cosmetics and others) can be developed. Usually, the development involves two components: the initial knowledge provided by indigenous communities and the chemists' work leading to the identification of a lead compound and to further development by designing synthetic production routes or modifying the molecule of the lead compound to improve its properties. The benefits should be shared by the community that provided the initial knowledge and the persons or bodies that made the further developments. In the words of Abramova and Greer (2013), 'any effort where drugs, supplements, and other high-value products have been developed as an outgrowth of ethnochemical knowledge should acknowledge the community from which the knowledge originated'.

It is important to provide basic information about these aspects to learners, as this emphasises the value of the traditional knowledge of their community and also generates the awareness of rights that need to be protected. It becomes part of the overall training as future citizens of their communities.

## ■ What is part of chemical heritage?

The history of chemistry – when viewed comprehensively – does not only include the development of the technologies but also include the development of the experimental and modelling activities. It also includes information about the public's perceptions, about explanations and interpretations from the public, or from people engaged in certain types of production activities such as miners or farmers. These interpretations were often different from those of the scientists, but are interesting as part of the overall picture of the relationships of human beings with substances and materials. For the history of European chemistry and other experimental sciences, many interpretations and beliefs of this type are included in the huge eight-volume work by Lynn Thorndike (1923–1958).

In a similar way, research on the chemical heritage of a culture/community can expand to include stories of beliefs about the properties of the substances and materials traditionally utilised, or about how and why certain uses started (Mammino 2012). This would also contribute to a broader perception of the long history of the relationships of human beings with the substances they use and to a more holistic perception of human intellectual and imaginative activities, crossing borders between disciplines.

A number of traditional practices closely related to beliefs are suitable for comparisons across different cultures worldwide. Even practices that do not appear – at first glance – as chemistry-related may find chemical explanations through modern science. For instance, Vogt et al. (2002:485) investigated possible links between plant secondary metabolism and lunar phases on the basis of traditional agricultural practices and related beliefs in Latin America. Traditions of this type are widely spread and have prompted a number of investigations, most of them chemistry-related (e.g. Brown & Chow 1973:265; Dorda 2004:29-44; Semmens 1947:613; Zürcher et al. 1998:665). For some of these beliefs, it would not be difficult to perform experiments even in situations without laboratories. For instance, taking into account the phases of the moon when choosing the appropriate time for a number of agricultural works was traditional also in Northern Italy. Many years ago, the author of this chapter made several experiments with plants such as different types of lettuce which are supposed to be seeded when the moon is waning) and green beans which supposed to be seeded when the moon is waxing), planting them in both lunar phases and observing their growth, and the traditional beliefs proved realistic. Similar experiments could be performed anywhere where such traditions exist, informing students that plant growth is based on chemical phenomena and that, therefore, if they observe some regular effects, there is a chemical component involved. Examples like this increase the importance of knowing or studying traditional beliefs, as some of them may stimulate research that sheds new light on some phenomena. Therefore, collecting information

about traditional interpretations and beliefs about substances, materials or phenomena that may have chemistry components is interesting not only for folklore studies: it may prompt interesting new investigations.

Students may be easily involved in this research if teachers stimulate the research and show respect for the interpretation or beliefs that they may find in their communities and relate them in the class or within projects. The research might also be ideal for cross-disciplinary activities between chemistry and humanities. Cross-disciplinarity may enable the scope to become as broad as that postulated by Tasič (2012) for ethnobotany, ranging from practical uses to the way in which the knowledge was first discovered or transmitted and to the uses related to rituals and celebrations.

## ■ Conclusion

Chemistry is a science that will largely shape the future, also because of the contributions that it can bring to make development sustainable. For this to be realised to its full potentialities, it is important that each country has an adequate number of well-prepared chemists and that citizens have an adequate level of chemical literacy. Thus, chemistry learning should not be perceived as a heavy duty from which to escape as soon as school regulations allow it, but as something that attracts learners' attention, engages their minds and involves them emotionally. Actively involving learners in the study of chemistry-related practices may simultaneously contribute to a positive perception on their side and to accruing and preserving information destined to enrich the knowledge of African chemistry heritage.

Linking chemistry learning to learners' culture may be one of the most effective options to foster interest and, possibly, passion for chemistry. In the words of a Nobel laureate, knowing about the chemistry components of a culture 'forms a natural bridge between chemists and non-chemists, between chemistry and



culture' (Hoffmann 2011). In the African context, it would also contribute to foster a shift from perceiving chemistry as somebody else's science to the awareness that it was present in the indigenous cultures through a number of practices and techniques. Then, chemistry learning can be rooted in the learners' culture, promoting positive attitudes towards chemistry and towards what chemistry can do to build a sustainable future.

## ■ Summary

Van Brakel (1997) pointed out that 'chemistry is the science of substances: it studies their properties and their transformations'. It has two major components: the investigation component and the applied component. The applied component has accompanied humankind development since the very beginning and is present in all communities and cultures. Knowing about it is part of the history of chemistry and also of the linkages between chemistry and everyday life and between chemistry and culture. African indigenous cultures contain a variety of chemistry-related practices. The incorporation of information about these practices within chemistry teaching has potential educational benefits. Implementation pathways to this purpose ought to comprise learners' active engagement in the recognition and investigation of the chemistry aspects of traditional practices. Collaboration between natural and human scientists is important to maximise the quality and extent of this investigation and the ensuing pedagogical benefits.

# Indigenous Knowledge education in library and information studies/science schools in Africa

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## ■ Introduction

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) has attracted several inclusive and exclusive definitions. Among the inclusive definitions is a UNESCO (2017) definition stating that:

Local and Indigenous Knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories

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of interaction with their natural surroundings [...] For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. [*Indigenous*] knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual, and spirituality. (p. 1)<sup>7</sup>

Stevens (2008) adds:

[I]t provides the basis for local-level decision-making about many fundamental aspects of day-to-day life, for example, hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture and husbandry, food production, water, health, and adaptation to environmental or social change. Non-formal knowledge - in contrast to formal knowledge - is [*transmitted*] orally, from generation to generation, and is seldom documented. (p. 26)

For Grenier, proposing an inclusive or broader definition, IK 'is the unique, traditional, local knowledge [existing] within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographical area' (Grenier 1998:1). Mawere (2015) emphasised the concept of 'intangible heritage' within IK, which is expressed by authenticity, spirituality and symbolism. Citing Deacon, Chabata and Chiwaura add other social values, such as language, oral traditions', taboo, 'rituals, music, dance, art, folklore, riddles and idioms, and cultural spaces, such as architecture (e.g. Egyptian pyramids), that significantly distinguish particular IK or traditional knowledge from others. Ocholla and Onyancha (2005:247), in turn, viewed IK as a 'dynamic archive of the sum total of knowledge, skills and attitudes belonging to a community over generations, and expressed in the form of action, object and sign languages for sharing'. Thus, inclusive definitions are broader or more comprehensive.

Exclusive definitions tend to be narrow or particular and emphasise aspects such as environment, culture, education and particular communities that are native to particular physical

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7. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/links/related-information/what-is-local-and-indigenous-knowledge/#topPage>

spaces/geographical locations but still keep most of their cultural traditions (e.g. native Americans, Aborigines, Masai and Khoi). For example, Eyssartier, Ladio and Lozada (2008) pointed out that IK:

[I]s a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief evolving by adaptive processes and handed down to succeeding generations by cultural transmission about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environments. (n.p.)

Similarly, Kincheloe and Semali (1999) portrayed IK as:

The dynamic way in which the residents of an area have come to understand themselves in relationship to their environment and how they organise the folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives. (p. 3)

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2003) earlier defined IK as:

[K]nowledge that is held and used by a people who identify themselves as indigenous of a place, based on a combination of cultural distinctiveness and prior territorial occupancy, relative to a more recently arrived population with its own distinct and subsequently dominant culture. (art. 1)

This definition sheds light on who should be called indigenous, which is open to debate as some people who have lived longer in a geographical area often consider themselves more indigenous than those who settle in the area after them. Stevenson (1996:280) linked IK to Aboriginal people by claiming that a more appropriate term for the 'knowledge, experiences, wisdom, and philosophies that aboriginal people can bring to bear on environmental assessment and management is "Indigenous Knowledge"<sup>8</sup>). In summary, it seems to this author that IK is traditional and often authentic knowledge handed down from generation to generation. Thus, indigenous or traditional knowledge can thrive in every community on earth, but the degree of fusion varies because of several factors.

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8. See Stevenson (1996:280).

There is a growing interest in IK for many reasons. Fundamentally, about 80% of the African population still refers to IK as the knowledge for solving a myriad of problems that modern knowledge cannot solve, particularly concerning traditional/herbal medicine for healing (Mosimege 2005), among other uses such as food security. A World Bank (1998) study noted that:

IK is unique to a particular culture and society. It is the basis for local decision-making in agriculture, health, natural resource management and other activities. IK is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals. It is essentially tacit knowledge that is not easily codifiable. (p. iv)

The World Bank (1998) report has also noted that IK is largely an underutilised resource in the developmental process and that IK improves local conditions, when what local communities know and have is understood and considered. This understanding enables informed responses to local needs, enhances the impact and sustainability of development assistance, enriches cross-cultural understanding and promotes the cultural dimension of development when shared among communities (World Bank 1998) across all areas of the world. Thus, 'knowledge provides the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities, especially the poor' (World Bank 1998:iv). In LIS, IK education should enable the recognition, understanding, appreciation, documentation, promotion, dissemination and use of IK, while *inter alia* tackling decolonisation issues. There does not seem to have been much work done to establish the status and challenges of IK education by LIS schools, except a recent study by Ngulube (2017) whose purpose and focus, however, were largely different from the focus of this study.

This study explores IK education within LIS schools in Africa to answer the following questions:

1. Is IK education in LIS schools necessary?
2. Who should offer IK education, in terms of an academic unit/department/faculty or school?
3. Who currently offers IK education?
4. Why is it being offered by the academic unit or discipline?

5. Who should be targeted for IK education?
6. How long should IK education take in LIS curricula?
7. At what level of learning should it be offered (e.g. UG and PG)?
8. What IK contents should be taught?
9. What are the challenges and opportunities for IK education?

## ■ Indigenous Knowledge education: Theoretical perspectives

Indigenous Knowledge education should be viewed as an emancipatory transformative education that is anchored by critical theory (Held 1980), critical theory of education (Kellner 2003), dependency theory (Ghosh 2019) and Afrikology epistemology (Nabudere 2011). Thus, ‘a critical theory provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination [such as imperialism and neo-colonialism] and increasing freedom in all their forms [...]’, and based on Horkheimer’s definition it has to ‘explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation’.<sup>9</sup> A critical theory of education is about (Kellner 2019):

[D]emocratising and reconstructing education to meet the challenges of a global and technological society’ [... and] ‘indicates what traditional aspects of education should be overcome and what alternative pedagogies and principles should reconstruct education in the present age. (p. 1)

Dependency theory’s major concern is ‘with the impact of imperialism and neo-colonialism on the economies and society of LDCs’ (Ghosh 2019:n.p.). Referring to ‘the nature of dependency and exploitation’, Ghosh highlighted 10 types of dependencies that include academic dependency (e.g. the education system, curricula, knowledge systems and academic information sources)

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9. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/>

and cultural dependency, which are closely linked to the focus of this chapter, particularly about the marginalisation of IK and IK education.

For Nabudere (2011):

Afrikology seeks to retrace the evolution of knowledge and wisdom from its source to the current epistemologies and tries to situate them in their historical and cultural contexts, especially with a view to establishing a new science for generating and accessing knowledge for sustainable use. (p. 4)

In doing so, it traces the origin, development and transformation of African indigenous/traditional knowledge and its link with other types of knowledge from antiquity (e.g. Ethiopian and Egyptian civilisations) to the present time. The four theoretical perspectives comprise emancipation, transformation, liberation, empowerment, and social justice. They are largely rooted in neo-Marxist radical paradigms, which constitute theoretical lenses for analysing IK education. The main tenet is an understanding that it is possible to challenge and interrogate the marginalisation of IK most convincingly.

Indigenous Knowledge education is about recognising, understanding and appreciating indigenous and cultural forms of maintaining a livelihood and development. Indigenous Knowledge education is important for demystifying IK marginalisation and developing it into a formidable part of knowledge, particularly knowledge management, for the development, application, and improvement of indigenous wisdom in our society. Promoting decolonisation techniques has been addressed by eminent African scholars, such as Paulin J. Hountondji, Ali Mazrui, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Odera Oruka and Kwesi Kwaa Prah. Decolonisation cannot occur without the integration of IK into university education or curricula in general and into LIS education in particular. Marginalisation, in this context, refers to exclusions such as those related to learning, teaching and research. Ocholla (2007:3), writing on the marginalisation of IK, argued that while IK is inseparable from

other types of knowledge, 'IK marginalisation has occurred over the years and has retarded its development and integration'. A recent example of marginalisation is the discovery of *Artemisia* or *umhlonyane* (in Nguni languages) in Madagascar for possible coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) treatment. This resulted in some controversy, because the herb had not yet been 'tested for efficacy and adverse side effects', as the World Health Organization (WHO) prescribes,<sup>10</sup> and following apparent support for its development by South Africa.<sup>11</sup>

Among many reasons in Ocholla's (2007:3) argument, marginalisation has occurred because of the misconception and misunderstanding of IK, which stems from its characteristics, particularly its documentation/non-codification, dependence on oral transmission and the memory of its beholders, limited transferability/sharing, embedded in 'the culture, traditions, ideology, language and religion' or spirituality of a particular community, the inability to universalise or globalise it as 'it is mostly rural, commonly practised among poor communities', making it unsustainable in multicultural, urban and economically stable societies. Ultimately, Ocholla (2007) emphasised that IK has been associated with poverty, deprivation, illiteracy and ridicule, with phrases such as:

[A]s 'primitive', 'backward', 'archaic', 'outdated', 'pagan' and 'barbaric'. This demeaning reference to the knowledge has slowed down its integration with other forms of knowledge, commonly referred to as 'scientific', 'Western', 'conventional' or 'modern knowledge' (largely products of explicit knowledge '[or documented knowledge]'). (p. 3)

These phrases have had confounding effects on the adoption of IK in educational settings, which would help its integration.

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10. See [https://www.afro.who.int/news/who-supports-scientifically-proven-traditional-medicine?gclid=CjwKCAjwm\\_P5BRAhEiwAwRzSOwgA3b2K7pCXykmJ8zJekbi-Jpm6W0X4K89wSw7l36WxzxdhjwQ6NB0Cjd0QAvD\\_BwE](https://www.afro.who.int/news/who-supports-scientifically-proven-traditional-medicine?gclid=CjwKCAjwm_P5BRAhEiwAwRzSOwgA3b2K7pCXykmJ8zJekbi-Jpm6W0X4K89wSw7l36WxzxdhjwQ6NB0Cjd0QAvD_BwE).

11. See <https://www.medicalbrief.co.za/archives/sa-traditional-medicine-researchers-examine-madagascars-cure-for-covid-19/>.



Most importantly, imperialism, modernisation, urbanisation, globalisation and technology have played major roles in IK's non-integration. Would that marginalisation have influenced the integration of IK in LIS education?

Indigenous Knowledge education as a whole (Kubow 2018; Mawere 2015; Ndille 2020) and in higher education institutions has also attracted attention. For example, Kubow's (2018) dualistic analysis compares a Eurocentric approach, based on Max Weber's:

[N]otion of an autonomous citizen within Western democratic states, with philosophical and cultural assumptions which operate in South Africa, where the individual is viewed as not separate from, but rather embedded in, the community into which one is born. (p. 1)

Kubow noted that '*ubuntu*', humanity epistemology, popularly expressed as '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' or 'a person is a person through relationship to others', echoes communalism, collectivism, compassion and togetherness in existence. This viewpoint not only affirms why IK education is necessary to provide a better understanding and appreciation of IK but also suggests what type of knowledge should be acquired in IK education. Thus, an epistemological approach to IK education should interrogate the dualism referred to by Kubow and provide a strong intellectual space for the philosophical analysis of *ubuntu* in the teaching and learning environment.

Some roles (eight roles) of IK in education were discussed by Munyaradzi Mawere (2015) – which can be examined by using the four theoretical perspectives at the beginning of this section, they are:

- Firstly, de-racialising African educational systems. The author cites eminent African scholars, such as Ali Mazrui, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Julius Nyerere who, several times, echo calls for the decolonisation of the curriculum, reduction of cultural dependency, bondage and imperialism, as well as learning in local languages (Prah 2017), to be fundamental. Also, Higgs (2016) used the term 'African renaissance in education' to discuss the decolonisation or indigenisation of knowledge

systems and transformative education that has been debated by many African scholars, largely at rhetorical levels.

- Secondly, promoting ‘innovative thinking provides the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities’ (Prah 2017). This refers to teaching and learning methods that enable student-centred learning, where personal experiences and knowledge are extensively embedded in the learning process.
- Thirdly, evaluating the effectiveness of conventional science and IK. It is important to mix or blend both and experiment with other methods, rather than relying largely on conventional learning methods, as is common in higher education institutions.
- Fourthly, motivating and generating interest in learners. The emphasis here is on learning from the ‘known to the unknown’, which is pedagogically sound and always exciting and interesting. Thus, learning that emanates from real life or known experience will be motivating.
- Fifthly, teaching language and instilling a sense of self-consciousness and cultural identity. Teaching in African languages (Prah 2017) is one of the most emotionally researched, discussed and debated aspects of the decolonisation of education and IK, for obvious reasons such as that language is the backbone of culture.
- Sixthly, promoting the dissemination of IK across cultures. The essence here is knowledge sharing in different ways, such as in medicine and healing, and agriculture.
- Seventhly, promoting the cultural dimension of development. Thus, ‘every culture is known for something distinctive and inimitable to it’.
- Lastly, promoting interpersonal relationships and reciprocal obligations. For example, individualism versus communalism and education or *ubuntu* epistemology that is based on communalism.

Kaya and Seleti (2013), citing Battiste, highlighted the integration of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) into higher education opportunities and referred to the opportunity to learn

appropriate community attitudes and values for sustainable livelihoods learning through culture:

[F]or example, folk stories, songs, folk drama, legends, proverbs, myths; and involving community knowledge holders in research, teaching, and learning, which enables students to learn across generations, thereby making them appreciate and respect the knowledge of elders and other community members. This way, higher education becomes a tool for cultural transfer through successive generations. (pp. 34-35)

Research on IK education highlights many epistemological, pedagogical, theoretical and practical challenges (Higgs 2016; Kaya & Seleti 2013; Prah 2017). There is a tendency to neglect national collaboration in favour of international collaboration and to use colonial languages that perpetuate the bond with our colonists at the expense of developing and using our indigenous languages. We tend to revel in Western or Eurocentric epistemology and pedagogy rather than developing our own, driven by participatory research teaching and learning with communities. We seem reluctant to replace or harmonise modern values with traditional knowledge, easily falling into the trap of dependency instead of exchange and engaging in rhetoric and inaction at the expense of action.

While there has been a lot of rhetoric and inaction, Kaya and Seleti (2013) reported on the successful introduction of IKS education at the North-West University (NWU), South Africa. There, IKS has been restored, developed and integrated into teaching, learning and research, largely through full-fledged undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that were inspired by the national IKS policy of 2004 (Mosimege 2005) and collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) IKS, with support from the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Kaya and Seleti (2013) reported that:

[A] professional four-year Bachelor of IKS (BIKS) [*that*] integrates both the natural and social sciences has been registered. The SADC Ministerial Conference on IKS Policy, which met in Seychelles in August 2009, adopted the BIKS programme to promote IKS regionally and

establish a network of staff and other resources for promoting the teaching, research and community engagement in the programme. (p. 35)

Kaya and Seleti (2013) recommended participatory teaching, learning and research, and the development of an African indigenous theory of 'knowledge'. Such knowledge, Kaya and Seleti (2013) clarify, would be:

[B]ased on the rich history of ideas and intellectual development in Africa and on strong institutional commitment, in terms of a conceptual understanding (on the part of the management) of the importance of AIKS in higher education, in human capital, finance and material support for the development of the various activities associated with AIKS in the core business of the institution. (p. 35)

The success of this sole full-fledged qualification programme in South Africa, and perhaps in Africa, provides an important IK education achievement for exploration, interrogation and adoption in higher education institutions (HEIs). However, this author does recognise that there could be IK education at our various campuses under different course titles and with similar contents that are not widely known.

## ■ Methodology

This study is grounded in interpretive (Thanh & Thanh 2015) and transformative (Romm 2015) epistemology or paradigms through qualitative research, involving literature review, a descriptive survey and the author's experiential knowledge as informed by related studies (Ndwande, Ocholla & Dube 2009; Ocholla 2009; Zungu & Ocholla 2019). Ordinarily, an interpretive paradigm/epistemology views the world from participants' perspectives, while a transformative paradigm is more about participation, emancipation, inclusivity, inequality and injustice. The study targeted LIS schools in the sub-Saharan Africa. Purposive sampling was used to identify major LIS schools in eastern, western and southern Africa. Ten responses of an expected 12 were received: from South Africa – the University of

South Africa (UNISA), University of Zululand and University of the Western Cape; from Nigeria – the University of Ibadan; from Kenya – the Technical University of Kenya and Moi University; from Uganda – Makerere University; from Namibia – the University of Namibia; and from Tanzania – the College of Business Education. The respondents were largely professors and academic leaders in the discipline (KM) from the LIS schools. Data collection involved sending out 10 open-ended questions – as in the study questions – on the landing page of an email message to the purposely selected LIS scholars/academics of LIS schools in the selected universities in the regions. An additional detailed open-ended questionnaire was attached to the email for detailed responses, largely in cases where IK education was offered in the LIS schools, to be completed by the academic teaching the IK course/module. All but one of the respondents used the 10 open-ended questions. Because the additional detailed questionnaire had more or less similar questions, responses to both instruments were collated using the 10 research questions. While writing this chapter, 10 responses were received from nine LIS schools and analysed by the 10 research themes, with full verbatim responses captured, as far as possible, in the next section following the successful use of such reporting system in a related study focusing on information ethics education in Africa (Ocholla 2009). It was expected that LIS schools that offer IK education would complete a course/module template capturing form as well. This, however, was not achieved as only one LIS School had a term-length module/course on IKS that is taught within a knowledge management semester-length module/course. The thematic representation and analysis of the responses are provided in the next section.

## ■ Research findings

The analysis focuses on 10 research questions and themes and the 10 verbatim responses informed by the successful use of a related approach (Ocholla 2009). The names of the respondents (P1-P10) and their affiliations have been concealed for reasons of privacy.

## ■ Is Indigenous Knowledge education in Library and Information Studies/Science schools necessary?

The necessity of IK education as a whole (Higgs 2016; Kaya & Seleti 2013; Kellner 2003; Mawere 2015; Mosimege 2005; Nabudere 2011) and in LIS education (Ngulube 2017) is acknowledged as an important contribution to educational endeavours in universities. The findings of the analysis include several themes. P1 concurred:

‘Yes. As information scientists transform into knowledge workers, training in IK is essential. The training is also essential because the role of knowledge, including IK, on economic development is getting more prominent.’ (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

U1 was sceptical and rebuffed the question:

‘Not really, because there are different aspects of IK, e.g. astrology, agriculture, health, etc., therefore, LIS schools do not have knowledge of these other fields. My view is that on IKS, as LIS schools, we should focus on the processes from acquisition to disposal.’ (U1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

Also, P2 submitted that ‘The trained student operates in an indigenous context, so they must understand the context and provide services that suit the context’ (P2, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P4 also concurred, admitting that it is necessary and emphasised that ‘graduates of LIS should be conversant and knowledgeable on IK since they will be custodians and disseminating information in various forms’ (P4, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P5 elaborated with an argument that:

‘[/]t would require more than just teaching IK and IK Management in LIS schools to make the knowledge of IK imparted to the LIS students impactful in African societies, beyond mere academic exercise. Those LIS graduates trained in IK and IK management would have an almost impossible task serving the IK needs of scholars and practitioners in other disciplines and fields, unless those other disciplines do integrate IK and its use into their curricula, to make them need the IK documentation and reference services that the LIS graduates trained in IK and IK management would be ready to provide.’ (P5, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

The #FeesMustFall movement in South Africa (Booyesen 2016) put the decolonisation agenda in the spotlight. In support of IK education, P6 emphasised that 'In addressing decolonisation in the curriculum, IK should become more visible' (P6, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P7 also concurred that it is 'Very necessary, one way to decolonise our LIS education is an emphasis on the creation, packaging, and sharing of IK that is undermined by Western models' (P7, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P8 supported the education and justified the support by stating that:

'Studies show that over 80% of African population still rely on IK for their various needs. Such popularity should be supported by IK education, where LIS is poised to play a major role in preparing students/future information providers, librarians and records managers in readiness to make IK accessible to its users largely through information collection development, records management and archiving, user education, research, publicity and promotion and use analysis for informed decision-making.' (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P9 expressed the concern that:

'A lot of scientific knowledge is linked to IK. To have a continuous inflow of IK into the scientific/technological knowledge, there is a need for documentation and professional management of IK for easy access and utilisation. Secondly, in most African communities, IK has remained relevant but is threatened with extinction due to lack of documentation and preservation for effective access.' (P9, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P10 also supported education.

Essentially, all the respondents to this question concurred that IK education is necessary but differed slightly on whether or not it should be offered by LIS schools alone, which is dealt with in the next question. For example, P2 was concerned that IK is multidisciplinary and may not be offered satisfactorily by LIS schools alone. The justification given for IK education by some respondents refers to the knowledge, information, and records management roles of LIS schools, which are reflected in their information, knowledge and archives and records management processes (Shongwe 2016). This raises a genuine concern.

## ■ Who should offer such education in terms of an academic unit/department/faculty/school?

All 10 responded to this question. P1 indicated that 'IK training should be domiciled in LIS, particularly in the stream [track] specialising in knowledge management' (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P2 argued that 'IKS is broad, as many fields of studies have elements of the subject. Therefore, each field of study should be responsible for their niche area' (P2, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). In contrast, P3 cautioned that 'This [IK] should be a university-wide offering. Remember, in South Africa, we are trying to promote African epistemologies, and I think the starting point is reclaiming the indigenous space' (P3, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P5 supports the previous two views by suggesting that:

'For it to be effective, it should be cross-functional across different units, depending on the focus, but these should be able to collaborate. For example, IK can be seen from a natural medicinal, biodiversity, sociological, oral historical traditional angle or information science perspective. What is required is the cross-pollination of all these ideas into a multidisciplinary centre of excellence.' (P5, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

P9 suggested that education be offered by 'Schools of IS/ Departments of Library/Information Studies' (P9, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). This view was also shared by P10, while P7 pointed to 'General Education Studies courses targeted to all first and second-year students [particularly]. LIS schools (for LIS students), Archives and Records Management Schools (For Archives students [...])' (P7, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P6 suggested a number of departments and/or disciplines such as 'Sociology, Anthropology, African languages, Bioscience, History, Food security studies, Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, Development Studies, Natural Medicine, and LIS' (P6, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P8 concurred, saying that:



'IK is a multidisciplinary field that can be offered in many academic disciplines from pure (e.g. Biochemistry, Botany and Zoology), applied (e.g. Medicine, Agriculture, Engineering) to social sciences (Anthropology, History, Psychology, LIS, etc.). It can be offered in an existing module/course, autonomous or semi-autonomous course/module.' (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

P9 favoured the:

'Department of Library and Information Science. Main issues in IK refers to documentation, processing, preservation, access, retrieval, Intellectual Property rights, etc. that fall within the LIS Department, where even the competencies of human resources exist.' (P9, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

Overwhelmingly, there was a suggestion that IK should be offered by more than one discipline because it is multidisciplinary. The majority (six of the nine) of the respondents to this question suggested that individual departments or disciplines offer IK from their content perspective. Thus, no single discipline/academic unit should be entitled to offer IK. They emphasise autonomy and a multidisciplinary approach to IK education, and some suggested that it be offered as general/foundation education. Other respondents (three of the nine) considered that LIS schools are most suitable to offer IK education. Overall, the multidisciplinary approach to IK education seemed to be widely supported.

## ■ Who offers Indigenous Knowledge education?

This question required the respondents to be more specific, in the sense that if it is offered, who (which disciplines/departments and faculties/academics) offers IK education. Six responses were found relevant to this question. P1 referred to:

'LIS professionals with training on knowledge management. However, specialised support can come from persons trained in religion, psychology, theatre, music, language or linguistics, or even medicine (traditional medicine) but this would depend on the research focus of

the specific university or LIS department.’ (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P2 felt that ‘it cuts across many fields’ (P2, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P10 mentioned ‘LIS in collaboration with other specialised departments, e.g. traditional medicine’ (P10, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P5 refers to his School and explains that the Centre has a course titled ‘African Development Information Sources and Systems’, which was a compulsory course in the Master of Information Science degree curriculum two decades ago, but the status has since declined to ‘Required’ and the ‘Elective’ in later reviews of the curriculum. The respondent admitted that another institute within the university:

‘[O]ffers African IK courses or topics connected to various arts and humanities disciplines (e.g. fine arts, music, etc.). I am not sure if the Library, Archival and Information Studies department of the University offer IK courses or IK topics as part of courses.’ (P5, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P8 admitted that:

‘Data on who offers IK is not readily available in my institution/university and probably in others as well. In South Africa [...] Ideally, a person offering IK should be knowledgeable, interested, aware and sensitive to the cultural context, institutional and national needs or policies regarding IK development.’ (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

As supporters of a multidisciplinary approach, P7 considered ‘LIS, History, Sociology, Agriculture, Biological Sciences, Medicine, Pharmacology, Law, Economics, Development Studies, Geology and Mining, and Environment – should all offer the course in small portions’ (P7, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

One of the respondents (P8) acknowledged that information on who offers IK education within our universities is not readily available, suggesting that the knowledge of who offers IK education should be audited on our campuses. Nonetheless, most respondents suggested that IK education be offered by those with humanities and social sciences qualifications or

education. As far as LIS is concerned, one respondent advised that academics with knowledge management teaching and research background are most suitable. Beyond IK education within LIS schools, perhaps an example of a practical answer refers to IK education at the University of the North West in South Africa, where a full-fledged qualification focuses on IKS (Kaya & Seleti 2013). In line with definitions of IK (e.g. Mawere 2015) at the beginning of this chapter, IK could be offered in other disciplines such as language (e.g. folklore), History – Oral Traditions, Visual and Performing Arts, Architecture and design, Anthropology, Religion, Psychology and Botany (e.g. healing plants).

## **■ Why is it being offered by the academic unit or discipline?**

While IK education, in general, is covered in most parts of the studies cited in this chapter, some reasons why it is offered are informed by philosophy (Nabudere 2011), theory (Kellner 2003), policy (Mosimege 2005) or discipline (Ngulube 2017).

Eight responses were received for this question. P1 argued that:

‘IK is knowledge emerging from information which needs to be collected, collated, organised, documented, validated, disseminated, applied and perpetuated. LIS professionals are best placed to perform IK management. Therefore, the training should be domiciled in a LIS unit.’ (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P3 referring to LIS defended the position that:

‘They have the competences and they are the custodians of information. They are the ones who classify and organise information. If left to other disciplines, they may not be able to articulate it well.’ (P3, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P5 referred to the ARCIS course:

‘African Development Information Sources and Systems aimed at enabling the master’s degree students to look inwards to Africa, and globally, in respect of design, development and use of African

information sources and systems for African development, including both formal systems like PADIS and traditional systems such as IK.' (P5, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P7 elaborated that:

'Understandably if knowledge is being used by most people in a region, such as Africa then it is necessary to offer such education. According to my knowledge, IK would be offered by some academic disciplines, which would articulate why it is being offered. In my Department, under AINF 212 – knowledge management – where it is offered, the aim of the semester-length module (IK takes 50% of the module or term) is to “equip students with fundamental knowledge, skills, tools, techniques, practice and theory on Knowledge Management and indigenous knowledge systems”'. (P7, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P9's view was that 'the knowledge and skills required to teach IK are embedded in LIS curricula that are covered by LIS graduates' (P9, age unspecified, exact date unspecified), while P7 noted that IK is included in their curriculum.

Noticeably, at the unit (e.g. Department) or discipline level, IK could be offered because it is a requirement for fulfilling the learning outcome, as mentioned by all the respondents and as articulated by P4 and P8 in their reference to specific modules/courses in which IK is taught.

## ■ Who should learn or be taught Indigenous Knowledge?

This question required the respondents to identify the proper target of IK education. Nine responses were received for this question. P1 considered that 'All LIS Diploma, Bachelor's and postgraduate students should be taught IK. The level of intensity can vary depending on the level of study' (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P10 opened it to include 'LIS students, other students according to the speciality, e.g. medical students, pharmacy students, traditional herbalists, extension officers, farmers, etc.' (P10, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

P2 also shared the view by pointing to ‘everyone who enrolls for a degree as long as the content can contribute to societal development and solve grand societal challenges’ (P2, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P3 concurred: ‘All university students. There should be short learning courses for academics as well’ (P3, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). Also, P4 suggested that ‘it should be taught to anybody interested, especially those who will disseminate it’ (P4, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

Similarly, P5 believed that it should involve:

‘[A]ll undergraduate and postgraduate students, for the historical best practices of African societies to be combined with modern best practices to solve local problems. I believe that communities who forget their past – good or bad – are doomed to repeat their past mistakes.’ (P5, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P8 agreed that:

‘All UG and PG students should have an opportunity to receive IK education. IK courses/modules can be offered as compulsory (fundamental), core or electives or full qualification programmes depending on its priority in the learning process.’ (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P9 settled on ‘postgraduate students’ only, while P7 suggested that ‘it should be taught across disciplines – natural science, medicine, information science, social science and humanities, law, depending on the tilt of the subject matter’ (P7, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

Most of the respondents agreed that IK should be taught or offered to all students at all levels. It can be offered or taught as a compulsory, core, elective or optional course or module, or as a full-fledged qualification (Kaya & Seleti 2013). There is also one suggestion that IK is offered as a continuous professional development (CPD) programme that will focus on the lecturers as well, and this sounds quite valid.

## ■ How long should Indigenous Knowledge education take in the curricula?

Many courses/modules offered by the surveyed universities are one semester in duration. Eight responses were received for this question. P1 suggested that:

‘There should be at least one course unit on IK lasting a complete semester or term. It should carry a full load of credit hours according to the structure of the curriculum.’ (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P2 indicated that ‘it can even be a degree in some areas, e.g. agriculture and health, or a module in others, e.g. LIS’ (P2, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P3 advised that ‘it should be infused into all modules in addition to being stand-alone’ (P3, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

P4, P5, P7 and P9 considered a semester to be enough. P8 argued that:

‘The length of the IK education could be longer or shorter, depending on national, institutional interest in its development and learning. It can take a term/quarter, semester or longer (e.g. major taking at least six semesters).’ (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

This was also shared by P10.

There were numerous suggestions regarding this question, ranging from shorter to longer, depending on the course or module or qualification outcomes required. However, most of the respondents suggested semester-length IK education, while one recommended an autonomous, full-fledged qualification.

## ■ At what level of learning should it be offered?

Nine respondents answered this question. When it comes to the level of education, P1 suggested:

‘From diploma upwards up to PhD level. Diploma level should focus on appreciation of IK; Bachelor’s on the management of IK; master’s and PhD levels should be on IK research, theory and policy issues.’ (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P2 was in support of ‘all levels, as it is a new paradigm’ (P2, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P4 and P9 supported the ‘Postgraduate’ level, while P5 and P10 considered *both UG and PG* levels. P8 preferred that ‘IK could be offered at both UG and PG levels. PG levels could focus more on research, development and application’ (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P7 concurred that it be offered at ‘both UG and PG - UG is the academic grounding while PG should be for advanced research’ (P7, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

The respondents did not agree on a single level. One suggested diploma to PhD, two referred to a PG level and another two suggested both UG and PG levels. Essentially, IK can be offered at either or both UG and PG levels.

## ■ **What content should be taught in Indigenous Knowledge?**

Indigenous Knowledge content will vary from one qualification outcome to another, which also defines levels of learning and teaching dispensation as reflected, for example, by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA)<sup>12,13</sup> and perhaps by other similar institutions in other countries. The guiding factor should be the learning outcome required at the particular level (e.g. UG and PG qualifications).

There were many suggestions by the 10 respondents to this question, with significant overlaps. P1 suggested that the focus should be on:

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12. [https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/2019-11/level\\_descriptors.pdf](https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/2019-11/level_descriptors.pdf)

13. <https://www.saqa.org.za/docs/webcontent/2015/Stephen%20Adam%20presentation.pdf>

'Definition of IK; characteristics of IK; types of IK; place of IK in contemporary society; management of IK; IK theories, policies, legislation; application of IK in agriculture, medicine, conservation, etc.; IK research; ICT and IK.' (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P3 was less prescriptive, advising that:

'IK education should address the fundamental questions: Who are we? What are our values, and what is their relationship to Western values? Can these values co-exist? Is Christianity in conflict with Indigenous Knowledge?' (P3, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P4 noted 'Introduction, Identification/types, Management Systems', while P5 simply referred to 'Tested and confirmed best practices IK in all fields of knowledge'. Like P1, P8 and P9 were more elaborate. Referring to a module offered at his university, P8 argued that:

'The course content for IK is likely to vary from discipline to discipline and determined by several factors such as purpose, target, duration, level of study, facilities, policy. At my Department, for example, the IK module, which is taught as part of knowledge management in the second part, covers Introduction: Concept of IK - definition, background, relationship with knowledge management; characteristics and types of Indigenous Knowledge; roles, functions, importance and benefits of IK. The roles of an IK manager; IK theories; IK methodologies and research approaches; IK management process and components; IK applications, e.g. application of ICTs in IK management; challenges and opportunities for IK management.' (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

R9 also provided detailed IK content in a course currently under review. He suggested that the course be organised around the following topics:

'Indigenous knowledge systems and Worldviews; Indigenous Epistemologies; Indigenous Knowledge systems in African societies, Indigenous Knowledge and Western science; Indigenous Adaptations to bureaucratic systems; and Indigenous contributions to contemporary knowledge, intellectual property and genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore, Oral history management, preservation and conservation of indigenous knowledge systems; palaeography (writing systems and interpretation, records studies,



archives, Africana and biography-making), the origin of knowledge (e.g. according to the Book of Kells, the Bible), museum management, the memory of the world, oral tradition and oral history research. History of books, libraries, archives and writing.’ (P9, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

He pointed out that ‘Course is being reviewed to bring in more relevant aspects regarding documentation and management’ (Resp. P9). P7 approached his answer beyond LIS by suggesting contents from ‘History, Law, Economics, Development, Natural Medicine, IKS, Biodiversity, Politics and Commercialisation’ (Resp. P7). This view resonated with P10, who argued that ‘It depends on the specialisation, it can focus on education, mathematics, medicine, chemistry, engineering, or management of IK’ (P10, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

Analysis of the contents provided suggests that they can be clustered as follows:

1. conceptualisation – definition, characteristics, categorisation/typology and roles/functions/benefits
2. contextualisation (most MU contents fit here) and relationship with other forms of knowledge, IK and society
3. IK theories and models, epistemologies and methodologies
4. IK management – IK policies, legislation, structures/systems, infrastructure/resources, research, mapping and auditing
5. application of IK – medicine, agriculture, IK education, ICTS application, etc.
6. challenges, opportunities and current issues.

## ■ What are the challenges of Indigenous Knowledge education?

Indigenous Knowledge education challenges have been discussed widely in the literature (Ghosh 2019; Ocholla 2007). Some of the challenges identified by the 10 respondents overlapped but are nonetheless worth reporting verbatim. P1 felt that ‘It is a crosscutting subject, hence difficulty in finding the appropriate

focus; IK is stigmatised and may not find space on the timetable; limited research and training materials on IK' (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P2 was concerned that 'The market is not yet ripe or receptive for IKS' (P2, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P4 pinpointed 'authentication and availability of records' (P4, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). Respondent U1 was of the view that:

'The biggest challenges are acculturation forces, including Western cultures, science-is-always-right paradigms, the religions, and urbanisation. African youth who one would expect to learn and improve IK are mostly easily colonised by these forces, to the extent that they hardly see anything good in IK, and often need those forces to show them what is good in their IK.' U1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

These issues resonate with the four theoretical perspectives alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, particularly the dependency theory (Ghosh 2019). P6's main concern was:

'[N]ot having staff expertise in IK. We were considering incorporating IK into the KM master's module, but it would have been far too superficially dealt with. The department tried to embark on an archives stream (whole programme) in which IK can be fitted, but the staff member resigned to take up employment elsewhere. IK is a sensitive, complex field not to be trivialised. Undergraduate LIS students take electives in modules such as Anthropology, History, etc. in which they are exposed to IK and thus do end up with IK knowledge they can apply in their working environment once they graduate.' (P6, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

This view was shared by P7 that 'expert knowledge, collaboration, low research capacity' (P7, age unspecified, exact date unspecified) are eminent. P8 elaborated by itemising seven factors:

'(1) Lack of time. (2) Students do not appreciate the module. (3) Teaching and learning approach – Students need to understand IK and its importance quite well from the onset. (4) Staffing. We do not find readily available and competent lecturers for the course. (5) Curricula/syllabus. IK seems to be one of those modules/courses in LIS curricula that would easily be abandoned when looking for spaces in the curricula for new courses/modules. (6) The job market

for IK is not readily known. Job market analysis is required to determine the need for IK for library and information services as well as in other sectors. This would perhaps increase interest among staff and students in IK. (7) IK policy, marketing and publicity would be one of the areas to consider for popularising IK education.’ (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P10’s concern was that:

‘IK is context-specific, and therefore its application depends on the context, location, culture and many other factors. Therefore, it’s not one-size-fits-all. It needs to be gathered, stored and applied in a specific context. However, most of this knowledge has not been gathered and shared widely. It remains in the heads of knowledge-bearers. Therefore, there is a need for a lot of research to gather it, manage, and apply it in an educational context.’ (P10, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

Respondent UMR9 pointed to ‘Inadequate local research on IK, lack of availability of IK tools for teaching, Western influence on students makes them not appreciate IK very much’ (Resp. UMR1).

The challenges mentioned by the respondents echo the IK education theories and perspectives highlighted earlier in this chapter. In a nutshell, the challenges identified by the eight respondents are as follows: lack of focus because of the crosscutting/multidisciplinary nature of IK; stigmatisation of IK – not always appreciated and given space in the syllabus; research, teaching and learning limitations; limited learning materials; dependency and unfair competition with exogenous knowledge, which is widely popularised and used; lack of interest by students, because of the high level of dependence and the influence of exogenous knowledge; lack of teaching expertise; the complexity and sensitivity of teaching IK in a multicultural society; availability of alternative courses where IK thrives (e.g. Anthropology); insufficient time given for IK education; the job market for IK education is not readily known; and lack of policy. We note the availability of IK policy in South Africa (Mosimege 2005), but we are not certain how far the policy influences IK education within HEIs.

## ■ What are the opportunities?

The opportunities for IK education exist at the policy level (Mosimege 2005), implementation level, for example, IK education at NWU (Kaya & Seleti 2013), at the multidisciplinary level and in LIS education (Ngulube 2017).

The 10 respondents remarked as follows. P1 noted that:

‘Most countries in Africa are turning to local solutions for socio-economic challenges. IK is steadily coming into focus. This is the time to mainstream it into LIS curricula. This will not only enrich the skills of LIS graduates but also enhance their visibility and employability.’ (P1, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P2 was of the view that ‘It is an opportunity for introducing and formalising new ways of solving grand societal challenges’ (P2, age unspecified, exact date unspecified), while P4 found strength in the ‘recording of the available information from those who are still alive and knowledgeable [...] virgin areas to explore’ (P4, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). In the opinion of P5:

‘IK education in LIS would make LIS students and graduates collaborate with subject experts in various other disciplines to identify, document, archive, repost and publicise available IK sources and content in local communities.’ (P5, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P6 lamented that:

‘If there were more staff (currently only five full-time staff for four programmes), staff with expertise in IK, or staff willing to learn about IK, our department could address this gap in the curriculum. We are currently co-supervising a PhD in IK with an expert from Anthropology, which is a positive outlook. If an expert IK LIS educator could construct a curriculum or course, it would be most welcome.’ (P6, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P8 suggested that:

‘[T]he challenges should be turned into opportunities. Essentially, make enough time for IK teaching in the curricula, engage and interest the students in the IK education, explore and apply innovative teaching and learning methods - involve relevant

community members in teaching as GL, identify and recruit suitable/qualified lecturers for teaching, review the curricula to include IK as autonomous, semi-autonomous or fully-fledged qualification programme, conduct research and establish the job market status for knowledge, justification and promotion of IK, develop IK policy that includes IK education (see SA IK policy), market and publicise IK, involve the library in IK collection development and access for research, teaching and learning, involve the local community in curricula development.’ (P8, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

P7 placed a premium on ‘decolonising the curriculum and building an IK base for sustainable development in Africa and beyond’ (P7, age unspecified, exact date unspecified). P10 pointed out that:

‘It will enable LIS professionals to learn different ways not only to manage exogenous knowledge but also Indigenous Knowledge which is very useful and relevant in their context. Noticeably, IK helped people to manage the COVID pandemic in different areas of the globe and WHO supports IK.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, if this knowledge is effectively managed and taught in LIS education, it will help LIS professionals not only to manage information but also IK which is available in their environment for the development of the surrounding societies.’ (P10, age unspecified, exact date unspecified)

Finally, P4 believed that ‘Opportunities for Knowledge managers exist in research organisations in different sectors, especially agriculture, health, etc.’ (P4, age unspecified, exact date unspecified).

In a nutshell, the respondents identified the following opportunities:

1. Most countries recognise the importance of IK, and some have developed IK policies (Mosimege 2005) and strong curricula as reflected at the NWU.
2. Research and conferences on IK education by LIS schools are growing.

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14. See [https://www.afro.who.int/news/who-supports-scientifically-proven-traditional-medicine?gclid=CjwKCAjwm\\_P5BRAhEiwAwRzSOwgA3b2K7pCXYkmJ8zJekbi-Jpm6W0X4K89wSw7I36WxzxdhjwQ6NB0Cjd0QAvD\\_BwE](https://www.afro.who.int/news/who-supports-scientifically-proven-traditional-medicine?gclid=CjwKCAjwm_P5BRAhEiwAwRzSOwgA3b2K7pCXYkmJ8zJekbi-Jpm6W0X4K89wSw7I36WxzxdhjwQ6NB0Cjd0QAvD_BwE).

3. Teaching and research collaboration is feasible within and outside our institutions.
4. The challenges mentioned in the previous section should be turned into opportunities.
5. The IK job market exists but must be explored.

## ■ Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, several IK definitions were highlighted. It is recognised that there are definitions that are broader/more inclusive/comprehensive and those that are narrow/exclusive, with United Nations (ILO, UNESCO, World Bank) and country or institutional definitions making a larger part of the former (inclusive) as they normally originate from collective viewpoints after thorough analysis. The definitions are important for unpacking IK concepts and providing a better understanding of their application and use in different settings, including in IK education. It is also noted that there has been growing interest in IK largely because it provides alternative ways for creating livelihoods and human development (e.g. health, agriculture, education, business, culture and heritage, and sports). For example, in an IKS policy document produced by the South African government in 2005, it was estimated that 80% of the people living in Africa rely on IK largely for healing or health purposes (Mosimege 2005). The benefits of IK are recognised widely (e.g. WHO)<sup>15</sup>; this makes IK education important and defeats any possible marginalisation mindset. The study recognises theory to be essential for an in-depth understanding of concepts and how they interact within and outside their domains. Ocholla (2007) believed that the marginalisation of IK has aspects of dependency (e.g. education and cultural dependency for this study). The radical response to dependency by critical and critical education theories, paradigms or

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15. See <https://www.saqqa.org.za/docs/webcontent/2015/Stephen%20Adam%20presentation.pdf>.

epistemologies provides intellectual material for interrogating and challenging dependency that leads to the transformation and elimination of IK marginalisation. The Afrikology epistemology (Nabudere 2011) dismisses Eurocentric paradigms that support dependency by suggesting that knowledge enterprise belongs elsewhere rather than Africa, while there is evidence of knowledge production, documentation and application in medieval Egypt, Ethiopia and Mali. Therefore, the theoretical lenses are vital for a deeper understanding of any conceptions and misconceptions of IK, and students and scholars must be aware of that. It is recognised that IK education should not be restricted to a discipline but should be multidisciplinary.

Nonetheless, IK education by discipline is still essential for a particular focus and emphasis. For example, LIS schools may emphasise recording, or documentation and retrieval, aspects of IK. Several studies are focusing on IK and some on IK education, as noted in the chapter. While IK is as important as it is, it was noted that there are limited studies on IK education by LIS schools (Ngulube 2017). Most of the themes reported in the findings of this chapter are unique and novel. Keeping the verbatim narratives, as was done in related studies (Ocholla 2009), has enriched this study a great deal.

Overwhelmingly, the LIS experts/respondents agreed that LIS departments should offer IK. As a multidisciplinary field, each discipline can offer it from its perspective; however, humanities and social sciences are well placed for IK education. Who offers IK education on our campuses is not readily known. Where IK is offered, it is done following national, institutional and qualification requirements. The target for IK education should be all students, while it can be offered as a foundation, core or elective module. A longer duration, such as a semester, is preferred for the educational programme, and it can be offered at both UG and PG levels. The contents should consist of concept, context, theory, application, and research. Challenges identified refer to contents, orientation, marginalisation, resource capacity/

support, interest, job market, policy, and overdependence on modern/Western/exogenous knowledge. Opportunities exist in turning the challenges into opportunities; for example, the recognition of IK for development is growing. The gaps in the study relate to data gathered from a small and homogeneous sample, most of whom do not offer IK education in their LIS schools as a whole or as an autonomous course/module/qualification. The knowledge of IK education as a whole within our institutions is not readily available and was therefore not used to interrogate this study. Nonetheless, the study provides a strong agenda for IK education mapping and auditing within the universities, and for interrogating the indigenisation and decolonisation of higher education in HEIs in Africa.

## ■ Summary

Indigenous Knowledge education is important for demystifying the marginalisation of IK and developing it into a formidable part of knowledge in general and knowledge management in particular. The inclusion of IK recognises the improvement of wisdom in our society. Further, the decolonising of curricula cannot occur without integrating IK into university curricula in general and LIS education in particular. In this chapter, we explore IK education within LIS schools in Africa to investigate whether IK education is necessary, who should offer IK and why, what (content) should be taught (and at what level), how long IK education should take and what are the challenges and opportunities for IK education in LIS. This interpretive and transformative research was accomplished through a descriptive survey, content analysis of syllabus and email open-ended questionnaire posted to purposefully selected respondents/LIS professors from eastern, western and southern African LIS schools. Findings include that IK should be offered by more than one discipline because it is multidisciplinary, IK should be made available to students at all levels, and its content should be objective and outcomes-based or outcomes-driven.



The challenges and opportunities enumerated in this study could be potentially used to set the agenda for further research and professional engagement in the domain (cf. Mawere 2015).

The awareness of IK education as a whole within our institutions is not readily available; therefore, it was not used to interrogate this study. Nonetheless, the study provides some considerations for IK education mapping and auditing within universities/LIS schools and interrogates the indigenisation and decolonisation of HEIs in Africa.

## ■ Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the 10 colleagues/professors who responded to this study at such short notice.

# Researching local indigenous community research: An African perspective

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Polokwane, South Africa

## ■ Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to advance an argument for the inclusion and recognition of indigenous community research as an alternative to other dominant research perspectives. This purpose is informed by the fact that there is currently a pronounced knowledge gap in its advancement in the research community. I suggest that indigenous community research, if given its rightful space, will make the world of research richer

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rather than poorer. For example, as Keitumetse (2009:1) alluded, 'it will bring with it the African cultural heritage that has long been hidden. And that by transcending the studies' ethnic and national blinders', we can appreciate the relatedness of the African world community experience to the rest of the world. However, I am not oblivious to the incongruities and complexities of attempting such a mammoth task, especially in the field of higher education and indigenous community research.

This chapter is not intended to be an intensive examination of the progress of this pioneering field of study: such a project would require thousands of pages, as indeed has been fulfilled admirably in notable works (Asante 1992; Sen 2005; Asante 2007; Magoro, Masoga & Mearns 2010; Masoga 2002; Sefa Dei 1995; Waitere-Ang 1999; Zulu 2006). This chapter aims to provide a general account of the main trends in African education, specifically of indigenous local community research. I also intend to suggest practical ways in which indigenous community research can be incorporated into the higher education curriculum. For example, how can the African worldview of knowledge, as embedded in the collective of oral and literary traditions, be used to conduct research in science and humanities? I argue that this perspective has been neglected either by design or by default. This knowledge gap has not been satisfactorily addressed in South Africa. Therefore, this chapter seeks to address this gap by addressing the question: Can indigenous community research offer alternative perspectives to how we understand the world around us? To situate this question in its proper context, this chapter addresses the need to explain how local indigenous community research is conceptualised.

## ■ **Conceptualisation of indigenous local research**

How we conceive of what ILR is or is not guides how we theorise and practice it. This explanation is not intended to resolve the long-standing debate on what it precisely is or is not. For now,

I am entering this debate for the purpose of operationalising its usage in this chapter. Therefore, I will merely touch on it as a prelude to this discussion.

Broadly, the concept of local indigenous community research could be viewed in two ways. The first view, which I will consider narrow, sees it as a 'simplistic process of socialisation involving the preparation of children for work in the home, the village and within a select ethnic domain' (Zulu 2016). It is the type of research that recognises and acknowledges social contexts in which research takes place by being sensitive to it and using it. This view portrays it, as Zulu (2016) avers, not as a step-child of Western globalisation ideas, but as legitimate and equal to the rest of its counterparts. In most cases, it is treated otherwise. It is projected as a 'stagnant, limited, and inoperative paradigm' (Zulu 2016), which is a carbon copy of European and American epistemologies. Most discussions that subscribe to this view use Western lenses, such as structure-oriented theories, which see ILR as the transmission of Western values cloaked in an African dress.

Contrary to this narrow view, ILR is seen as involving an understanding of research as a social responsibility, deeply rooted in the moral values of the African people. This is normally expressed by participating in ceremonies, rituals, songs and dances of the African people. In other words, ILR should be Afrocentric in approach (Zulu 2016). This is what Shokane and Masoga (2018:18) mean when they allude to 'a culturally sensed manner' of doing things in order to discover the uniqueness in local indigenous ways within specific communities (Sillitoe & Marzano 2009). Thus, ILR should involve not only the transmission of facts but also the norms and values of the African people. It should be a social, cultural and political process. It is within this latter view that ILR is located in this chapter. It is this approach that has not been given adequate attention in the literature on research.

I agree with Semali (1999a), who argued that the interface between what is happening in schools and African communities has not been given adequate attention in literature. He reflects

on this as follows: 'The transfer of Indigenous Knowledge from everyday life to schoolwork is not always valued or encouraged, and indigenous ways of knowing may not be recognised by teachers' (Semali 1999b:305). Recently, this fact has been echoed by Opata (2020:233) when he remarked that 'the debate on African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and their link with African cultural practices and belief systems has elicited serious debates'. This binary way of thinking about education as formal and informal perpetuates and undermines the Afro-sensed ways of doing research. An Afro-sensed way of thinking is a concept described by Shokane and Masoga (2018) as a focus on the use of IK and cultural approaches to dealing with issues. Asante (1998) referred to this as placing the African ideas at the epicentre of any analysis, for example, conducting research in the language of the local people, their culture and their heritage.

The field of IK research and higher education in Africa is arduous and very complex to study (Bitzer & Menkveld 2004; Ngethe, Subotzky & Afeti 2008). Many factors contribute to this complexity. One such factor is the genesis of higher education in Africa. Higher education in Africa, in the past, used to be shaped by European universities in both the course curricula and methods of instruction. This influence is ineluctable despite universities such as the University of Limpopo in South Africa trying hard to escape from it. This is not surprising given the fact that historically, the staff at these universities were predominantly European. Besides, these universities were created in major cities and were meant for the elite in African society. As such, they looked down upon local everyday knowledge of the rural areas where the majority of the indigenous people live, especially where their university students come from and where there are more development challenges. This has resulted in some universities becoming white elephants, disconnected from everyday experiences and the needs of local people, for example, how to grow food in home gardens, recognise and have knowledge about medicinal and food plants, and conduct emancipatory and participatory types of research. Of particular interest to this

chapter is the medium of instruction used in South African universities. Lack of progress in the use of African languages remains a thorn in the flesh of higher education in Africa.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the relevance of what is researched and how it is researched have often been questioned. For example, normally, African culture does not allow women to debate with men in public or young people to argue with their elders. As a result of this culture of silence, researchers who use the European framework may wrongly conclude that research participants were in agreement on a certain topic when they were not. These and other examples are normally nuanced in the participation of the researched and may enable or inhibit the research process. The subjugation of local languages and other forms of colonialism have been questioned more sharply in the past few years, especially by students.

In this chapter, I want to join in this questioning by using two terms, the *theoretic* and the *practical*, which I have borrowed from Schwab's (1969) paper, *The Practical: A Language for the Curriculum*. While I have borrowed these terms from Schwab's (1969) conceptual framework, I think the terms are better explained in Fox's (1985:63) distinguished essay: *The Vitality of Theory in Schwab's Conception of the Practical*. Here I will only give a summary thereof. Schwab (1969) distinguished the theoretic and *practical* in terms of four constructs, namely, the subject matter, the outcome, the origin of the problem and the method. The scope of the chapter will not allow me a full discussion on his extraordinary volubility of thought. Here I have only attempted to give a brief summary of this.

According to Seymour Fox (1985), the *subject matter* of the theoretic is something taken to be universally true and abstract, while the *subject matter* of the practical is concrete, particular and always in a state of flux. This could be explained by seeing the theoretic as globalisation and the practical as localisation of knowledge. For example, while the use of English as a medium of instruction is useful for internationalisation of higher education, it

should not erode the values, customs and traditions of the African people. The (Fox 1985):

[O]utcome of the theoretical is knowledge, while the *outcome* of the practical is a decision which is 'never true or trustworthy' because it is not lasting and not easy to evaluate. (p. 66)

This has implications in the way we should do ILR. For example, it is being able to meld the technical know-how of the natural scientist with the cultural sympathy of the social scientist. Research should move away from business as usual to being re-imagined and re-envisioned. A single discipline is incapable of doing this. There is a need for interdisciplinary research, where, for example, an anthropologist and public health practitioners can work together to address community health problems such as TB.

The *origin of problems* in the theoretical arises from areas of the subject matter marked out in our minds about what we already regard as tacit fact or truth and we do not as yet know. On the other hand, practical problems originate from a breakdown of a condition that we desire it was otherwise or that it could be changed, and where the theoretical informs the practical. Thus, problems from the practical could be altered by changing such undesirable conditions. Thus, in doing ILR, we should consider participatory approaches, where local people could guide experts in scientific knowledge. The Eurocentric, structural-oriented approaches to research have been guilty of superimposing solutions on African people by coming up with one-size-fits-all solutions. I think that homemade brewed strategies are what researchers need (Battiste 2017). For example, the COVID-19 has revealed that parents have the ability to teach their children at their homes. The binary type of situation between everyday knowledge and school knowledge needs to be reconceptualised if schools are to lead societal change.

On the *methods* of the theoretical, Joe Schwab (in Roby 2008) argued that they are 'controlled by a principle which determines

the general shape of its problem' and its methods of investigation (Chilisa 2019). For instance, how data are collected, analysed and interpreted. On the other hand, the method of the practical is not universal or one-size-fits-all, as it is difficult to solve because it is not static. He, thus, calls for an ongoing deliberation, which is a 'complex, fluid, and transactional approach aimed at identification of the desirable and attainment of the desired or alteration of desires' (Roby 2008). Therefore, if ILR is to succeed, it needs to be re-imaged. My view is that ILR needs a strong theoretical framework if it is to provide a good mirror of what it should look like. In the next section, I discuss reasons why I think ILR in its present state is inadequate and needs to be reconceptualised if it is to be relevant to the current challenges.

## ■ Reconceptualisation of local indigenous research

Three reasons why I think Schwab's framework makes sense to advance ILR are the following (see Roby 2008):

1. The field of local indigenous community research is moribund and unable in its present methods and principles to make any meaningful contribution to knowledge creation, especially from an Afro-sensed perspective, and it is desperately in search of new and more effective principles and methods.
2. In the second place, ILR has reached this unhappy state because of its inveterate and unexamined reliance on foreign theories even where these theories are partly inappropriate in the first place and are inadequate for the tasks which the research field sets out for it.
3. The bulk of educational research energies need to be diverted from the theoretic to the practical.

Before going any further, it may be useful to explain what these concepts mean here. I think it is important to raise these three reasons for such an explication.



- Firstly, it is important for local indigenous research to resurrect itself from invisibility in the world of research. One way of doing this is by adopting a critical corrective theory that advances new and more effective principles and methods of doing relevant research.
- Secondly, by using such research, it will help raise consciousness for the need to shift from the theoretic to the practical.
- Thirdly, if the critical corrective theory is adopted, there will be a renaissance of the field of local indigenous research, with a renewed capacity to contribute to the quality of African education through the use of such research. To put it in the words of Schwab (1969:1), '[...] the bulk of research energies are diverted from the theoretic to the practical, from the quasi practical and to the eclectic'. This is a behemoth of a task, I must admit. Before this task can be attempted, there must be a strong conviction about the usefulness of community IK in schools and universities than there is at the moment. Hence, it is necessary to explore the relationship between everyday knowledge and school knowledge. It is important to take this detour as it forms the precursor to my thesis.

The concepts 'everyday knowledge' and 'school knowledge' are, broadly speaking, described as follows: everyday knowledge is that informal knowledge that the learner acquires in the home or local environment independently or guided by a friend (cf. Itibari M. Zulu 2006), adult or teacher. School knowledge is that which is received at school, normally termed formal education (Mutemeri 2013). A detailed discussion of this will follow later in this chapter. Before embarking on the discussion of knowledge types, I want to briefly address two dilemmas that face ILR.

## ■ A curriculum for an indigenous community research study

Any discussion on an indigenous community research study should be premised upon two propositions. First proposition: The way we conceptualise what curriculum is or is not determines

how we think and practice it. Second proposition: Curriculum is a contextualised social process, thus a highly context-sensitive concept. With regard to the first proposition, there are two ways of conceiving what a curriculum is. The first view is that curriculum is a document to be developed elsewhere by a team of experts and delivered to teachers for implementation. The second view is that curriculum is that which is constructed by researchers and students and practised in their classrooms. The first conception regards curriculum as a document, whereas the second regards it as a process. Others (Cornbleth 1988; Stenhouse 1975), as I do, regard the first view as narrow and disempowering and the second view as broad, enabling and empowering. The scope of this chapter does not allow a detailed discussion on these notions. It suffices to point out that in my view, at present, the indigenous community research is located in the first conception. In the next section, I support my claim.

Indigenous local research is locked into the Western worldview of knowledge creation and not the African view. This is evident in the manner in which it is locked into European ways of knowing and doing research. I have observed that researchers, insensitive to the cultural and traditional practices of local communities, often trample upon the rights of indigenous people (Themane 2020). For example, in many African communities, the role and position of women during public meetings are different from that of Europeans in the sense that they appear to be subdued. But, in most instances, it is not so. This could be compared with Apostle Paul's admonition to women to be quiet, as he says in 1 Timothy 2:11: 'A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet'. This type of cultural and religious rule is often overlooked by researchers, who are mostly informed by Western frameworks.

Regarding how data are generated, for example, through focus and group interviews, rural women may play a docile role because of their cultural restrictions not to speak in public in the presence of men. This often makes researchers, who are less

sensitive to this context, to come to wrongly conclude that their family participants were in agreement when they were actually not.

This kind of attitude from researchers is not surprising given its historical evolution. It is sufficiently evident that such research ethos is dominated by Western thought as most researchers are either white males from the west or the few Africans who are in the African universities but studied in either Europe or North America. So, they continue the culture and tradition of the universities that colonised Africa. Most historically black universities fit perfectly into this picture that I have painted here.

The narrow view of curriculum does not put community knowledge at the centre. Other ways of learning do not feature as the designation of what constitutes good research is described as the presentation of hard data (meaning statistics). Any narrative encounters are regarded as anecdotal and therefore not scientific. Masha (2007:163) desperately argued against this view of research about two decades ago. He passionately pleaded that although the centrality of the need for systematisation cannot be ignored, the questions 'What does it mean to be systematic?' and 'Is it planned or does it emerge?' remain perplexing.

Lastly, the work of Roscoe (2007). The Columbia guide to central African literature in English since 1945 typifies what works in ILR. In this work, he paints a unique picture of African literature with its rich and diverse literary traditions. He also shows the rapid rise and growth of modern literature in the three post-colonial nations of Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia.

My thesis, I reiterate, is that as long as local indigenous community research is ill-defined, an African perspective to research remains a dream, yet it has so much to offer. The notion of curriculum as a contextual social process, on the other hand, shows promise for two reasons. Firstly, I think it allows space for a holistic discussion of the challenges of indigenous community problems and promotes the idea that there are other ways of

learning that have always been relegated to the role of peripheral illegitimate participants in knowledge creation. For example, where different stakeholders of the school could form partnerships for school improvement, such have been sidelined. Parents, for instance, have a significant role to play in educating their children. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, with schools opening and closing, has ennobled the importance of parents' role in educating their own children more vividly than it has always believed. Indigenous local research can learn a lesson from this.

Secondly, in her call for a new form of African education rooted in the positive aspects of indigenous thought (philosophy) and education, Tedla (1992) introduced the concept of *Sankofa* education. *Sankofa* is a Ghanaian concept that means to 'Go back and get it, to fetch, to seek and take'. *Sankofa* is thus often associated with the proverb, '*Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi*', which translates as: 'It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten' (Willis 1998).

According to Zulu (2006), this concept is best suited to serve as a buffer against the uncritical and often unconscious negative images about Africa that has led some of Africa's youth to value the uncritical and untested sensibilities that allow Western values to demean African research and thus devalue the traditional African ways of knowing. This way of looking at the curriculum for indigenous research defies an inveterate reliance on the theoretic that overlooks the context.

The pursuit of the *Sankofan* indigenous community research is in no way the rejection of other ways of knowing outside Africa; rather, it is the strengthening or the fulfilment of such research and not the opposite. It is not the blind acceptance of everything that is African, but a call for another perspective of knowledge creation and validation that has been usurped by the ostentatious adherence to other ways of knowing, especially from the former colonisers. There is certainly no one way of knowing, even in Africa itself. It is important, therefore, to unearth these other perspectives through a holistic discussion of the challenges of

indigenous community research (Sefa Dei 1995). As Sefa Dei (1995) rightfully contended, there is a need to reject the notion that there is only one universal way of knowing that is premised on Western thought and thus ignore others as being irrelevant.

## ■ Dilemmas

On the first dilemma, I want to raise the following evidence: indigenous community research is at a crossroads. It faces a dilemma of self-identity. Its proponents (of which I am one) aspire for its incorporation in the university research agenda, but lack the strength to do. They are like a woman in labour, but who no longer have the strength to give birth. Observe the first dilemma: for over two decades and five years, there has been an ambition to promote an African perspective in research. But, nobody has come out boldly to face the Goliath of the European perspective. Who can liberate us from this body of death?

The second dilemma is this: most African universities have, ever since the liberation of their countries from their former colonisers, depended on them (the colonisers) for their funding. It is, therefore, not surprising that African universities have remained loyal to their former bosses in terms of their epistemologies, and research, which gives credence to the Western ways of doing research.

On the third dilemma, the indigenous local community research study is confronted by a dilemma because of its inveterate and unexamined reliance on Western research approaches. It does so even when these approaches contradict the local ways of creating knowledge and of validating it.

In my previous chapter contribution (due for publication) entitled: *Rethinking curriculum theory for African educational problems*, I have argued compellingly for a break-away from traditional foreign curriculum theories in favour of alternative approaches and trajectories that are proffered in defence of the Africanisation of education on the African continent. This should

be done particularly through the notions that constitute the beliefs, customs, values, traditions, oral literature languages and histories of African and African-descended peoples. Yet, while people like myself may be emotional about this stance, the stark reality is that the quest for the internationalisation of higher education stares at us unwaveringly in the face (Taylor & Harrison 2018).

African advocates of indigenous community research falter between these two opinions. The question is: for how long? Through the #FeesMustFall movement, students have demonstrated how to take the bull by its horns. They have delivered free education which took over two decades to deliver, albeit still in its inchoate state. These dilemmas take me back to the binary conceptualisation of school knowledge and everyday knowledge that needs to be addressed if ILR is to succeed. I think it is here where the colonisers have managed to make the colonised unfit for their participation in the economy and to ensure a continued supply of cheap labour to the markets.

Much has been done in the area of everyday knowledge and school knowledge. Some of this work dates back two decades (Taylor 1999). Taylor's (1999) chapter, *Finding a Balance between Everyday and School Knowledges*, has poignantly pointed out that the quality of student learning is influenced by many factors: home background, individual aptitudes, school culture, teaching quality and the availability of resources. This underpins the importance of taking care of the socio-economic and cultural milieu of students (Muller 2016) whenever we conduct research. For example, it is important to consider the languages of the local people when generating and analysing data.

The opportunity to leverage South African's 11 languages has been missed. When universities were offered a chance to factor a language that would consider the local indigenous people, most historically black universities opted for English. Instead, some Historically White Universities grabbed the opportunity and started developing policies to accommodate this move (Makalela & McCabe 2013). This is regrettable.

Slightly over a decade ago, Bandiera (2007) and Sikoyo and Jacklin (2009) in their study, *Micro-organisms: Everyday Knowledge Predates and Contrasts with School Knowledge*, have confirmed the need to induce pupils to express their prior knowledge in order to improve their learning. They have shown that using everyday examples that students are familiar with makes learning better. These and other studies have a solid foundation for indigenous and Afro-sensed community research to build on. Lately, Silseth (2018) made a significant contribution in understanding the interface between the two knowledges. He aptly showed how continuities and discontinuities between social practices in schools and the everyday lives of students are important topics of investigation in educational research. His work also provided a mirror through which African scholars can apply self-reflection.

About four years ago, Banda and Banda (2017) conducted sterling work on the need to re-consider the everyday experiences of students when teaching research. They demonstrated how everyday knowledge could be incorporated into classroom practices of institutions of higher learning. This, too, could inform us on how we can use diversity as an advantage rather than a barrier.

These and other similar studies leave us with one message: there is a need to repatriate from the Western epistemologies of doing research to ILR that pivots around an African framework. This is not by any means a call for the eradication of Western views of research, but to raise awareness of the need for knowledge that is of most worth to our indigenous community. The knowledge is relevant to the requisites of the moment. If we are willing and ready, ILR is possible and achievable in our lifetime.

To return to the thesis of this chapter, it befits us, all of us who are the proponents of indigenous community research to be convinced that taking the local context into cognisance is a better way of doing research. If there is any doubt about its usefulness to the community of knowledge in the world, then we will have

no passion to drive it forward. We cannot do much if we hobble between what we want to be and what we are now at the moment. I think what has locked us down is a lack of faith in what we purport to believe. We are doubting Thomases.

This fear to come out boldly from the shackles of Western education confirms what others like Zulu (2006) say that indigenous community research is simplistic or anecdotal. This misconception leads to research procured through African epistemologies always remaining in the shadows of Western globalised ideas. ILR is always projected by its antagonists as a stagnant, limited and inoperative paradigm, which leads others to conclude that any discussion about it is but a noise. If we are to push its agenda forward, we must passionately believe that nothing is impossible.

This claim is supported by Chilisa and Ntseane (2010) who have demonstrated how the African gender theory and policy in Botswana, which is influenced by the Western views of knowing, have tended to 'reduce women and girls' experiences to the categories of 'victim' and 'other' (Chilisa & Ntseane 2010:617). She has also shown how Western male hegemony enters the school through subjects such as religion and may be reinforced through Tswana culture, embodied in language and rituals, generating multiple centres of oppression for girls. They have also shown how this has infiltrated the entire way of conducting research from a local indigenous community perspective (Chilisa & Ntseane 2010).

There is a wealth of knowledge that can be mined through local indigenous community research that lies fallow in slick misconceptions about African inferiority. For example, the local indigenous community research promotes a mutual respect for the opinions of others, treatment of elders with respect, the promotion of dialogue, lessons about conflict negotiation, the spirit of tolerance and forgiveness, and the spirit to face the future openly (Zulu 2006). Another perfect example of this wealth of knowledge is advanced by Semali (1999) when he



pointed out that local indigenous research is independent of the Western epistemologies and can use community knowledge produced from local history to enrich its people and other countries, and people enrich people globally.

It is from this perspective that this chapter calls for a critical discourse regarding the utility and the placement of indigenous African theoretical and philosophical ideas at the centre of research and policy development. It also calls for the resurrection of African epistemology, and the departure from the rhetoric and theoretic to the practical and eclectic. Unless this is done, students and other interested parties will soon run out of patience with what I term a talk show that African scholars are engaged in but which leads to little action. The students will soon force their way into our well air-conditioned offices where we endlessly quibble about inventing new theories and overthrow us. In the next section, I cite two examples that support my thesis. These are from the works of Masha (2007) and Ramani et al. (2007) and their research teams.

An example of this perspective is revealed in the work of Masha (2007): *A Journey in the Construction of Meaning: Experiencing and Accounting for Emergent Research Methodology*. Masha, in this beautiful elucidation of what research is, pieces together an appealing idea of how a good research problem could be conceptualised. Although he does not say so, I would venture to argue that he argues for a research approach that is reconcilable with local community research. Masha (2007) argued that in South Africa, local IKS are characterised by sharing and temporality. For instance, in the case of dances, dancers who go to the centre do so in turns, and when one is in the centre of the circle, the others support him/her by singing and clapping of hands and ululating. No one is to be dominant and permanent. This notion of knowing affiliated to the notions of curriculum as nomadic and rhizomatic, as espoused by Guattari and Deleuze (2000), is one which I will now explain briefly.

The concepts nomadic and rhizomatic are introduced by Guattari and Deleuze (2000) who made a significant contribution to understand curriculum as a process in their work entitled: *A Thousand Plateaus*. Their conceptualisation strongly resonates with contemporary discourse about indigenous local community research. They coined the term 'nomadic' from the image of a wanderer, one of a race or tribe without fixed abode, but moving about from place to place according to the state of the pasturage or food supply. Guattari and Deleuze (2000) stated that curriculum is always in the state of flux, changing and adapting as and when there is a need.

According to Guattari and Deleuze (2000), the rhizome image is derived from a root-like subterranean stem, which usually produces roots below and sends up shoots progressively from its nodes. This is unlike an arborescent, which is a term used to describe thinking marked by insistence on totalising principles, binaries and dualism. The local indigenous research is opposed to a conception of research as arborescent but instead prefers to describe as rhizomatic. Zulu's (2006:36) paper, 'Critical Indigenous African Education and Knowledge', buttresses this claim when he describes an African way of knowing as a means to an end: social responsibility, spiral and moral values, participation in ceremonies and rituals, imitations, imitation, recitation, demonstration, poetry, reasoning, sport, epic, etc.

Another notable work pushing the frontier of indigenous community research is that of Ramani and Joseph (2002) in the early 2000s. A typical example of their good work is entitled: 'Breaking new ground: Introducing an African language as the medium of instruction at the University of the North: New developments and research'. It is a great pity that this work was not given the recognition it deserved at its home as Jesus himself had pointed out that 'a prophet has no honour in his own country' (Jn 4:44). Ramani and Joseph (2002) argued that although 'additive multilingualism has been the long-nourished vision of

applied linguists and multilingual specialists worldwide, it has not yet become a reality in South Africa' (in Setati 2008).

South Africa, with 11 official languages, would be an ideal space to experiment with trans-languaging in the classrooms to promote diversity (Makalela 2017b). Ramani and Joseph (2002) averred that:

African languages are used in the informal domains of communication and are restricted in formal education to being learnt as a subject (L1 or L2), but rarely as official medium of instruction and assessment. As a result, English continues to displace African languages, both symbolically and functionally. (p. 233)

This also pertains to the African heritage carried in these languages. This points to the fact that African scholars have not exerted themselves to dismantle colonialism in higher education.

Unfortunately, these fledgling initiatives did not take root because the African scholars, particularly those in Curriculum Studies, did not rally around their team (Ramani & Joseph 2002) to serve as midwives. Had these ideas been nurtured more carefully and sensitively, then Sepedi would perhaps be used as a medium of instruction in classroom communication, in reading materials and in assessment at the University of Limpopo today.

Regrettably, African scholars at this University missed yet another golden opportunity as they were trapped in the rhetoric spider web of the technocratic curriculum development rather than in the practical, Afro-sensed and, indeed, the eclectic. Elsewhere (Themane 2011) I have decried technocratic tendencies that have recently dominated curriculum development in South African universities. This is characterised by an over-emphasis on curriculum development (calculation of credits and notional hours) at the expense of understanding curriculum. Unfortunately, the biblical adage has become true for promoters of local indigenous research: 'The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved' (Jr 8:20).

Yet, another good work from Esther Ramani and her research team (Ramani et al. 2007) which has gone unnoticed is: *Theorising from the Classroom*, where they elucidate a possible methodology for integrating theory and practice in the classroom. They (Ramani et al. 2007) argued that the theoretical-input model does not work because it superimposes a structure on the process of learning, which should be natural. It might encourage teachers to theorise and conceptualise their own practice as a basis for articulating, examining and revising their assumptions in their worldview. Rather than beginning with established methods and principles, they could use their craft knowledge and their homebrewed skills to tackle their problems.

There may be other such efforts where research has moved from a slavish reliance on the rhetoric to break the mould to shift to the practical and the eclectic. Zulu (2006) pointed out some of these in science and technology. In mathematics, I am reminded of the work of Zulu (2013), which is an attempt to teach mathematics using indigenous mathematical knowledge. He advocates for the recognition of the use of mother tongue (Tswana), the use of cultural background and the learner's background in the teaching of mathematics. This is in line with my conceptualisation of local indigenous community research that I am advocating in this chapter. Using local experiences helps to elucidate the practice of math, helping students make sense of it and use it in practice in their real lives. Although the work is still at an embryonic stage, it is promising. Unfortunately, such flickering ideas that are like a bruised reed have often been broken, and their smouldering wick quenched.

This rising trend of the quest for a local indigenous community research is observable in other fields as well, which the scope of this chapter will not allow me to enter fully. The more recent work of Kaya and Seleti (2013) exemplified my point. They made a valuable contribution by calling on researchers to look into local IK in other fields such as geography, ecology, conservation,

agriculture, pharmacy and other applied sciences and promote the implementation of local indigenous community research that is relevant to their localities.

However, such efforts need to be translated into practical application if they are to be meaningful to the man in the streets of Bochum in Limpopo province. Otherwise, they remain exclusive to the chosen few and unlikely to make any meaningful impact on the local people (Darko 2014). An example of this would be to help local people plough their maize fields and take care of their livestock (Zobolo & Mkabela 2006).

I think that current approaches to research are not a part of communities where research takes place, especially African communities, because ideas from universities appear lofty and abstract. Universities appear more like white elephants. The way they are approaching research is unlikely to address issues that matter to rural/indigenous communities. For example, higher education cannot address the growing environmental challenges facing the African continent today; challenges include pollution, poor sanitation, deforestation, desertification, erosion and degradation, HIV and AIDS, poor education and primary health systems. These and many more problems continue unabated and are on the rise despite millions of rands being allocated towards the search for solutions.

But, despite these sporadic contributions cited here, there is still a paucity of research, especially action research that promotes or prioritises indigenous community research as seen as the African ontology and epistemology alternative to Western research. The gap becomes even wider when it comes to science and technology. In South Africa, these subjects were reserved for white children during the apartheid era and continue to handicap them at university.

This is not surprising given the history of the exclusion of African ways of knowing and creating knowledge, which validate African experiences. As I have pointed out earlier, unless a

proactive community of African scholars resurrects and gives Africa-sensed research a new meaning and significance, it is doomed. However, the frustrated state of indigenous community research should not lead to despondency. All fields of intellectual activity are liable to such crises. It should not be allowed to reach a state of inertia, but should rather rekindle the zeal to move forward. The two examples cited in the foregoing section should give us the courage to move forward. To do so, in the next section I will answer the question: what could constitute the indigenous community?

The recent calls for a decolonised curriculum by students at South African universities, and elsewhere in the world, have provided a lifeline to the indigenous community research to redeem itself. If this opportunity could be grabbed and embraced, it might change the landscape of South African Higher Education forever. But, this may not be easy as the field is facing a crisis. This is a crisis of breaking the shackles of the credulous reliance on the theoretic or the principle. This crisis is not unique to indigenous community research only; it is common to all intellectual activities such as philosophy, where an idea can become outdated yet be slavishly and dogmatically defended.

Academics tend to start a circle, rising up by inventing new ideas and principles and reaching their zenith where these flourish (Schwab 1969; Ward 1995). But, regrettably, in the course of time, these ideas and principles tend to become irrelevant. They fail to solve the problems and face new challenges. When the once-trusted and relied upon solutions that are provided by these principles and ideas become obsolete, then a crisis kicks in. People become despondent with the dream of reaching the Promised Land and begin to move into diverse directions. Although this may be a crude caricature of the state of indigenous community research, I think we have reached such a point of saturation with what has always been viewed as true research. To defend this position, I want to borrow from Schwab's (1969) framework of a crisis of curriculum theory, to describe the crisis

facing indigenous community research today, at least in South Africa. In the ensuing paragraph, I want to venture onto this holy ground where angels dare to tread. Hopefully, I will not at all be wearied at length and be bowed by the overwhelming sense of my smallness in the ocean whose waters I am not familiar with (Masoga 2017).

I briefly observe four kinds of crises that face indigenous community research. Firstly, the field is unable to deliver a decolonised or Africanised indigenous community research because of its reliance on the traditional methods of conducting research which were brought over from Europe, for example. One such example is its tendency to borrow from classic psychology, which relies on the objective world where everything should be measured by statistical methods. Stories of lived experiences of people, which is characteristic of how most African people know, are taken as anecdotal and not as scientific or hard data and therefore unauthentic. To be freed from this slavery, there is a need for home-grown solutions that are applicable to communities where research is carried out.

Secondly, another crisis facing local indigenous community research is the shift from the discourse about its principles and methods of the subject matter to a discussion about the principles and methods themselves. I have found a number of conferences I recently attended on conducting research from an indigenous perspective boring because the speakers were lamenting the fact that local indigenous community research was captured by the West and the North, without providing practical suggestions on how to overcome this. This is what others refer to as talks about talks. Much effort and time is wasted on debates about which methods and principles are better than which. In such discourse, there is movement from one theory to another and from theory to meta-theory. After all these hair-splitting definitions of concepts, the actual implementation remains unattended. This crisis needs to be addressed if the indigenous community research agenda is to be pushed forward.

Thirdly, the crisis is with regard to the yearning to go back to the original state before the African ways of knowledge were corrupted by Western thought. More calls are being made for moving back to basics – a desire to go back to a state of innocence in search of a liberating theory. Whether this is possible or not is the question. The problem with this thinking is that the world has become a global village. Africa cannot divorce itself from the rest of the world.

Fourthly, the crisis is manifested by a movement to the sidelines, where researchers in the field tend to adopt the role of observers, commentators and critics of the field. Many of us in the field are bent on crushing what others are trying to build rather than advancing the field.

## ■ Way forward

Having outlined the crises besetting indigenous community research, I should acknowledge the fact that the task of making the alternative a reality is gnarled with complexities, contradictions and absurdities. But this frustrating state of the field is not insurmountable and does not warrant any feeling of guilt. All fields of intellectual activity are liable to such crises at one point or the other. Therefore, we should keep on being indefatigable until the walls of Jericho crumble.

A subject area like indigenous community research is much bigger than any theory can accommodate or explain. Its subject matter is much more variable and much more complex than a single theory can accommodate. This is because research is always emergent and nomadic (but not, unfortunately, always apparent) by its nature and design than its theories can encompass. Its subject is not just about problem formulation, rules, content, facts and so on, but there are underlying assertions made behind these that are more than meets the eye. Here is where theory, no matter how good it might be, falls short of its glory. Its inadequacy and insufficiency form the *a fortiori* of my



thesis that less energy should be directed to the theoretic of what indigenous community research is rather carrying it out. Do we mean that we should throw away theory as something undesirable? By no means! I never intend to say that theory is not a desideratum at all. On the contrary, I have noted elsewhere the need for a strong theory in curriculum development (Themane 2011).

Perhaps at this stage, it is opportune to define what the practical means as applied in the application of indigenous community research, with an African flavour. It is important to do so because it forms the foundation of my inquiry. Undoubtedly, the concept carries nuances of meanings. It does not have an official meaning. So, there is a need to enclose it within the narrowest limits of this chapter. As I alluded to at the start of this essay, I have tailored this description on Schwab's (1969) conceptual framework of the practical. I devote the ensuing section to this description.

Schwab's (1969) essays on the practical need to be understood within a specific context. They emerged from a set of conversations in the 1960s, which were in search of a new curriculum for American public schools, in response to the revolution of science. One consequence of this was the 'contestation over the scope and nature of the curriculum work, and particularly curriculum research, within colleges of education' (Schwab, in Roby 2008). In the background of this revolution was the increasing awareness that much of the curriculum was not making any significant impact on society. According to Schwab (in Roby 2008), 'schools as institutions were not, it seemed, responsive to direction by way of top-down, expert-based command-and-control or elite ideologies and platforms'. The curriculum field faced new challenges. It faced the problem of how it fitted into such developments: What might a 'new' Curriculum Studies be like? What should curriculum research look like? What should be the relationship between research in and around the curriculum? This awakening was to play an important part in the propositions for curriculum reform.

It is against this backdrop that Schwab (1969) proposed the need for the practical. Without being bogged down by the finer details of what the practical stands for, I can summarise it as the solution to problems that faced Curriculum Studies than was to be the creation of what he called the 'commonplaces' of educational thinking. By this, he meant a gathering of different stakeholders as learners, teachers, subject matters and the sociocultural milieu, and the fourth being a curriculum specialist who was to work with other stakeholders to ensure that the commonplaces are well coordinated. From this conceptual framework, I have developed the need for an eclectic model. It is from this vantage point that indigenous community research should be buttressed in order to acknowledge the interests and views of an African perspective to research.

The challenges of developing an inclusive curriculum or research require that we address issues of race, representation and identity. Here is where the sociocultural milieu in the commonplaces can become relevant (Sefa Dei 1995). This way of looking at research could reflect the diversity of our societies, which includes the knowledge of the local indigenous people, such as Africans, or even tribes. This will give African students and researchers alike an opportunity to reflect on issues from their own perspectives, for example, how to talk to elders when conducting interviews.

Besides this alternative route to inclusion, I doubt if there is any unified theory in the immediate future that can tell us how to put together a credible research agenda that could confront research problems that exclude indigenous local community research. The practical, which leads to the eclectic, seems a viable option at the moment, its shortcomings notwithstanding. For example, it could be by providing numerous avenues to knowledge creation rather than relying on one theory only. This can be exemplified by focus group interviews with elderly people in a rural setting. The practical, and indeed the eclectic model, seems to me the credible route given the fact that it is unsystematic,

uneasy, pragmatic and uncertain. This flight of thought is not completely new. About two decades ago, Masoga (2002) in his provocative paper, 'Contesting Space and Time: Intellectual Property Rights and the IKS Research in South African Universities', raised similar questions at an international conference in Dakar, Senegal, which I think to date have not been satisfactorily answered.

When once we clearly grasp the momentous interests that are involved in the belief in the indigenous community research, in particular from an African perspective, we shall attempt to answer these questions. We shall attempt to understand what the form and central features are in the renaissance of African universities. It often seems that African researchers are so inebriated with Western epistemologies that they do not realise the vastness of the consequences that it brings. Even those who hold firmly to indigenous community research are tempted to regard it as an add-on and therefore belonging to the periphery of 'real research'. Indeed, all of us have been led to dissociate it from the rest. And not infrequently, we substitute it with Western ways of knowing, which we have made our sounding board. This obsession needs to be modulated.

## ■ Conclusion

I have argued that the resurrection of the indigenous community research with an African flavour lies not in the religious adherence to a specific theory or theories but in embracing and ennobling the practical and indeed the eclectic. I have shown how this alternative way of looking at research could inject verdure in African education. The inclusion of African perspectives of doing research, which accommodates varied and diversified views, holds a promise. Stringent regularities are stifling rather than enabling.

So far, I have cleared the way for the ground of my inquiry. If we grant the view of the practical, then there is no antecedent

improbable in the indigenous community research as unsurmountable. Thus, the question is not simply: Is the indigenous community research with an Africanised sense possible? But, it is: How can it be dovetailed with the rest of what exists today? Let us keep the conversation going.

## ■ Summary

This chapter has advanced two arguments: ILR is the way to go if we are to decolonise the curriculum. To do so, it needs to move from the rhetoric or theoretic to the practical. However, the practical should be based on sound rationality. The other argument is that the best way to be practical in the African context is to divorce from the Eurocentric approach to ways of knowing in accordance with the Afro-sensed ILR. However, I have not provided absolute answers to these issues, but ideas for further engagement.



# Cultural uses of indigenous grasses in Zimbabwe

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## ■ Introduction

*'[...] All flesh is grass [...]'*

- Isaiah 40:6

Grasses are an important feature of the ecosystems of southern Africa. Grasslands are a major component of the vegetation in the predominant savanna ecosystem (Knoop & Walker 1985; Skarpe 1992). From an ecosystem services perspective, grasslands are important in soil conservation, water catchments, as a food resource to the diverse herbivore populations of southern Africa associated with them (hence the above reference to the biblical verse 'All flesh is grass [...]'), and in carbon sequestration. Savanna grasslands are also home to Africa's 'big five' game (the African elephant, black rhinoceros, Cape buffalo, African lion and African leopard) and are therefore ecologically important. Therefore, the chapter aims to explore the cultural uses of indigenous grasses in Zimbabwe, a diversion for the research emphasis on scientific (taxonomic and ecological) aspects of grass species.

Grasses have had a significant influence on the history of humankind. Among plants that have been domesticated and are regularly utilised by humankind worldwide are members of the grass family. Grain cereals such as maize, wheat and rice comprise the staple carbohydrate sources for most human societies around the world (De Wet 1981). Grasses form the main component of cultivated and wild/natural pastures and comprise the natural food source for most of our herbivorous wildlife. The grass family is the fifth-largest plant family, and it is of immense value to humankind, livestock and wildlife.

Research on various aspects of the grass family in the southern African region has been on their taxonomy (Bennett 1980; Chipindall & Crook 1976; Clayton & Renvoize 1982; Russell 1988; Russell et al. 1991; Van Oudtshoorn 1999), ecology

(Rattray, 1957; Rattray 1960a) and pasture use (Meredith 1955; SARCCUS 1961). However, the focus of research on the uses of indigenous grasses has been on their value as pasture, while other important ethnobotanical uses by indigenous communities have been underplayed and largely excluded (Cocks & Dold 2004). This unfortunate oversight is attributable to the neglect by Western modern grass science of the vast IK on grasses and their sociocultural and economic values to local communities as they focus mainly on the scientific aspects of taxonomy and ecology. In addition, most research on ethnobotanical uses of plants has been done by non-indigenous people who tend to focus mainly on non-grass plant species that are used as medicine or food, with very little focus on sociocultural aspects.

The emphasis of this chapter is on people-plant relationships, an aspect that is usually underrepresented. It draws attention to the sociocultural uses of indigenous grasses by local communities in southern Africa, more specifically in Zimbabwe. The sociocultural grass uses have been grouped into the following categories: grasses used traditionally as food, grasses used for utilitarian purposes, grasses used as construction materials and grasses used as environmental indicators.

## ■ Methodology

The uses of indigenous grasses discussed in this chapter are based on our observations and interactive conversations with people in urban food markets and rural homes of indigenous people across the country and from our own cultural knowledge and experiences over time, spanning the period 2002–2017. Observations of practice are an important indigenous way of learning and knowledge transmission within indigenous community contexts, as exemplified by the Shona phrase '*chaita mumwe chitewo*', meaning 'what you observe others do also do'.



These observations are substantiated with literature wherever possible. Interactive discussions were used to elicit more in-depth knowledge on the cultural uses from the IK holders and practitioners.

## ■ Cultural significance of grasses to indigenous communities

Indigenous communities have relied heavily on the natural environment for their livelihood, sustenance, and well-being. Local plants play a very important role in such communities, providing food, raw materials and medicines, among many other livelihood products. The relationships between plants and people are more often clearer in indigenous societies, as is demonstrated by the knowledge they have accumulated over generations on the plants around them.

Zimbabwe is predominantly covered by savanna vegetation and has more than 500 species of indigenous and naturalised grasses (Chapano 2002). Indigenous grasses of Zimbabwe are an integral part of the sociocultural system of indigenous communities. Grasses comprise part of non-timber forest products (NTFPs)<sup>16</sup> that are of cultural and practical importance to the sustenance of the livelihood of local communities. They are an abundant and renewable resource with a relatively short reproduction cycle. The local communities reflect their long-term interaction with these grassland ecosystems through their varied uses of grasses around them, which are part of their cultural heritage. The various uses of indigenous grasses by indigenous people in Zimbabwe are discussed in this chapter. These provide evidence of grassroots innovation that draws on people's IK.

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16. NTFPs or non-woody forest products are any products from forests other than timber or wood; they include plants used for food, beverages, medicines, barks, fibre and fodder, among others.

## ■ Indigenous cultural uses of indigenous grasses

### ■ Grasses traditionally used as foods

#### □ Cereals

The survival of many indigenous southern African communities over many generations has been because of their reliance on a broad local food base to supply their nutritional requirements. A wide range of indigenous grass species were used as carbohydrate sources by local communities in the past, with several of them being domesticated.

Traditionally, the three most important grains in southern Africa prior to the introduction of maize and wheat were sorghum (Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2), finger millet or rapoko (Figure 4.3), and pearl or bulrush millet. They are estimated to have been under cultivation as far back as 5000 years ago (Russell et al. 1991; Van Oudtshoorn 1999). These indigenous cereals still have considerable food value among the locals, as is exemplified by their continued cultivation at present, albeit at a subsistence scale. Most of these grains are drought resistant, can thrive in harsh, marginal agricultural zones where the exotic cereals fail, and are now usually grown as a local food security measure against the emerging climate change effects (Shava et al. 2009). It is interesting to note that there was a preference for the larger-grain-sized species in the selection of indigenous cereals for cultivation. The ease of harvesting and processing was most likely to have influenced this selection as well as fewer attacks on ripe crops by birds.

Sorghum, rapoko and bulrush millet now fall under the underutilised or minor indigenous small-grain cereals category (Board on Science and Technology for International Development 1996) as they have declined rapidly in popularity and cultivation compared with the now popular exotic cereals such as maize, wheat and rice, which have superseded them as dietary staples in



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.1:** A sorghum plant.

southern Africa. As a result, indigenous cereals have been relegated to use only as dietary substitutes by indigenous communities, particularly during times of famine. This decline also shows a trend by local communities to select in favour of large-grained cereal crop species. This trend towards exotic cereals is because of the difficulties in processing the indigenous small-grained crops, the higher producer prices offered by both local and international markets for these crops and the changing food preferences among local communities. This trend has been largely supported by preference and support for exotic hybrid crop varieties spearheaded by government agricultural extension workers, working in cohort with seed companies to promote hybrid seed varieties, at the expense of local crops. Such a trend indicates a narrowing of the original plant food resource base for



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.2:** Harvested sorghum sweet *ipwa/imfe* [cane/reed] with some indigenous spiny cucumbers in the background.

local communities, which was earlier characterised by indigenous species that were more adapted to the local conditions. This dietary shift has had dire consequences on the food security of local communities as the exotic crops regularly fail under adverse conditions, are prone to pest and disease attacks, are labour intensive and require massive and expensive inorganic fertilisers and agrochemical inputs.

The reliance on exotic cereals as dietary staples has negative environmental impacts that extend beyond food security such as the pollution resulting from agricultural chemicals and impact of monoculture practices on crop biodiversity. Furthermore, these exotic large-grained cereals are less adapted to local semi-arid conditions, thereby exposing the small-scale farmers who are



Source: Photo taken by Soul Shava, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Soul Shava.

**FIGURE 4.3:** A finger millet plant.

dependent on rain-fed agriculture to risks and vulnerabilities from droughts. Such risks and vulnerabilities are more pronounced in the present era where there is increased frequency and intensity of droughts in southern Africa because of the effects of climate (eds. Nhamo & Shava 2015).

Some commonly used traditional grain crops are listed in Table 4.1.

Fortunately, several efforts are now being made to resuscitate, improve and popularise indigenous small-grain cereals, in particular in the semi-arid areas where rainfall is unreliable. Research is being conducted in Zimbabwe by the Sorghum and Millet Research Team of the Division of Agriculture and Rural

**TABLE 4.1:** Local knowledge on commonly used and domesticated indigenous cereals.

Scientific name	Common and indigenous names	Growth conditions	Preparation and uses
<i>Eleusine coracana</i>	Finger millet, rapoko (English); <i>zviyo, njera, rukweza</i> (Shona); <i>uphoko</i> (Ndebele).	Finger millet is widely cultivated in areas where the annual rainfall is above 800 mm.	The grain is ground into a meal, which is then used to make porridge or <i>sadza</i> .
<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i>	Bulrush mullet, pearl millet (English); <i>mhunga</i> (Shona); <i>inyawuthi</i> (Ndebele).	Bullrush millet grows well under hot, semi-arid conditions as are found in the Zimbabwean Lowveld. It provides better food security under such conditions despite being not as popular as maize.	The grain is pounded or ground into a meal, which is then used to make porridge or <i>sadza</i> .
<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	Sorghum (English); <i>mapfunde, mashava</i> (Shona); <i>amabele</i> (Ndebele).	Sorghum grows very well even in low rainfall areas. However, like other traditional cereals, it has since been replaced by maize as a staple food.	The ground meal from the grain is used to make porridge or <i>sadza</i> . A sweet variety of sorghum, sweet cane (English), <i>ipwa</i> (Shona), <i>imfe</i> (Ndebele), is grown for its culms, which have a high sugar content. The culms are chewed raw for their sweet sap when they are mature.

Extension in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation in Zimbabwe. Research and popularisation of small-grain cereals are also being undertaken by the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics. It is hoped that continued research and local community awareness will yield positive results towards the cultivation of indigenous cereals in the long run.

Less commonly used indigenous grain cereals are tabulated in Table 4.2. Most of these are used only during times of severe famine and are collected from the wild. However, these wild grain

**TABLE 4.2:** Less commonly used wild indigenous cereals.

Latin name	Common name(s)	Supporting information sources (references)
<i>Brachiaria brizantha</i>	Upright brachiaria, common signal grass (English), <i>zinyaruzoka</i> (Shona)	Reynolds (1991)
<i>Brachiaria deflexa</i>	False signal grass, Guinea millet (English)	Scudder (1962, 1971)
<i>Dactyloctenium giganteum</i>	Giant crow foot grass, <i>Nsoko</i> (Tonga)	Scudder (1962, 1971)
<i>Echinochloa colona</i>	Jungle rice (English), <i>Tsoboda</i> (Shona), <i>Chinalumbwa</i> (Tonga)	Scudder (1962, 1971); Reynolds (1991)
<i>Echinochloa crus-galli</i>	Barnyard millet (English)	Scudder (1962)
<i>Echinochloa pyramidalis</i>	Antelope grass (English)	Dalziel (1937)
<i>Leptochloa uniflora</i>		Scudder (1962, 1971)
<i>Oryza longistaminata</i>	Wild rice (English)	Reynolds (1991)
<i>Panicum coloratum</i>	Buffalo grass (English)	
<i>Panicum maximum</i>	Guinea grass (English); <i>chitsetse</i> , <i>chivavane</i> (Shona); <i>uhatshi</i> (Ndebele); <i>nsekenene</i> (Tonga)	Scudder (1962, 1971)
<i>Panicum novemnerve</i>		Reynolds (1991); Scudder (1962,1971)
<i>Rottboellia cochinchinensis</i>	Guineafowl grass, <i>shamva</i> grass (English)	Reynolds (1991)
<i>Sorghum bicolor subsp. arundinaceum</i>	Common wild sorghum (English)	Scudder (1962, 1971)
<i>Sorghum versicolor</i>	Black Sudan grass (English)	Reynolds (1991)
<i>Sporobolus panicoides</i>	Famine grass (English), <i>Kambumbu</i> (Tonga)	Chipindall and Crook (1976)
<i>Urochloa mosambicensis</i>	<i>Gonya</i> grass (English), <i>mbawani</i> (Shona)	Reynolds (1991); Scudder (1962,1971)
<i>Urochloa trichopus</i>	<i>Mpunganini</i> (Tonga)	Reynolds (1991)

cereals are unknown to the younger generations, and their use is extremely marginal even among the remote communities, who only indicate that they have been used in the past.

## □ Beverages

Several traditional beverages are made from indigenous cereals. The most popular traditional beverage is the opaque alcoholic brew *doro* or *hwahwa* in Shona or *utshwala* in Ndebele. This traditional beer is mainly consumed in social gatherings, community functions such as traditional participatory communal ploughing and weeding practices (*nhimbe* in Shona, *ilima* in Ndebele), beer parties, weddings, and funerals. It is also prominent in religious/spiritual ceremonies [*bira*] where it plays a symbolic role as libation [*kupira mudzimu, ukunikela amadlozi*] when communicating with the ancestral spirits. The beer is made from grain malt, usually of sorghum (*mapfunde* in Shona, *amabele* in Ndebele), finger millet (*zviyo* in Shona, *amabele* in Ndebele) and bullrush millet (*mhunga* in Shona, *inyawuthi* in Ndebele).

The malting process is similar for all species, with the grain being steeped in water until it starts to germinate. The germinating grain is dried in the sun, ground, boiled into porridge and allowed to cool. Fermented malt is added, and the brew is left to stand for a day to several days. The resultant brew is then strained through a sieve and is ready for serving. This brewing process is traditionally undertaken by women. Currently, however, opaque beer is commercially produced by a number of local breweries. For this purpose, selected varieties are used, and the crop is produced under contract terms between the farmer and the brewing company. This arrangement, however, still sidelines small-scale farmers who may be seeking markets to sell their own produce commercially.

A non-alcoholic fermented brew of *mahewu* (Shona) or *amahewu* (Ndebele) is made by adding ground germinated grain from the same species to thin grain porridge and leaving this to stand overnight. The resulting fermented, sour-tasting brew is drunk as an energy drink for performing manual jobs. Nowadays, sugar is added to sweeten it. Currently, mahewu is now being



commercially produced and packaged with a variety of flavours added to it.

## ■ Domestic utilitarian items and crafts

A variety of traditional domestic utility items are made from grasses. These include items such as sleeping mats (*rupasa* in Shona, *icansi* in Ndebele, Figure 4.4), brooms (*mutsvairo* in Shona, *umthanyelo* in Ndebele, Figure 4.5), winnowing baskets (*rusero* in Shona, *isitsha sokupepetha* in Ndebele, Figure 4.6), carrying baskets (Figure 4.7) and containers (*tswanda* in Shona, *incebethu* in Ndebele). Most of these items are still used around



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.4:** A man making a traditional grass mat, with sheafs of thatching grass in the background.



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.5:** A woman using a traditional broom to sweep the homestead yard.

the home. In the past, the traditional making of most craftware has been the domain of women. Currently, however, there is an economic driven shift towards mass-producing utensils and decorative crafts for commercial purposes, with some communities dominating the trade, such as the Tonga tribeswomen who make very popular decorative baskets. Other modern crafts from indigenous grasses include door, wall and floor mats, shopping baskets, washing baskets, dog baskets, trays and basket chairs. Both men and women are involved in the making of these modern, commercialised craftware items. Some of the uses of indigenous grasses for utility items and craftware are discussed in detail further.



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.6:** Traditional winnowing *rusero* [baskets].

## ■ Broom grasses

Some grasses are used for making traditional hand brooms, as is implied by the common Shona and Ndebele names (*mutsvairo*, *umthanyelo*) which mean broom when translated into English. Some broom grasses are listed in Table 4.3.

## ■ Craftware grasses

Several grasses used for craftware purposes are listed in Table 4.4.



Source: Photo taken by Soul Shava, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Soul Shava.

**FIGURE 4.7:** Traditional carrying basket.

**TABLE 4.3:** Some indigenous broom grasses.

Latin name	Common name(s)
<i>Aristida junciformis</i> and other <i>Aristida</i> species	Bristle grass (English), <i>mutsvairo</i> (Shona), <i>inkonkoni</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Loudetia simplex</i>	Common russet grass (English), <i>umthanyelo</i> , <i>uzungu</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Miscanthus junceus</i>	Broom grass (English); <i>indabula</i> , <i>umthala</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Pogonarthria squarrosa</i>	Herringbone grass, cross grass (English), <i>nyakatswatswa</i> (Shona), <i>umadolwane</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i>	Cat's tail grass(English); <i>dindindi</i> , <i>mungapunga</i> (Shona); <i>isikhaba</i> , <i>umsingizane</i> (Ndebele).

**TABLE 4.4:** Some indigenous grasses used in making craftware.

Scientific name	Common name	Uses
<i>Miscanthus junceus</i>	Broom grass (English); <i>indabula</i> , <i>umthala</i> (Ndebele).	Bundles of dry culm portions are used as rattles or castanets ( <i>indabula</i> ) during traditional Ndebele dances. The culms ( <i>umthala</i> ) are also used in weaving a variety of crafts.
<i>Oxytenanthera abyssinica</i>	Bindura bamboo (English); <i>muchenjere</i> , <i>mushenjere</i> (Shona); <i>umhlangamalambo</i> (Ndebele).	Split culms of this grass are used in basketry, in making musical flutes and in making decorative craftwork.
<i>Phragmites mauritianus</i>	Reed (English); <i>tsanga</i> (Shona); <i>umhlanga</i> (Ndebele).	The culms of this riverine grass are split longitudinally and sewn together to make sleeping mats. The culms are also used in the making of basket chairs, large containers, washing baskets, shopping baskets and traditional fishing traps.

## ■ Grasses used for construction purposes

Grasses are a prominent feature in traditionally constructed structures. They are used mainly to thatch traditional huts and other similar structures within the traditional village homesteads. Thatching is a gendered activity (Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9). Women harvest the thatch by cutting the grass close to the base using a sickle and trim it to rid it of loose leaf-blades and flowering racemes. These traditional grass-harvesting practices play(ed) a significant role in seed dispersal, grass regeneration and the regulation of grass biomass. The cut grass is then tied into bundles using strips of bark [*rwodzi*] with all the bases facing one end and stored to dry. The women then bring the dry grass bundles to the home for thatching (Figure 4.8). Men have the traditional role of thatching the huts (Figure 4.9). In the traditional thatching of the roof, bark rope [*rwodzi*] made from the inner



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.8:** Women cut and bring the thatch to the homestead.

bark of tree branches, mainly from the *mupfuti* (*Brachystegia boehmii*), *musasa* (*Brachystegia speciformis*) and the *munhondo* (*Julbernardia globiflora*) trees, was used to fasten the thatch to the wooden pole roof.

Thatched roofs are now a popular, modern trending feature in affluent urban homes for gazebos. Additionally, safari and game chalets and hotels in tourist resort areas extensively use thatching as a means to give them an authentic look and feel that is associated with an African cultural background. Importantly, local communities still consider thatching to be a mainstay of roofing materials.

The most common thatching grasses are *Hyparrhenia* and *Hyperthalia* species because of their long culms and abundant



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.9:** Man thatching a roof.

distribution in the savanna ecosystem. The most popularly used and widespread thatching grass is *Hyparrhenia filipendula*. However, some grasses like *Andropogon gayanus* are only popular in localised areas where they can be gathered in sufficient quantities for thatching purposes. Other grasses used for thatching are listed in Table 4.5.

Other construction work, such as supporting structures for chicken runs, drying racks and traditional meeting huts (*dare*, Figure 4.10), is done using the more robust-culmed grasses such as *Oxytenanthera abyssinica* and *Phragmites mauritanicus* mentioned earlier. Culms of these grasses are also employed in modern agricultural practices as trellises and stakes to support

**TABLE 4.5:** Some indigenous thatching grasses.

Latin name	Common name(s)
<i>Andropogon gayanus</i>	Blue grass (English).
<i>Cymbopogon caesius</i>	Turpentine grass (English), <i>imbanjana</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Cymbopogon nardus</i>	Tambookie grass (English), <i>huswa hwekupfirira</i> (Shona), <i>utshani bokufulela</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Dichanthium annulatum</i> var. <i>papillosum</i>	Matopos marvel (English), <i>ikhununu</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Heteropogon contortus</i>	Spear grass (English), <i>tsine</i> (Shona), <i>inzala</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Hyparrhenia filipendula</i>	Thatching grass or three o'clock grass (English), <i>zhengezhu</i> or <i>dangaruswa</i> (Shona), or <i>itungwa</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Hyparrhenia nyassae</i>	Bronze-awned thatching grass (English), <i>huswa wekupfirira</i> (Shona), <i>utshani bokufulela</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Hyparrhenia hirta</i>	Thatching grass (English), <i>huswa wekupfirira</i> (Shona), <i>utshani bokufulela</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Hyperthelia dissoluta</i>	Yellow thatching grass, yellow spike thatching grass (English), <i>huswa wekupfirira</i> (Shona), <i>utshani bokufulela</i> (Ndebele).
<i>Pennisetum glaucocladium</i>	River bank pennisetum, <i>Umfuli</i> grass (English), <i>nyakatswatswa</i> (Shona).
<i>Stipagrostis uniplumis</i>	<i>Mutsvairo</i> (Shona), <i>Umthanyelo</i> (Ndebele).

tomatoes, beans and grape vines. Grass thatch is also used in the construction of fences, screens (Figure 4.11) and nesting baskets (Figure 4.12).

## ■ Grasses used as indicators

Grasses are used by local communities to indicate the veld condition with regard to grazing value, land degradation or disturbance, wetland conditions and soil quality (Londe & da Silva 2013; Omari et al. 2018; Sampson 1939). Good quality





Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.10:** A traditional meeting place for man [*padare*] in the background and a traditional granary (*dura*) in the foreground.

grazing is important to indigenous communities who rely on the natural veld as pasture for their livestock. Degraded veld is traditionally identified by the disappearance of certain important grass fodder species through grazing and the appearance and dominance of certain indicator grasses for poor veld conditions that replace them. Degraded veld is avoided, while rich pastureland is preferred. Avoiding degraded land gives it an opportunity for grass regeneration during the period it remains fallow, which is significant in ensuring the ecological sustainability of the areas under grazing stress. Preserving such an indigenous heritage practice of livestock



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.11:** A traditional bathroom (*imba yekugezera*).

migration in traditional grazing areas is important to use the environment sustainably. Soil quality is important for crop cultivation, with richer, fertile soils being preferred. Wetland areas are important to indigenous communities as a source of water for domestic use as well as for watering livestock. Land surrounding wetlands is usually partitioned into community gardens in which crops can be grown all year round because of access to water. Grass indicators of wetlands are therefore important to indigenous communities.

Indigenous grasses used as indicators in Zimbabwe are listed in Table 4.6.



Source: Photo taken by Cryton Zazu, date and location unspecified, published with permission from Cryton Zazu.

**FIGURE 4.12:** A traditional hen nest.

**TABLE 4.6:** Examples of indigenous grasses used as traditional indicators.

Botanical name	Common names	Indicator role
<i>Aristida barbicollis</i>	Spreading bristle grass (English), <i>mutsvairo</i> (Shona).	Indicator of disturbed, degraded or overgrazed land.
<i>Aristida adsensionis</i>	Annual bristle grass (English), <i>kasokokwekababa</i> (Tonga).	Indicator of disturbed, degraded or overgrazed land.
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Couch grass (English), <i>tsangadzi</i> (Shona), <i>uqethu</i> (Ndebele).	Indicator of disturbed, fertile (clay, silt or loamy) soils.
<i>Euisine indica</i>	Rapoko grass (English), <i>soramombe</i> (Shona), <i>Umnyankomo</i> (Ndebele).	Indicator of fertile soils and healthy veld.

Table 4.6 continues on the next page→

**TABLE 4.6 (Continues...):** Examples of indigenous grasses used as traditional indicators.

<b>Botanical name</b>	<b>Common names</b>	<b>Indicator role</b>
<i>Melinis repens</i>	Natal red top (English), <i>bhurakwacha</i> , <i>nyarumvundwe</i> (Shona).	Indicator of disturbed, degraded or overgrazed land.
<i>Perotis patens</i>	Bottle brush grass (English), <i>shavahuru</i> (Shona).	Indicator of disturbed, degraded or overgrazed land.
<i>Pogonarthria squarrosa</i>	Cross grass (English), <i>nyakatswatswa</i> (Shona), <i>umadolwane</i> (Ndebele).	Indicator of disturbed, degraded or overgrazed land.
<i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i>	Cat's tail grass (English); <i>tsinde</i> , <i>dindindi</i> , <i>mhungapunga</i> (Shona); <i>isikhaba</i> , <i>umsingizane</i> (Ndebele).	Indicator of disturbed, degraded or overgrazed land.
<i>Imperata cylindrica</i>	Silver spike, <i>jekacheka</i> (Shona).	Indicator of <i>vlei</i> or wetland conditions.
<i>Oryza longistaminata</i>	Wild rice (English), <i>Mupungasango</i> (Shona).	Indicator of <i>vlei</i> or wetland conditions.
<i>Phragmites mauritianus</i>	Reed (English), <i>tsanga</i> (Shona), <i>umhlanga</i> (Ndebele).	Indicator of <i>vlei</i> or wetland conditions.
<i>Miscanthus junceus</i> ( <i>Miscanthidium junceum</i> )	Broom grass (English), <i>indabula</i> (Ndebele).	Indicator of <i>vlei</i> or wetland conditions.
<i>Panicum maximum</i>	Guinea grass (English); <i>chitsetsere</i> , <i>chivavane</i> (Shona); <i>uhatshi</i> (Ndebele).	Indicator of fertile soils and healthy veld.
<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Red grass, <i>insinde</i> (Ndebele).	Indicator of fertile soils and good veld.

## Conclusion

Indigenous grasses of the savanna ecosystem are important to the livelihoods of indigenous communities in southern Africa. The cultural and practical significance of indigenous grasses to indigenous communities forms an important part of their heritage. However, this role has remained largely undocumented because of a research bias on the taxonomy and possible pasture uses of indigenous grasses. By highlighting some of the traditional uses of indigenous grasses, this article contributes to the necessary process of documenting IK. It also aims at fostering an appreciation

of the cultural and utilitarian values of the indigenous plant biodiversity around them among indigenous people and the need to use it sustainably. It is hoped that, in the process, this will help in the conservation of the indigenous grass genetic resources and the continued sustenance of related traditional knowledge on grasses and their utilisation.

## ■ Summary

This chapter explored the cultural uses of indigenous grasses in Zimbabwe, a diversion for the research emphasis on scientific (taxonomic and ecological) aspects of grass species. The main information in this chapter was mainly drawn from observations and conversations with users of the grasses. The cultural uses varied from the uses of grasses as food to their use for utilitarian purposes and finally to their role as indicators of ecological conditions.

## ■ Acknowledgements

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# Asset-based and participatory methods in Malawi Women's Community Partnership to protect African Indigenous Knowledge

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## ■ Introduction

This chapter explores the use of CBPR to inform asset-based community development (ABCD) for the Women's Community Partnership (WCP), a micro-enterprise led by women. These women live in communities served by a nongovernmental organisation (NGO) in southern Malawi and supported through an international service-learning (ISL) programme with a university in the United States. The NGO is the hub of the project, partners in research and supports university student learning. This study aims to understand if the use of CBPAR and ABCD, as methods, protected the integration of IK held by the women in the *Gulu la Azimayi a mudzi ophika ndi kugulisa sopo* (WCP).

## ■ Context of research

The Malawian women from three rural villages donned their protective clothing, giving a clear indication that they belonged in a sterile laboratory, not on a veranda of a community school (NGO). The women were prepared to share their knowledge of soap making with United States university undergraduate and graduate students visiting as part of a service-learning course. The visual juxtapositions were jarring, a collision of two worlds: the stark white of the women's protective coats and rubber

gloves contrasted against their vibrant Malawian clothing; the calm of the child strapped to his mother's back in opposition to the energy of the women in front. All women ensured the baby was safe as their playful smiles engaging the baby alternated with focused concentration on the task of boiling ingredients for soap. The women were in charge of their process of making soap, while students of the United States were observers and learners about the soap-making process. The process was both informal and orderly.

The tools of the soap-making trade are temperamental, made more difficult in the context of extreme poverty with resource scarcity. In the year that the women had been developing their soap-making business, a mixer jammed, a thermometer broke and there was a shortage of supplies, like lye and fragrant essential oil. Despite the challenges, the women recognised their own strengths, believed in the potential of this endeavour and hoped that soap making would provide an essential product and generate income for their communities.

The examination of the WCP presents an asset-based business development collaboration that grew out of CBPR. The CBPR project partners include the NGO in southern Malawi, the women who lived in the three rural communities the NGO served (from whom they formed the WCP), the *mafumuwo* (traditional authorities) of the communities and a university in the United States through an ISL course. The US university's institutional review board approved the study. The WCP were the CBPR partners and the most important resource of the research project. As part of the project, the faculties of the US University and South African University joined the project as co-researchers with the women. The US University students also joined the project as part of student learning. Here they learnt about ABCD in action and also the role of a learner and elevating community expertise. However, the US Student Service Learning is not the focus of the chapter but was instead added for the context of the project.



The chapter examines the role of the women, the *mafumuwo*, the NGO, and the researchers of South African University and US University. A description of the NGO and the surrounding communities provides a rich narrative of the realities of the extreme poverty and capacity held by local, indigenous women. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the models and methods used in the project: CBPR, ABCD and African IK will be outlined. The discussion explores the extent to which IK was promoted, preserved or undermined in the process. In the next section, the background of the Malawi communities and the NGO lays the background.

## ■ The Malawi communities

Malawi is a member of the Southern African Development Community (Government of Malawi 2017). Since 1994, national leaders have been democratically elected. Within this democratic form of government in Malawi, individual villages govern through traditional authorities of *Mafumuwo*, commonly translated to chiefs in English. Each community [village] had one *mfumu* [chief] chosen by familial lines, and some also have at least one *mafumu ang'ono ang'ono* [sub-chiefs], depending on the size of the community, governing the geographic boundaries of their village. Altogether, these leaders are called *mafumuwo*.

The *Mfumu* of one community in our project was a woman; there were seven *Mafumu ang'ono ang'ono*, women and men, for a total of 10 *mafumuwo* from the three villages. They received a small stipend and reported to the paramount chief of their region. Geographic boundaries of the communities were set by the British colonisers generations ago without consideration of culture or indigenous community, what became three villages representing nine indigenous *mafuko* [tribes] with different cultural traditions, languages and religions. Two communities were primarily Christian and one was primarily Muslim. However, residents often incorporated African indigenous spirituality with their Christian or Islamic faith. There was a mix of matriarchal and patriarchal structures for traditions and governing bodies. The

community members spoke several languages, but Chichewa, which is the language of the Chewa people, was dominant in the region, with English being used only through a translator for this study. Within the confines of these three villages was a community school that was an NGO for the villages' orphaned children – providing meals, education and support to the community and orphaned children. The NGO was the site to gather co-researchers as well as each individual village. Indigenous Knowledge methods were applied in integration with CBPR and ABCD to assist in protecting the IKS of the Women's Community-Based Partnership in Malawi.

## ■ Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous Knowledge is the collective knowledge held through the ways of learning and communicating wisdom, grounded in the culture (Rix et al. 2019) and often passed through generations through customs, folk stories dances and songs that define norms and expectations within a culture (Masoga 2017).

Traditional healing, the use of herbal medicines and the definitions of family, strengths, problems and coming of age practices are all examples of IK. Indigenous Knowledge often guides how communities as a collective respond to challenges, especially in resource-impooverished places. However, communities also struggle to maintain their IK; examples include those who have survived historical trauma such as colonialisation, holocaust, the *maafa* (Eno et al. 2012) and/or apartheid (Rix et al. 2019; Thompson 2008). Indigenous Knowledge is particularly vulnerable when outsiders come into a community as part of the 'white saviour industrial complex' (Schneider 2015). Schneider (2015) presupposed that well-intentioned outsiders to African communities seek to repair historical injustice or provide relief during times of crisis, but end up undermining local capacities for resilience. In these instances, Westerners reinforce stereotypes of dependency and powerlessness, ultimately serving their own needs rather than those of the people they intended to help. With

respect to this phenomenon, in this study, the presence of both IK and Western knowledge was managed on an ongoing basis, for instance, daily checks for meaning, use of Indigenous practices as paramount and use of Chichewa as means to communicate (translators used).

The use of IK was consistent in the villages, the NGO and during the CBPR study. Families grew their own food, primarily maize, other vegetables, and some fruits, selling excess to raise cash to purchase goods and services in the community. Families with more resources also owned chickens and sold the eggs, and a few owned goats or sheep to sell for breeding or slaughter. During years when the harvest was good, the ability to raise cash in this way helped keep the local economy flowing. Care of children was shared by the community and the NGO school personnel; older children also helped in caring for younger children. Indigenous Knowledge was used to understand the ways in which climate change was changing their subsistence livelihoods (Shokane, Masoga & Blitz 2020). During this study, extreme poverty, along with changing circumstances, caused a shift to solve the problem of how to thrive.

## ■ Assets and strengths of the women

As part of the methods of ABCD and CBPR, a WCP was an action produced by co-researchers in Malawi and the United States. The WCP comprised of 15 women, and five each from these three adjacent villages were identified by the *mafumuwo* of their community as having the qualities or skills to develop a business. These women all had struggles related to living in a remote village in Malawi but had access to and use of IK for their livelihoods. These 15 women were also considered to be co-researchers as part of the project.

The women ranged in age from their late 20s to late 40s. Most were married and had their husbands' support for participating. All had children; one was raising her children alone following the

death of her husband and her children were enrolled at the NGO. Others had child relatives who received services from the NGO. All had attended primary school, about half had completed through standard 8 and one had finished secondary school. All were fully literate in Chichewa, the local language, and a few spoke some English. The women grew up in the communities, but with a few exceptions, they did not know each other. At their first meeting, held at the NGO and facilitated by the NGO social services director (SSD), they named themselves the WCP and discussed how to develop a business.

As part of ABCD, the women were guided to make a list of their skills and talents. On average, each woman listed five items, in various combinations of:

- making mats (8)
- brooms (8)
- charcoal (2)
- sewing by hand (6)
- knitting (5)
- cooking (6)
- making traditional drink [*thobwa*] (2)

The women also included sports (6) and artistic talents (2). Several included skills not mentioned by others, such as brick laying, welding, making chairs from cane, bags with wool necklaces, repairing shoes and using a sewing machine. The ABCD helped to gather the IK held by these women as a collective and as individuals. In addition, the women's enthusiasm to start a business and work hard despite daily hunger (as most ate one meal a day), back-breaking subsistence farming, and among others, further demonstrated their resiliency.

## ■ The guiding models: CBPR, ABCD and outside resource

In incorporating the IK of the WCP, CBPR and ABCD as models helped to position this knowledge, rather than solely relying on

Western knowledge obtained from outside the community. Community-based participatory research and ABCD bring together people who want a voice regarding action on the use of strengths and issues in their community. By mobilising individual and group strengths and resources, people can address the problems they identify as needing attention (Lightfoot, Simmelink McCleary & Lum 2014). The integration of these methods/models is strategically applied as research, action, participation and strengths to elevate the local community members and their held knowledge. Using CBPR can be a way to reach a broader scope of community members to get their input on development but who may not be able to participate in the work while also having the community define and name their issues and interventions based on their own held, shared knowledge.

## ■ **Community-based participatory research**

Community-based participatory research has been used successfully in a wide range of areas, including medicine, public health and school improvement (Cuervo 2014; Jagosh et al. 2015). For this CBPR study, in keeping with CBPR rigour, the university scholars guided the research ethics, institutional review and informed consent, with community research partners defining the project and guiding the methods (Jagosh et al. 2015). Community research partners were drawn from the defined community of Malawian women, NGO staff partners and the US and South African faculty members.

In CBPR, as in this study, the principal investigator (PI) developed the project design and overarching research questions driving the project (Alameda-Lawson et al. 2010). In this study, CBPR was conceptualised by the collaborative co-researcher design with community partners guiding the methods, co-creating the questions asked during data collection and helping in providing data analysis. Action steps are then decided on collectively as a research team (Jagosh et al. 2015). Because of

its close connection to the community, CBPR is often noted as producing culturally relevant findings and promoting social justice (Cuervo 2014). The CBPR team in this study included the WCP facilitated by the SSD of the NGO, PI, ISL students and co-faculty from the United States and South Africa. It is worth noting that the WCP was the core ABCD team as facilitated by the SSD.

## ■ The case for community development

Asset-based community development is unlike needs-based approaches to development, where outsiders to the community enter to assess what they define as deficits or problems and may work towards solutions based on their understanding, not community priorities. It collaborates with community members to map out individual, group and community strengths and works to mobilise these assets to address problems defined by the community (Masoga & Shokane 2019). It was a natural fit for the CBPR research methods in the larger study.

Central to the ABCD philosophy is that community should have a voice in development regarding them, and thus, the inside-out leadership (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993; Ssewamala et al. 2010) is highlighted. Inside-out leadership emphasises relationships and collaboration with the intent that people who are often marginalised in development projects will be given a central place where their voices can be heard and their ideas validated through action (Ssewamala et al. 2010). While ABCD has been criticised for its lack of theoretical depth, and for failing to consider the historical structures and systemic issues that cause or contribute to disempowerment, when added in this context, it can elevate assets and IK as co-construction of the research process and the action (Ennis & West 2010).

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) delineated five ABCD actions or steps that guide development. In this study, the ABCD actions were used in coordination with the actions under CBPR with the WCP process. Of the five actions in ABCD, the order of the actions taken is directed by the WCP and the NGO. The direction of the

action by the local community helped to keep the focus on the group's own ideas for building on existing strengths in the process, potentially realising the use of IK. Here, the strength of ABCD was in its actions that can be followed without a Western-influenced education, allowing flexibility for individual and collective talents and IK need to be utilised in the development process (Masoga & Shokane 2019).

## ■ **The use of Indigenous Knowledge within the Women's Community Partnership**

In the integration of IK in the WCP development, the following principles of ABCD and CBPR were applied to protect local shared knowledge; the co-researchers used a three-step process to define IK-based on the local understanding of the term. Firstly, the team reviewed field notes to examine examples of IK or practices that surfaced multiple times in different contexts. Secondly, as the notes were analysed, the conceptualisation of IK included any practice that had been learnt from community members and designed to support the community way of life. For example, in the women's list of skills and talents, making brooms and other household items as they were taught as children was mentioned multiple times. In addition, there were several times in different contexts where the women made reference to preferring to make things on their own over store-bought goods. This assertion is in line with the principles of ABCD. This was labelled as 'handcrafted daily necessities'. Thirdly, the team reviewed the ABCD/CBPR processes, and examples from the study were elevated to show how IK or practices were supported or undermined.

What follows is not a comprehensive list of Malawian IK, values or practices, but rather some examples from the data. Many communities share these same values. The following gives examples of items that were repeated during analysis and helped

in the conceptualisation of IK as held by the women who were co-researchers:

- Importance of community belonging.
- Respect for *mafumuwo* and others in authority and leadership positions.
- Desire to give back to the community, especially those perceived as ‘needy’ and ‘the less privileged’ such as the orphaned and vulnerable, elderly, and those with little or no financial resources.
- ‘Circle time’, after dinner multi-family gatherings where adults teach the children traditional songs and dances and narrate stories with a moral that teaches community values.
- Collective responsibility for members of the community, for example, frequent references to ‘the children’ rather than ‘my children’ unless responding to a specific question (see also Shokane et al. 2020).
- Commitment to family responsibilities.
- Wanting the children of the community to stay local when they grow up and carry on local traditions when they are adults.
- Valuing education – all types – oral and traditional, as well as education learnt in schools.
- Valuing tradition.
- Helping others.
- Handcrafted daily necessities.
- Connection to spirituality, religion and/or faith expressed daily in all important matters.
- Resilience as a community or group effort.
- Shared power within the group.
- Care and love as central factors in coming together for a project.
- Collaboration.
- Collective decision-making.

The IK as applied above shows the ways in which knowledge is held, known and shared. It also positions the research to elevate



the locally held knowledge and to potentially protect the knowledge from outside researchers (Westernised).

## ■ ABCD actions

The research was guided by the method of CBPR with community members being integral to all steps of the research definition, data collection and analysis. Additionally, the research was guided using IK. As a cumulative to the research, ABCD allowed for a strength-based orientation. To guide the project, Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) five ABCD actions or steps were applied. The orientation of the project was applied using these five action steps and they are outlined in chronological order further.

### ■ ABCD action: Step 1

This action step includes leveraging resources from outside the community for locally defined development (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

Previously, in 2014, one of the two white American co-founders of the NGO approached the university hoping to establish a relationship, with no preconceived ideas about what this relationship should entail. The university was interested in a student study abroad service-learning opportunity and connected him to the professor who became the PI<sup>17</sup> a white American woman, because she had experience with organisations serving children, including one in Africa, but she had not been to Malawi and did not speak Chichewa.

### ■ ABCD action: Step 2

*The 2nd action step* utilised mapping the capacities and assets of individuals and local institutions (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

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17. PI is also the first author in this chapter,

The research project was initiated in January 2015, when the PI visited Malawi to learn about the NGO's operations and mission, and to orient to the local culture and understand the resources available.

The PI discussed ABCD and CBPR with NGO leaders (co-founder, executive director, SSD and the education director), explaining the intersections of the approaches integrating community knowledge. The PI stressed that it was important to work collaboratively, respecting community leadership and culture. The NGO leaders expressed interest in being partners and wanted to support community culture. Engagement with the guardians of the children they served was an existing priority but other than the SSD conducting home visits in crises, they had no resources for outreach.

Nongovernmental organisation leaders were most familiar with resources and expertise coming in from the outside and being placed onto the community. The IK and locally held ways of doing, being, meaning-making and problem-solving were often not considered. The NGO provided services to children who were orphaned or vulnerable. The NGO founders had been directed to these communities by the local government based on a traditional needs assessment that showed there was unusually high poverty, food shortages and very few resources in the area.

For these reasons and to focus on the use of CBPR and ABCD, the co-researchers decided to focus on several areas, one of which was a group of women. Because of the low crop yield during the 2015 drought, everyone with whom the co-researchers spoke during the July research trip was lacking cash and could not afford food, clothing or soap. The PI, SSD and the woman who originally brought up the idea of developing a business brainstormed the idea of making and selling soap and then discussed it with others. The conversations took place outdoors, and neighbours stopped by to join. The idea of soap making was discussed as once an indigenously held activity but no one in the villages knew how and therefore bought soap from the market but more often went

without it. They had heard that it was easy and felt confident that they could do it. At this time, while soap making had been an indigenous skill, none of the women could access this traditional knowledge. Following the formation of WCP, the PI taught the women how to make soap and worked with the SSD to find supplies locally. The PI's recipe was somewhat complicated but utilised the women's skills in cooking and found ways to change the recipe to meet local knowledge and access to supplies. WCP started making soap at the NGO regularly. They named their soap MILTA for goat milk, lye and tallow, the three main ingredients, and obtained approval from the Malawi Bureau of Standards.

Many of the activities happened without the Western intervention or the US researcher. Instead, the action of continually mapping and remapping assets was done internally by the Malawian SSD and the women. The activities and mapping happened in an ongoing, interactive process.

### ■ ABCD action: Step 3

A third action step includes convening a representative community group to build a vision and plan for the project (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

In July 2015, the PI returned for a research trip to learn from community members and leaders (*mafumuwo* and elders) and NGO personnel (teachers, kitchen staff, groundskeeper). The co-researchers continued in building a vision plan, thinking about sustainability and ways in improving the product and the selling of the product. The team conducted individual interviews and focus groups and used thematic analysis to interpret the data.

The PI and SSD worked closely together, gathering and interpreting data and then checking back with the community. The SSD acted as an interpreter and cultural guide to conduct interviews with the women, one of whom initiated the idea of developing a business. A decision was also made to include the NGO as a place to make the soap and for financial security.

The vision was to have a business, operated by women, of which they could start selling their soap in the local markets as well as wholesaling their product to a local hotel. The plan was carefully crafted to include women's skills, needs they might have, while balancing the responsibilities of each of them within the village. Additionally, the use of local markets, as opposed to supermarkets or chain stores, was also held as important to selling the soap. The use of this traditional means of selling a product was paramount to the women's understanding of business.

### ■ **ABCD action: Step 4**

This action step includes building relationships for problem-solving and enhancing community connections (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

There had never before been a collaborative project among the communities, although they shared similar demographics, concerns and strengths. At the large meeting at the NGO, the PI asked what should be considered for developing a collaborative business. An elder woman declared, 'We should all come together to love one another' and received enthusiastic applause.

This was the start of a collaboration and a building on community connections of similar villages. They shared knowledge and ways to build on their business ideas. During the three-year soap-making business, the community and the women continued to problem solve and devise ways to integrate soap-making practices and selling practices that made sense to their local context.

### ■ **ABCD action: Step 5**

The action step was to mobilise community assets for information sharing and development (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

Community assets were mobilised at different points throughout the 4-year project. At first, it was identifying the women who would take part, using their knowledge and their time. Later, assets included thinking through the improvement of soap making using local herbs and processes, ways of marketing the product that would be attractive to local communities and the mobilisation of ways to get their products to the markets.

Additionally, there were multiple facilitators supporting WCP: the NGO provided financial and human resources, physical space and guidance. The CBPR team learnt what WCP wanted in terms of education and skill development and then the university provided this during student learning trips. The *mafumuwo* provided access to the communities and encouraged WCP. Later, a second local NGO got involved, taught WCP a simple method of making soap and contracted with them to buy the soap regularly. The interplay of systems, resources and power was complex.

The CBPR team grew as two scholars from South Africa, a woman and a man, joined our team. Both were black, indigenous scholars who had experienced apartheid just as many of our community partners remembered colonialism and spoke of it as personally humiliating and degrading in addition to undermining indigenous culture. Our new partners brought expertise in ABCD and IKS, moving the team deeper into understanding African IK and seeing new strengths. More importantly, the South African professors were able to guide and challenge us, opening our thinking and enhancing our vision.

A staff was hired at NGO dedicated to the WCP, showing a sharing of the mobilisation of assets from the formal institution located in the villages. However, this became complicated as some of the decision-making moved to the staff shifting the decision-making from the women of the WCP. Herein, lies the difficulty of keeping IK and assets at the forefront when outside parties join such a collective. The CBPR team continued to meet

with the women to model how to gather their ideas for development.

In 2020, the WCP was disbanded, formally. Since then, all 15 women now include soap making as a new skill, and some were operating a personal business selling soap at the trading centre or from their home.

## ■ Conclusion

Four Malawian women, three US students and co-researchers joined for a meeting, sitting in the dirt, using the colourful wraps common in Malawi. The four women business owners were animated, discussing in Chichewa what they believed to be the next steps for growing their business. The NGO staff helped to translate. The women shared they believed they wanted to add scent to their soap and the ways to do that using local and wild herbs. Together all shared in decision-making and planning for the next steps, but also checked in with the US group to gain feedback. Here, the process was careful to keep the decision-making and planning with the Malawian businesswomen.

The women were firm and animated in stating they wanted to advertise their soap to reach a wider audience than the three villages. They felt they were supplying their local communities but wondered about reaching other communities. The collective decision was made to share the local soap so that other communities did not have to buy foreign soap. A decision was made to test the soap in the local markets selling it a different way. The use of IK to sell locally made soap to compete with the foreign soap instilling a feeling that the locally made soap was better for skin and health.

The market is an outdoor area where most businesses sell their goods in stalls or in designated areas on the ground. This type of market is common in the area in Malawi, with some being replaced by larger indoor stores/markets. Upon entering the

markets, the four women and three US students and co-researchers began yelling '*Malonda, malonda, malonda*' [sell, sell, sell] as a crowd surrounded the group, curious to know what was being sold. The four businesswomen and the three foreigners laughed and danced and became an attraction for all in the market. 'Sopo wopangidwa kwathu komokuno, ndi Azimayi a mudazi!' [Handmade soap, made by ladies in the community]. Laughter and quick exchanges happened between the women and those in the market. All began to share in the enthusiasm, almost singing, '*Soap wabino, wathovu, wolimba!*' [Good soap, with foam and longer lasting].

Customers flooded the group wanting to know-how the soap worked and why it was better than the green foreign soap they usually bought. Impressed nods, sighs and exclamations from the customers filled the air to express their fervour for a locally made product by their own people that is good to use for their own skin!

As suggested in this narrative and throughout this chapter, the use of CBPR and ABCD was highlighted in this project with the WCP as part of the community, NGO and university-led partnership and research project. Indigenous Knowledge was elevated and kept at the forefront in the use of research methods, actionable items and ways in which the local community's ideas, knowledge, and ways of planning and problem-solving were incorporated throughout the multi-year project. The use of these in conjunction with IK helps to bring to the forefront people's own ways of being, knowing and doing that is important as Western ways of scientific appraisal. The study helps to illustrate ways to proceed in such research and partnership, even in a rural, extreme impoverished area. It also suggests some of the areas of which to be mindful so that the pitfalls of replacing IK do not occur.

## ■ Summary

This chapter explored the use of CBPR to inform ABCD for the WCP, a micro-enterprise led by women. These women lived in communities served by an NGO in southern Malawi and supported through an ISL programme with a university in the United States. The NGO was the hub of the project, partnered in research and supported university student learning. The aim was to understand if the use of CBPAR and ABCD, as methods, protected the integration of IK held by the women in the WCP.





# Discourse on decolonisation of knowledge within the South African Higher Education setting: Indigenous knowledge systems, deculturation and epistemology

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## ■ Introduction

This chapter explores the linkages that exist between the call for decolonisation of knowledge within the South African Higher Education setting, and IKS, deculturation processes and epistemology. Without any doubt, the student protest actions of 2015–2016, particularly under the banner of the #RhodesMustfall, stoutly flagged what remained a work in progress and thus needed urgent attention and action, namely, the challenge of epistemology that prioritises and promotes Eurocentric images, perspectives and ideas. The Cecil Rhodes statue was identified as one of the symbols within the post-1994 context that represented colonial legacy in all its forms and continued with the mission of the marginalisation of African identity and self-esteem. In this relation, decolonisation can be explained as a call and a process of challenging and ‘undoing’ the continued European social, cultural and intellectual domination. The students protest actions and messages formed part of the #RhodesMustFall movement which put into the spotlight the fact that the post-1994 South African Higher Education transformation agenda mainly prioritised and focused on matters such as governance, funding, quality assurance and student access and success, and as such, issues related to curriculum were not put at the centre (Jansen 2017; Keet 2014).

As part of the epistemic binarism (cf. Gill & Pires 2019), colonialism decimated African cultural heritage and practices ensured that the colonised remained without tools of defining themselves, creating and re-creating knowledge that is critical for the colonised sociocultural and economic advancement. While engaged in ‘doing the colonisation’, the colonial powers failed to understand and appreciate the essence of African cultural heritage and knowledge that is embedded in it and to integrate European cultural thought and practices into African culture (Makgoba 1997). Thus, this chapter focuses on the call for the decolonisation of knowledge call within the South African university setting, and this is among other motivations informed

by the notion of the Africanisation of African space, identity and destiny and its relation to epistemology in a crucial attempt to provide a framework for strongly advocating for a genuine modernity that embraces all the knowledges of the world. The intention is to discourage the approach that predicates knowledge production on European cultural hegemony as the one and only reference point.

The writing of this chapter, as part of the discourse of decolonisation of knowledge, was motivated by some of the writings of Professor Mogomme A. Masoga, especially his Professorial Inaugural Lecture that was delivered at the University of Venda, Thohoyandou, in 2017 titled: *Making the Fish Understand its Water: Reflections on Africanisation, Indigenous Knowledge and Decoloniality in Our Time* (Masoga 2017). In his address, Masoga aptly unpacks the idea of 'IKS and decolonisation as tools for facilitating comprehensive emancipation and Africanisation of African space, identity and destiny'.

Dealing effectively and efficiently with the subject of his address and some of his writings effectively wrestles intensely with the question: 'What do IKS and decoloniality mean and imply for contemporary social transformation and community resilience?' (Masoga 2017). This question is central to the linkage between IKS and epistemology and the discourse on 'decolonisation of knowledge' within the (South) African higher education setting. Factors related to the current and future agenda on Africa's sociocultural and economic development are part of the linkage. This is informed by the fact that in the post-colonial African space of knowledge production and learning, the de-centering and marginalisation of African cultural heritage and practices continue to be maintained through epistemology that prioritises and promotes Eurocentric images, perspectives and ideas. Hence, it is normal for African political leaders without consciousness to always search for solutions for African problems from the dominating epistemologies.

With the question that is sharply raised by Masoga (2017) in his inaugural lecture in the backdrop, in its considerations, this chapter critically examines the complexities and contradictions associated with the role of the African university. As an institution, it is vested with the responsibility to manage and generate solutions to various crises that continue to confront African communities and their governments, from poverty, hunger and civil conflicts to disease epidemics including HIV and AIDS. Additionally, South African universities continue to play a role of promoting and sustaining epistemologies that undermine African knowledge (indigenous, locally held), and essentially what are traditional and progressive intellectual efforts and interventions geared towards socio-political and economic development of the continent and its people (Zezeza 2006).

Therefore, the thrust of this chapter is to explore the linkages that exist between the call for decolonisation of knowledge within the South African Higher Education setting, IKS, the deculturation processes and epistemology. To achieve its main objective, the chapter (1) explains the key concepts related to the call for decolonisation of knowledge within its context, (2) briefly unpacks the conceptualisation of colonialism and its deculturation processes of African cultural heritage and practices, (3) the significance of IKS and its relation to the dominant epistemology within the South African Higher Education setting, and lastly (4) presents a case for the reclamation and re-centering of African epistemology.

## ■ The key concepts

The following is the explanation of key concepts that are used in this chapter to explore and support the call for the decolonisation of knowledge within the South African Higher Education setting and its linkages to IKS, deculturation and epistemology.

## ■ African cultural heritage

African cultural heritage is made up of material objects such as artefacts (crafts, sculpture, pottery, symbols), implements for production and weapons for defence (axe, hoe, assegai), and other non-material aspects such as religious institutions, values and traditions and rituals. The latter have been produced and developed over a period of time by Africans in their relationship with their environment and others.

Chief among historical African cultural concepts is *ubuntu*, which has ethical and practical characteristics and has been used to guide and govern social, economic and political relations among African people. Socially, this concept encouraged and continues to encourage communalism rather than individualism, positioning 'national good or benefit' above individual gains (Ani 1994; Biko 1978; Makgoba 1997; Mbiti 1975). Essentially, people's interaction with their environment includes both guiding values of production and guidelines for the distribution of that production among its members. It also reflects their response to technological needs designed to achieve a particular lifestyle. African inventions throughout history illustrate this adaptation in terms of agricultural achievements, military strategies and inventions, the mining and smelting of various minerals, as well as advancements in medicine, architecture, engineering and astrology (Ben-Jochannan 1971; Tondi 2001; Van Sertima 1990). Colonial marginalisation of these knowledges or epistemologies disrupted both the creativity and style of living, as Africans knew it and which they intended to also share with others in time and space.

## ■ Colonisation and European cultural imperialism

European cultural imperialism or domination can be explained as a systematic cultural colonisation and subsequent dispossession of the colonised people. The objective is to ensure that

communities and societies of the colonised and their wealth form the basis of socio-economic advancement of European/Western societies. The unequal interdependent nature of the relationship defines and forms the basis of the affluence of colonising countries, as well as their cultural dominance in social areas such as judiciary, governance, education and other areas of the colonised lives.

Countries colonised by the same colonial power would then form a cluster known as an empire, with the colonial country being the 'metropole' that guided production and distribution, thereby impoverishing the colonised countries, which then turned into export enclaves. This relationship spilled over into other aspects of life like values to be upheld, social practices, religious beliefs and so on. With the intent of advancing its mission of distorting and disorganising African cultural heritage, European cultural imperialism used socio-linguistic terms such as 'primitive, heathen and backward'. In this way, the very foundations of African society were thus supplanted by Eurocentric references (Masolo 1994; Tondi 2001).

## ■ Deculturation

Deculturation is a concept that explains the colonial and apartheid ideological processes that ensured the sociocultural and marginalisation of African cultural heritage. The deculturation process had as its ultimate objective the devalorisation and decimating of African cultural heritage and practices that also embodied the traditional knowledge of the colonised (Ani 1994; Tondi 2004).

In a very sophisticated manner, European cultural imperialism was able to displace critical aspects of African cultural heritage by disregarding and defining them as 'primitive', 'uncivilised' 'superstitious' or 'mystical'. This included the paganisation of African religions and belief systems, the demonisation of their value systems and denigration of cultural practices not only at

the superstructure level but also at the practical level of IKS. In the end, this affected the colonised efforts of self-determination and self-reliance and the drive to create and re-create knowledge (Tondi 2001).

## ■ Decolonisation of knowledge

Decolonisation is all about ‘undoing’ of colonialism and its mechanisms that subjugated and marginalised the historical and cultural foundations of the colonised. Intellectually it is about challenging the continued assumed superiority and decentering European knowledge within the space of knowledge production and pedagogy. In essence, decolonisation within the post-1994 South African Higher Education setting is about neutralising European knowledge from being the only point of reference in developing curriculum and restoring African knowledge.

In this connection, the objective is to ensure that African students are afforded the space and time to learn about themselves, their people’s history, societies, inventions and achievements, ambitions and their future (Jansen 2017; Le Grange 2019). What this means in simple terms is that there must be an effort made to ensure that Europe does not continue to be the only reference point in the production of knowledge and pedagogy.

## ■ Reclamation and re-centering of knowledge

Reclamation and re-centering of knowledge is a strategy that has as its intention to deliberately explore the possibilities of salvaging the ‘lost memories’ of African achievements, with the aim of demonstrating the ability, competency and potential of African people to relocate themselves for the benefit of today’s generation of policy-makers. Furthermore, it is about discovering mechanisms of infusing relevant cultural lessons from reclaimed history that



can be used in guiding context-related solutions to social and economic development plans needed for the transformation of the post-1994 South Africa and its communities and futuristic plans thereof (Makgoba 1997; Tondi 2001). The responsibility of the university is to produce relevant knowledge and teach what will benefit the communities within its context (local) while also looking at contributing to the global space.

## ■ Colonialism and the deculturation of African cultural heritage

To have a better understanding of what informs the agitation, as has been manifested in the 2015–2016 student protest against ideas and tendencies that perpetuate colonial legacy, it is necessary for one to be aware of how colonialism was conceptualised. The launch and onslaught on African cultural heritage and practices were constructed in such a manner that it could be sustained over a long period. As part of the strategy to alienate and marginalise that which had no European identity and expressions in the colonised African communities, European cultural imperialism used ideology, religion, language and identity as mechanisms for the displacement of African cultural heritage and practices (Biko 1978; Makgoba 1997; Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1986).

As experienced and confirmed in various ways by the majority of the world communities, culture is a tool or mechanism through which people create their space, organically formulate and define their identity and map their destiny. Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) in his work that critically interrogates the impact of colonialism on African cultural heritage and practice explains culture as ‘a product of the history which it in turn reflects’ and also as ‘a product and a reflection of human beings communicating with one another in the very struggle to create wealth and to control it’. Therefore, in order to consider this explanation for what it means and apply it in the context of what this chapter intends to

reveal, it is possible to conclude that any systematic ideological displacement of the culture and life of the concerned people (the colonised) will *ipso facto* lead to disruption of their space, disorientation of their identity and sabotage of what could be their prosperous destiny, referring to their self-determination and self-reliance.

Therefore, a potential reason for those from outside Africa, who colonised, proceeded to gain influence over the ways in which meaning was created and sustained, and organic ways in which knowledge was created and re-created, was to subjugate and marginalise fundamental aspects of cultural heritage and practices of the colonised. This was, among other things, to ensure total integration of African communities' economic histories into European thought and behaviour. Culture in the context of this chapter is regarded as an ideology that is bound to impact on the identity of a community, in that it has the potential to motivate the creativity among people and shape personalities in their behaviour in their interaction with other people in time and space (Ani 1994).

In as far as the relationship between language and African cultural heritage is concerned, Prah (ed. 1998) defined language as that aspect in life that serves as a reservoir that:

[B]ears the record of history, traditions, beliefs and knowledge of any people. It is through language that people learn, relate to each other as social animals in a material world of production, reproduction, distribution and exchange. (p. 2)

This supports the notion that language is 'both a means of communication and a carrier of culture' (wa Thiong'o 1986). As such, as a tool for communication, a particular language (e.g. Portuguese) can be used by 'different cultural groups in a society, but as a carrier of culture, language can be used by a specific group or native speakers of the language (e.g. Sesotho)' (ed. Prah 1998), and in this way, it informs the attitudes and behaviours of particular people who use it.

In summary, the point that Prah (ed. 1998), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) and Ngara (1985) are trying to make in their assertions is that language plays a central role in articulating culture and the formulation of an identity of a specific people within a society, mainly because it forms part of their cultural heritage. As directed by the ideological designs and practices of colonialism, language as a mechanism of displacing African cultural heritage was able to ensure that the colonised remain subjugated and marginalised in the creation of knowledge and creativity. Consequently, the process did not only have to do with ensuring that the colonised inherit alien syntax or lexicon but are susceptible to adopting an inferior position that will determine how the colonised 'ultimately perceive self and the world and how to relate to others, especially Europeans' in their assumed superiority (cf. Tondi 2001; Tondi 2018). What all this means is that (Tondi 2018):

[T]hrough languages foreign to African communities, concepts, and thoughts, which were in direct and open conflict with traditional communal development values and ideas got into the fibre and genes of the colonised and ultimately disorganised the colonised psychologically and referentially. (p. 263)

The result of all that is unpacked, and here the gradual devalorisation and depreciation of African cultural heritage and practices (Ani 1994) was explained. African knowledge is an integral part of the comprehensive African cultural heritage, including knowledge systems. This observation supports the assertion by African intellectuals such as Ani (1994), Osha (2005) and Biko (1978) that, in an endeavour to enforce the desire for control and domination, the colonialist imperialism and the South African apartheid hegemony's suppression of the historical development of the dominated also meant the suppression and devaluation of their cultural advancement within the human world. This was informed by the fact that in essence, cultural heritage forms part of the formulation of the space, identity and ultimately the destiny of a people in the world.

## ■ The nature and ideology of a dominant epistemology at a South African university<sup>18</sup>

Explaining how Eurocentric knowledge was entrenched and sustained, Osha (2005) posited that, as part of colonialism's sociocultural mission to devalorise and depreciate African cultural heritage and practices, the coloniser attacked the intellectual creativity of the colonised by designing curriculum that put European knowledge at the centre. This was meant to give Eurocentric knowledge an upper hand in what was to be learnt by the colonised about what is supposed to form their space, identify and destiny. As observed by Harding (1997, cited in Keet 2014), the ultimate result of what is described by Osha (2005) is that African teachers and students had to believe that modern sciences are European ethnosciences in their cultural situatedness and their pedagogical methodology. The implication of this is that the university in the colonised societies had to adopt the form and content of the Western canon. This, in essence, meant adopting the knowledge system that was created some 500-550 years ago in Europe by white male scientists (Hall & Tandon 2017).

Consequently, as part of the scheme, the colonised were denied an opportunity to fully, intellectually and culturally experience how knowledge is created through invention and re-invention process and dislodged their continued inquiry that human beings normally pursue in their space and interaction with others (Freire 1993). With the fall of the formal political colonialism in the 1960s and the emergence of a post-colonial movement, there was a need for a reverse action, namely, what Jansen regards as 'efforts to undo legacies of colonialism' (Jansen 2019). What motivates the call for decolonisation is the fact that no nation in the world that was pre-maturely cut from its umbilical

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18. And the case for 'decolonisation of knowledge'.

cord (tools that are critical in shaping its space and identity, and determining its destiny) can be able to recover wholly and progress in the world. A purposeful recovery and successful socio-economic development initiative is expected to use as its reference point the African cultural heritage and practices, and IKS pliable to be invented and re-invented (Makgoba 1997).

Decolonisation can also be understood as a sociocultural tool for (re)-construction and development, which also encompasses the processes of re-centering the history of the African people on the one hand and relates the experience of Africans to the history of humanity as a whole on the other hand (Keto 2010; Masoga 2017). This is of significance, in that 'when the history of Africans becomes centred, it becomes an unambiguous integral part of world history at the same time' (Keto 2001:5), and this paradigm shift enables the colonised to dislodge the narrative of the coloniser that has always peddled European cultural and epistemological supremacy.

In simple terms, decolonisation is about intellectual contestation of the narrative that has always promoted the constant negative perceptions of Africa and African people and the complex historical, political and economic circumstances that account for Africa's current situation of dependency and underdevelopment. What is comforting for the African intellectuals is the fact that with the call for decolonisation of knowledge as a movement that has a political and philosophical will, the European notions of superiority and acts of imperialism in the 21st century be addressed and neutralised. Tuck and Yang (cited in Keet 2014), advocating for a meaningful process, argued that 'decolonisation should not be used as a metaphor supporting intellectual projects such as human rights and social justice, but as a movement that represents the repatriation of indigenous land [meaning the African space] and life' or what is referred to as identity and destiny in this chapter.

To re-centre IKS and inclusive epistemology, and ultimately depose the continued assumed superiority of European-centred

knowledge, African intellectuals who possess a socio-political will must be in the forefront of initiatives that are about to bring a paradigm shift in knowledge production within the African university (Ki-Zerbo 2005). This action should have as its objective to refuse the promotion of all forms of internal and external subjugation, arbitrary limitations and exclusion that are among other things obstacles to the processes of the Africanisation of the African space, identity and destiny. A meaningful decolonisation process should aim at recovering and re-centering the intellectual traditions of African communities that are progressive and possess the potential to empower the community as a whole.

## ■ **The case for reclamation and re-centering of indigenous knowledge systems in the post-colonial and post-1994 South Africa's context**

As already explained, African cultural heritage and practices encompass the material aspects or physical objects such as artefacts (crafts, sculpture, pottery) and implements (iron tools such as axe and hoe that were an improvement of wooden and stone tools), and other non-material aspects, often reflected through elements such as religious institutions, values and traditions, produced over time (Mthembu 1999). All these material and non-material aspects that are central to human existence and survival have always been used by Africans in their relationship, on the one hand, with their material environment, and on the other hand, among individuals and other selves in their space, formulation of their identity and determination of their destiny.

Firmly grounded in their cultural heritage and practice (as it evolves), without any disruption of any kind, people can make progress in terms of their material needs and also relate to other people in the world with confidence, trust and faith (Ramphela 1995). More significantly, what most of the African intellectuals cited in this chapter are intellectually contesting and

advocating for is that the post-colonial era in Africa should be a period of total recovery for African communities, from European cultural domination in all its forms, and a chance to Africanise the African space, formulate and define African identity and have full control over what becomes the continent's destiny. For example, for post-1994 South Africa to make great strides in as far as sociocultural and economic transformation process is concerned, it is essential that policies that are critical in guiding a sustainable nation-building project be informed by, among other things, indigenous cultural values, traditions and practices (Tondi 2004).

Without any doubt, the need for the reclamation and re-centering of IKS is connected to one of the objectives of the African renewal and advancement project, which focuses on the socio-economic development of Africa. Faced with the challenges of globalisation and the dawn of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), Africa needs space to reconstruct the nearly destroyed African village which is the shell within which are contained the essence of values, the morality, the philosophy, the wisdom, the culture and the political philosophy of African civilisation (Vilakazi 2001). This need is demonstrated by how in some communities within the post-1994 South African context there are situations of unending tension, and this is because of the introduction of modern governance structures that are deliberately refusing to recognise and collaborate with traditional systems that exist and are amendable to new dynamics.

A relief in this regard is the fact that the movement advocating for the discovery and recovery of traditional knowledge seems to be gathering momentum in some of South Africa's HEIs. An example is the recent PhD thesis that was submitted at the NWU by Koitsiwe (2018) titled: *African Indigenous Astronomy of the Batswana in Botswana and South Africa*. The study is regarded as the continent's first PhD in African Astronomy, and it revealed how Batswana use their knowledge of celestial bodies in their space for things such as agricultural activities, reproductive health, navigation, time calculation, rain-making and thanksgiving ceremonies.

## ■ Conclusion

This chapter critically reflected on the processes of colonialism and their impact on the African cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and their connectedness to the discourse on decolonisation of knowledge within the post-1994 South Africa's higher education setting. The intention is to contribute towards a critical understanding of the past – the meaning and implication of the effect of colonialism's mechanisms of displacement of African cultural heritage, including knowledge systems. More significantly, the processes of dispossession of African knowledge are highlighted and briefly unpacked.

## ■ Summary

Through the review of works of various African scholars, the critical linkages between IKS and epistemology, and the discourse on 'decolonisation of knowledge' within the (South) African higher education setting, have been explored and placed in the context. In an attempt to illustrate these linkages, the chapter adopted Masoga's notion of the Africanisation of the African space, identity and destiny. What needs to be noted is that the notion is located within the discourse on decoloniality, namely, the project of undoing the legacies of colonialism. The chapter advocates for the reclamation and re-centering of African knowledge, as an integral part of the decolonisation of knowledge project and a strategy to be considered for Africa's sociocultural and economic development in a world predicated on Western knowledge and systems.





# Decolonising the social sciences for social work teaching and practice

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Polokwane, South Africa

## ■ Introduction

In this chapter, the author provides a background for the decolonisation discourse in South Africa and argues for the decolonisation of the social sciences as a precursor for a decolonised social work curriculum. The chapter problematises the social work training that is founded on colonialism and apartheid. Having discussed this aspect, a leap is made into the possible value and knowledge base of the decolonised social work curriculum.

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Decolonising the social work curriculum and pedagogy is a matter of international concern (Akbar 1984; Harms-Smith 2020; Nobles 1978; Razack 2016; Schiele 1994, 1997). Fanon ([1961] 2004:2) argued that decolonisation sets out to change the 'order of the world' and, in this sense, furnishes 'an agenda' aspiring to entirely 'disorder' the world as presently constituted (see also, Modiri 2020:157-173). Among African scholars, the issue about the decolonisation of the curriculum started at a level of decolonising institutions of higher learning (Amuwo 2002:1-18; Lebakeng 2004; Mngomezulu 2020: 81-97; Ntuli 2004: 171-184) because 'the higher education system is perceived to be deeply embedded in the old South Africa with little if any hope of undergoing transformations that are internally driven' (Bawa 2014:236; see also Teffo 2002). Some of the poignant and strident voices in this regard were influenced by Nabudere's (2003) seminal work, 'Towards the Establishment of a Pan-African University, strategic concept paper'. Closer home in South Africa the discourse found impetus through the writings of scholars' contributions that culminated in a reader on 'Towards an African Identity of Higher Education' (Seepe 2004). In this work, a myriad of topics pertinent to the decolonisation of African universities were penned. Articles such as 'Knowledge and Identity: An African Vision of Higher Education Transformation' (Makgoba & Seepe 2004:13-58) offer a broad view of the challenges of achieving this goal.

## ■ Decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum

Decolonisation means putting Africa first and seeing phenomena with an African lens. For purposes of this chapter, Africanisation and decolonisation would be used interchangeably.

The debate about decolonisation and Africanisation emphasises validating African traditions, civilisation, culture and worldview as critical aspects for theorising, researching, writing and acting of

African universities (Abodunrin & Akinola 2019; Mokobane & Lebakeng 2002). As the debate continues, the discourse has trickled down to decolonising curricula (Higgs 2011) because since 1994, higher education has continued to use European models and paradigms (Tella 2020:1-12). Whereas decolonising the curricula had started at almost the same time with the notion of 'Peoples Education' as well as the discourse on African University, the need for a decolonised curriculum gained a louder refrain more recently with the #Fees Must Fall Campaign.

In this chapter, whose thrust is decolonising the social work curriculum, in particular, I would like to submit that such a feat is almost impossible to achieve as long as the social sciences remain colonised. By this, I mean that it is impossible to fathom and contemplate a decolonised social work curriculum as long as the social sciences are deeply steeped in the Western Eurocentric paradigm.

Granted that social work is an applied social science, it is therefore not possible to decolonise social work without doing the same about the social sciences. Besides, Akbar (1984) was spot on when he made a scathing observation that:

[S]ocial science, like the economic and political institutions, has become an instrument designed to reflect the culture of the oppressor and to allow for the oppression and domination of African peoples. (p. 395)

Whereas it may be argued that such a position is both anachronistic and untenable because apartheid was legally obliterated and condemned to the waste bin of history in 1994, and the legacy of the system continues in the lives of many South Africans. Mokobane and Lebakeng (2002), for example, argued that the social sciences and humanities played a pivotal role in sustaining the structure and logic of the apartheid political economy. By implication, one may further argue that the vestiges of the system are still evident in the teaching and practice of social work in South Africa today. Thus, for a great number of scholars, this

Western Eurocentric orientation is the only way of understanding life, thanks to the colonial project.

Typical of an intransigent colonial past, however, the sad reality is that African scholars unconsciously adopt the Western Eurocentric worldview and perspective as well as its conceptual frameworks (Mazama 2001), even though the problems are of an African nature (Adesina 2010). The African people's failure to realise and challenge this schizophrenia ignores the racial bigotry from Western Eurocentric (social) sciences, thus keeping the injustice intact and making it universal (Abodunrin 2008).

As may be expected, Akbar (1984) decried this sordid state of affairs and equated this with a situation where African scholars participate in their (our) own oppression, which results in what he aptly referred to as 'conceptual incarceration'.

## ■ Discourse on decolonisation of the social work curriculum

The discourse on decolonisation of the social work curriculum 26 years into democracy is opportune given 'that both colonialism and apartheid shaped the evolution of the nature, form and the content of social welfare policy in South Africa' (Patel 2005:66; see also Shokane, Nmutandani & Budeli 2016) and hence the training of social workers. Smith (2014:305) put it more succinctly that 'the history of South African social work is interwoven with the history of colonialism and imperialism'. MacPherson and Midgley (1987) had earlier lamented the fact that colonialism disrupted and denigrated most traditional forms of welfare.

Colonisation, just like slavery, starts at the level of destroying a people's identity and culture. To that end, African culture and languages were not accorded the requisite respect, such that Africans began doubting themselves and their culture. It is therefore imperative that an attempt to reverse the damage of colonialism should start by emancipating African culture and indigenous languages (Harms-Smith 2020).

Ayittey (2005) chronicled and bemoaned the betrayal of African culture by, among others, the first generation of post-colonial leadership:

African nationalist leaders believed they could not rely on Africa's 'backward' indigenous institutions for the rapid development they envisaged after independence. As such they searched for some foreign systems to adopt for Africa. But then, they possessed only a perfunctory understanding of these foreign systems. (p. 94)

## ■ Language and culture in decolonising the curriculum

It is unfathomable to isolate language and culture from education or a curriculum. In consolidating this view, Mamabolo (2012) cited Ngugi wa Thiongo that language was a key instrument for colonisation, and culture cannot be separated from language. This is an established position among African scholars, such as Maake (2004:157-170), who maintain that language is at the centre of decolonisation and that language should occupy this position when it comes to education throughout all levels. This, therefore, suggests that Africa and African languages would be at the core rather than the periphery of the transmission of the social science and by extension the social work curriculum.

The conundrum for tertiary education in South Africa is whether African languages can be used to teach university courses, including social work. My immediate response is that such a dream can be realised if the South African government and the private sector would invest generously in the development of African languages to the same extent that the apartheid government developed Afrikaans as a scientific language.

Such a scenario would make social science and social work help students who are struggling with social work concepts and the English language at the same time. By the way, if it is not in my language, then it is not mine. The significance of learning new skills in one's language was highlighted by Makhubele and

Qalinge (2009:199–208; see also Tella 2020:3) in their discussion of the value of language in indigenising life skills education in South Africa. Language, particularly English in this instance, is a barrier to most students whose first or second language is not English. English could be a second or third language to most African students, and the challenges associated with this reality have been well documented (Cloete 2002; Makhubele & Qalinge 2009; Viljoen 2005).

The following paragraph paints a grim picture of African students studying English at the university, and one is tempted to say even though the challenges in the paragraph refer to difficulties with English in particular, the disadvantages are pervasive and permeate all subjects, including social work. A deficit in English language proficiency undermines the students' ability to master basic concepts necessary to understand and evaluate literature. The students also lack the competency for ordinary conversation in English, let alone for discussing topics in English literature. Students struggle to construct sentences and lack rudimentary knowledge of virtually all aspects of grammar and the mechanics of writing (Cloete 2002:23; see also Viljoen 2005).

The extent to which African students (mis)understand social science concepts in general and social work nomenclature, in particular, is yet to be determined. It is also to be ascertained as to how many of these plausible language distortions influence social work teaching and practice. Undeniably, language is a carrier of culture.

At the point of student's learning, a conflict between the student's culture and the foreign culture which he is assimilating is inevitable. When that clash of cultures happens, several scenarios may unfold. Firstly, a student may uncritically imbibe the dominant culture (Schiele 1997) innocently because that guarantees the attainment of the social work qualification, and this would eventually get the student a job to earn bread, or a

cauldron of resistance to the dominant culture may ensue, in which case the student may finally fail and drop out because he finds it difficult to accept the marginalisation of his indigenous culture.

As is the case with most university courses, social work lectures and practice seem to be dominated by the Eurocentric and somewhat universalist ideas that undermine all other contributions to civilisation and problem-solving but European (Sewpaul & Hölscher 2004). The problem with this state of affairs is that Eurocentrism seeks a one-dimensional world rather than a polycentric one as the basis for European domination in general (Mamabolo 2012). In order to obviate the Eurocentric hegemony, African scholars seek 'many discourses, of multiple origins, which may shed light on the challenges facing contemporary Africa' (Mamabolo 2012:56; see also English & Kalumba 1996).

Arguably, the decolonisation discourse is timely based on the preponderance of the evidence that 'Western science is not a panacea to all our problems' (Lebakeng & Payle 2002:73), more so that Africans were not involved in the design of this epistemology. Ramose (2002; see also Hartshorne 1998; Mokobane & Lebakeng 2002) is unrelenting about the injustice of violent exclusion of Africans in the design and structure of education:

In effect, the indigenous conquered African peoples were excluded from the sphere of the construction and the design of knowledge and education. Neither decolonisation nor the new constitutional dispensation since April 1994 in South Africa has overcome or resurrected from this epistemicide. The indigenous conquered African peoples have thus been reduced to the condition of the consumers but not the manufacturers of knowledge and education. (p. 152)

The notion and perception of an epistemicide make the decolonisation discourse in South Africa overbearing. An 'epistemicide refers to the negation and dismissal of the African experience as a basis for understanding African social reality' (Lebakeng & Payle 2002:76). A reversal of this epistemicide rests upon the decolonisation of the social sciences.



## ■ Decolonising and Afrocentricity in the social sciences

Decolonising the social sciences should start at the epistemological level. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that concerns itself with the modalities of learning and how people make sense of the world around them (Babbie & Mouton 2010; Schiele 1997). Decolonisation would, therefore, mean, first of all, an epistemology that is consistent with African realities and worldview. A worldview explains how people interpret and understand their context which covers life in its totality (Ani 1980). In Mazama's (2016:388) words, this represents 'epistemological centeredness'.

Afrocentricity, as articulated by Asante (1991), is a worldview that is African-centred, in that Africans are understood as subjects rather than objects of inquiry, more in the centre than the periphery. Mazama (2001:388) also acknowledged the fact that Afrocentrism valorises African experiences instead of perceiving these as signs and symptoms of victimhood.

Mazama (2016) opined that Asante has significantly contributed to the making of African epistemological standpoint into a heuristic tool and principle, a feat that was achieved by Cheikh Anta Diop in locating the blackness of the ancient Egyptians into an operational scientific principle. In almost the same way, Leopold Senghor also elevated negritude as the awareness, protection and advancement of African values (English & Kalumba 1996).

Akbar's (1984) guidelines about decolonising the social sciences first identified those variables and constructs of social sciences that need to be scrutinised, and their African equivalents sought. Akbar's (1984) template for decolonisation problematised social stratification first and foremost because sociology identified the middle class as a normative group. The question now is what do Africans regard as a normative group?

Contrary to the notion of the middle class as the normative group, Africans do not adhere to a system of social stratification

that classifies people in terms of their material resources and socio-economic status. Social stratification negates the values of *ubuntu* that ‘you are and therefore I am’. As the bastion of apartheid South Africa, social stratification was based on Darwin’s theory of the evolution of the human race and the premise that a natural ranking existed on a scale from the primitive to the most civilised (Biakolo 2000:9-19; Dubow 1987).

‘Class divisions never existed in traditional Africa’ (English & Kalumba 1996). Instead, Africans have this philosophy called *ubuntu* which says a person is human through others (Mbiti 1970; Pato 1997). This philosophy does not ascribe socio-economic standing to an individual or a family.

## ■ The decolonisation project

So, part of the decolonisation project would be to see people who consume social work services as human beings, regardless of their socio-economic status. Another stronghold of Western Eurocentric social science is individualism. An individual is at the centre of things. Much emphasis is placed on individual achievement, and problems are ascribed to individual pathology.

Emphasis on individuals goes against the essence and grain of African culture because it is an imposition by colonialism. Before colonialism, Africans practised a system of communalism which ensured that the welfare needs of all community members were catered to (Biko 1998:26-30; Patel 2005:66; see also Bundy 1992). An identity of a person, for example, is always ascribed to a clan. A surname such as Sithole, for example, is always seen in the clan praise-name, *Jobe ka Matshane*. So, an individual is seen as part of the group. This is probably what Karenga (n.d) meant by the sociality of selfhood.

English and Kalumba (1996) share Leopold Senghor’s conceptualisation of a family:

The family is the microcosm, the first cell. All the concentric circles which form the different levels of society [...] village, tribe, kingdom,

empire [...] reproduce in extended form the family [...] The African is thus held in a tight network of vertical and horizontal communities, which bind and at the same time support him [...] The family in Africa is the clan and not as in Europe 'mum, dad and the baby'.

It is not the household but the sum of all persons, living and dead, who acknowledge a common ancestor. (p. 230)

So, mitigation of personal problems such as marital discords needs input from a larger group than just marital partners. It is so because even the consummation of marriage in the African culture is never finalised between two individuals (Pato 1997). Two individuals may initiate marriage through dating, but eventually, the whole clan will be part of the formalisation of this marriage.

## ■ A decolonised Afrocentric social science

A decolonised Afrocentric social science will be buttressed by tried and tested writings from African scholars; such must pervade social work course outlines and study guides. Several African scholars and what they represent hardly find their way in the social work curricula.

Very few students would know the giants of African social sciences such as Magubane, Mafeje, Vilakazi and Ramose (just but to name a few) because some continue to teach from texts that are still by and large Western and Eurocentric. 'One must strive for a balance through post-colonial critiques to resist the stranglehold of colonisation and hegemony which could easily be sustained through complicity in benevolent responses' (Razack 2016:12).

The decolonisation discourse also implies that knowledge production and distribution need to be dominated by those who are meant to benefit from such knowledge. However, the reality is that most books and journals in South Africa are still dominated by Western Eurocentric science. A case in point is the paucity of

articles in the so-called mainstream, accredited and peer-reviewed journals penned by Africans. Scrutiny of who sits on the editorial boards of these accredited journals shows bias and domination by people of Western Eurocentric social science orientation.

This hegemony will remain unabated if what Pali Lehohla said is not reversed or addressed. The former Statistician-General deplores the fact that most African students do not succeed in their university education (Lehohla 2017). This situation is worse than what was during apartheid. So, African academics will continue to be lesser in number.

Publishing companies and commissioning agents of these journals are also Western. Barney Pityana in words, popularised by Steve Biko 'black man, you are on your own' (Ally & Ally 2008; see also Senokoane 2011; Pityana & Biko 2011), argued that the challenge is for Africans to start establishing their journals and publishing companies.

More than establishing their institutions to pushing back the frontiers of colonisation, Africans also need to be conscious of axiology, epistemology and logic as they are part of a people's worldview. As would be clearer later, a *hiatus* exists between Afrocentricism and Western social science around these three. For example, Dixon, as cited by Karanja (2010:113) argued that axiology, epistemology and logic are central tenets of a culture's worldview.

Axiology refers to the nature of values (Myers & Speight 2010). Dixon (as cited by Karanja 2010) expands on this definition by informing that the dominant value orientations in the Euro-American worldview are what he terms 'Man to object relationship'. On the flip side, The Afrikan's value orientations are termed being, felt-time, communalism and harmony with nature. The difference between these two value orientations is that the African value orientation is based on collective

responsibility (as opposed to individualism), corporateness and interdependence, as well as spirituality and circularity.

Schiele (1994) maintained that the bases for an African-centred social work paradigm are: (1) the identity of the individual is a collective identity, (2) the spiritual component of a human being is the essence of human existence and (3) the subjective approach to knowing is epistemologically valid. Translating these African values to social work practice implies that solutions to problems should not be seen and ascribed as well as sourced from individuals but rather from collectives and that in decision-making, clients may have to consult significant other people in their family or clan such as uncles or aunts and that always brings an aspect of spirituality in interpreting circumstances that individuals, groups and communities may be going through (see Harvey 2003:119).

Dixon as cited by Karanja 2010) here maintained that within the Western worldview, the knower attempts to distance himself from the subject of his study, whereas for African scholars, the knower attempts to get immersed in the phenomenon that is under investigation. This latter fact needs special attention within the helping professions, social work included.

Whereas social work advocates for controlled emotional involvement (Banks 2012; Biestek 1957), the principle is easier preached than followed. Several social work educators and practitioners complain about the trauma they experience when supervising their students' work because they find it pretty difficult to separate themselves from the pain of their clients. This is what Fanon ([1961] 2004) referred to as generational trauma, and it happens among Africans as a result of the legacy of colonisation. Here, an Afrocentric social work teaching and practice could integrate the ways of healing for the client and attend to the practitioner and supervisor.

Lastly, it is the role of logic in people's worldview. Western social scientists are inclined to see phenomena as either/or,

whereas from an Afrocentric perspective the diunital logic is central. This attribute may sound paradoxical in that it represents apartness and unity at the same time. One often hears this in conversation among Africans or in greetings. 'How is your family this morning,' and the response takes this form, 'No, they are fine' or 'Oh, no, they are doing well but for so and so [...]'. These apparent contradictions need to be taken into account in counselling, and perception checking may help in clarifying the apparent contradictions.

In decolonising social work as a profession, emphasis may be placed on some of the following approaches and services:

- Radical social work.
- Healing.
- Placement of students.
- Traditional councils.
- Informal settlements.
- Social work with refugees.
- International aid organisations.

Social work with refugees

- Placement in churches.
- Social workers at initiation sites.
- Social work practice in traditional African marriages.

## ■ Radical social work

A seemingly normative approach to the teaching and training of social workers has largely been buttressed by the system preserving theories and ideologies. Very little is offered in the social work curriculum from radical approaches and that is probably one of the reasons the profession finds itself in such a state of total disrespect and disregard by the authorities.

Social work training and education exhort social workers to advocate on behalf of their clients, yet it seems some social

workers often find it hard to advocate for themselves. This is certainly an orientation at odds with the approach adopted by Nomzamo Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Ellen Khuzwayo as described by Shokane and Masoga (2019). This apparent inertia could be partly attributed to too much consumption of the system preserving theories and models at the expense and total disregard of radical social work approaches.

System preserving theories may not provide adequate and pertinent ammunition for students to enter such spaces as informal settlements and violently torn communities. Such environments would require social workers who have mastered system changing theories and approaches. Razack's (2016:11) observation is apt: 'Decolonising pedagogy includes theories and understandings from post-colonial studies and spatial and critical race theory'. In the same space, Razack (2016) has the following to say about critical space theory:

[A]llows us to reflect on and analyse how we imagine, organise and socially construct spaces that we occupy, how these imaginings produce entitlement in terms of who belongs and who does not, and how one occupies a particular space and place. (p. 17)

In the past 20 years or so, social workers have been complaining about their service conditions such as office space, stationery and transport, just to mention a few. And one is appalled by the level of the intransigence of the authorities in providing tools of the trade. Such complaints are falling on deaf ears, and it may be time for social workers to start addressing their problems radically.

In this regard, one may also commend Mokgadi Tjale for organising social workers to bring to the attention of authorities the plight of social workers. Social workers need to help themselves before they can help their communities. In the words attributed to Mahatma Gandhi (n.d.:n.p.): 'Become the change that you want to see in the world'.

## ■ Healing

Literature that acknowledges the wounds of the past that continue to gnaw at South Africa's national psyche abounds (Jansen 2009; Patel 2005; Raborife 2017). Apartheid colonialism wreaked havoc with the lives of the indigenous people, the scars of this violent system are difficult to hide, and healing is essential.

The trauma of apartheid is largely responsible for the violence that is witnessed in South Africa to date. Whereas psychological and emotional healing is essential, redress through compensation such as what happened to the victims of the holocaust is imperative. Patel (2005:67) noted that 'Colonialism imposed enormous social challenges on traditional societies, but no responsibility was taken for the social costs of such large-scale social disruption'.

Several attempts at healing the wounds of the past, particularly the psychological ones inflicted by apartheid, were initiated. One such effort was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sadly, such attempts have just scratched the surface (O'Loughlin 2013), and some wounds on both sides of the racial divide have started festering. Evidence of this is sporadic bursts of racial attacks and vitriol such as those from Penny Sparrow (Singh 2019).

In re-curriculating social work, serious attempts need to be made to include modules that will facilitate mediating national trauma such as dealing with those scars left by xenophobic attacks in South African black communities. Silence in the phase of these traumatic events only breeds more psychological problems. 'Silence around historically traumatic events can have the deleterious effects both for individuals and for whole societies' (O'Loughlin 2013:249). Social workers could pave the way in such change to heal historical trauma, using Afrocentric ways as well as considering the community as opposed to the individual.



## ■ Placement of students

Placement of students in training sites as part of the work-integrated learning is the *sine qua non* of the whole social work training. Therefore, the following sites could be used for the placement of students over and above the traditional tried and tested field practicum *loci*.

## ■ Traditional councils

An area that remains a vexing problem in students' training is the placement of students as part of their work-integrated learning in the rural areas. As the enrolment of students increases yearly, placement opportunities would also be limited.

Consideration of placement of students at traditional councils must be explored. Traditional councils came into being and are recognised for a traditional community in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the *Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003* (Act No. 41 of 2003) or any corresponding provision in provincial legislation.

Arguably, traditional council offices may know the role of social workers in community development and their (occasional) involvement in addressing some of the community's challenges. In a situation where, for example, there is a dispute over a piece of land, children and other institutions surrounding the family such as schools and banks may be affected, and social workers may have to interface with such institutions on behalf of the client system.

Placement of students in traditional councils would have implications for the social work curriculum. Inevitably, the curriculum would have to ground such students in traditional leadership as an institution and a solid language and cultural base of the people served. So, the universities could have electives in such areas or provide short certificates and CPD courses in this area.

## ■ Informal settlements

All over South Africa, informal settlements are mushrooming and sprawling across the landscape. Such settlements are *loci* of poverty and its attendant problems. Judging by the political developments and economic growth in South Africa currently, the country is not about to turn around these informal settlements.

Emanating from this reality, some questions one always asks are as follows: Are there social workers permanently placed in such informal settlements? Do social workers want to be placed in such settlements? Would it be fair for social workers to be placed in these informal settlements? Is it fair for such settlements to be without social workers? If indeed, social workers have to be placed in such settlements, would the social work curricula prepare would be social workers to take their space in this social milieu?

Having said this, one needs to appreciate the involvement of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Department of Social Work in the Bambayi settlement and their continued fraternal links with the *Abahlali be Mjondolo*, a pressure group for 'homeless and landless' people. The decolonised social work curriculum needs to focus among such socio-economically depressed spaces and work with pressure groups that are intent on bringing about change in this regard.

## ■ Social work with refugees

South Africa may consider herself fortunate that she did not have to contend with a flood of refugees from the Middle East like European countries. Perhaps, South Africa's luck stems from the fact that RSA is a developing country and the size of the refugee population as compared to that which entered Europe would have collapsed the economy and infrastructure. That notwithstanding, the flood of more refugees flocked to South Africa from neighbouring countries. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a Regional Economic

Community comprising 16 Member States: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (SADC)<sup>19</sup> and beyond has not abated as long as world peace is still in a crucible. So, the country and its people need to be ready for that.

A politically and economically unstable continent continues to direct all kinds of refugees to South Africa, among other destinations. On the flip side is the fact that South Africa also 'exported' refugees to African and other countries during the apartheid era. Several pull and push factors are responsible for the escalation of the refugee communities in this country. It is important to note that refugees are also protected by the constitution and that they also are deserving of social work services, primarily because they are human beings.

## ■ International aid organisations

The placement of social work students at International Aid Organisations such as USAID, Gift of the Givers and the likes is not so much popular in South Africa and, therefore, an opportunity to be explored. The International Aid Organisations such as the Gift of the Givers is a voluntary organisation that spreads love throughout the world by intervening in areas of crises brought by conflict and other natural causes such as earthquakes and similar events. Whereas the work of the Gift of the Givers is philanthropic and therefore resonant with the ethos of social work, very little is evident from social workers' contribution in this particular context. The decolonised social work curriculum needs to emphasise voluntary work locally and internationally because crises afflicting humanity remain unabated.

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19. See <https://www.sadc.int/media-centre/frequently-asked-questions>.

## ■ Placement in churches

The locus of help in South Africa and the United States, of course, 'has not been linked to one profession' (Daniels 2016:302). The foundation of social work as a profession can largely be attributed to pioneers driven largely by religious persuasion, and yet to date, few social workers are employed by religious organisations and churches in South Africa, when the latter is growing and mushrooming in an unprecedented rate.

Needless to say, South Africans are so overwhelmed by personal problems that they seek divine intervention, and this they pursue without much circumspection. Naively, some people end up chewing snakes, drinking petrol and being sprayed with doom to overcome their situations, a situation that attests to the fact that prayer and worship need to be supported by social work and psychotherapy. In a decolonised social work curriculum, placement and employment opportunities within this space need to be explored to the full.

Substance abuse and addiction have been some of the scourges that are successfully dealt with by churches such as the Zion Christian Church. The latter is the biggest church in southern Africa managed by black people themselves. In exhorting its members to maintain a healthy physical and spiritual life, the church prohibits its membership from smoking, drinking alcohol and eating pork, among others. Known substance addicts can jump onto the water wagon after a brief spell of association with the church.

Very little literature on substance abuse, at least in South Africa, ever acknowledged this fact. Whether the church might be used as a referral resource is a possibility that may be explored with the leadership of the institution. Whatever the modalities of the relationship between the church and social work, some kind of partnership is essential, particularly religious formations, and these may not be peculiar to the Zion Christian Church, historically

have provided social welfare services to the communities (Daniels 2016; Patel 2005).

## ■ Social workers at initiation sites

Some Western social science and discourse have in the past seen Africans as people 'who live in spaces of barbarism, aberrant cults, polygamy, and circumcision' (Mamabolo 2012:62). Therefore, school social work is yet to embrace an initiation school site as a *locus* of social work service delivery. On the other hand, this position is oxymoronic, in that one of the adages in social work is 'start where the client is' and do not be judgmental. So, if a significant size of the African population holds on to beliefs and practices in rites of passage and thus embraces initiation and sends children to such institutions, a decolonised social work profession would be accessible to pupils at initiation schools.

One is tempted to acknowledge that initiates could be experiencing similar if not more serious problems than those experienced at school only for a short space of time because initiates are at most at the institution for a month. Afrocentric social workers would be in a position to address problems experienced by African people in all their contexts and thus reclaim their epistemology.

The challenge for African scholars, therefore, is to conduct needs assessment studies in this regard and provide the required services. One needs to commend the advances made by African Western-trained doctors and nurses and, of course, social workers who are complementing services provided by traditional healers at initiation schools (Pato 1997). This is one area where traditional medicine and a decolonised Western medicine work jointly for the benefit of the client population. A similar team approach with HIV/AIDS patients is reported in an article on 'Adlerian Similarities to a Sangoma Treating AIDS in South Africa' (Hill et al. 2009).

## ■ Social work practice in traditional African marriages

The institution of marriage is one area that is still an enigma for social workers in South Africa. The dominant marriage arrangements in social work practice centres on marriages in community of property, out of community property as well as marriage with an ante nuptial contract. These are heterosexual and monogamous civil marriages which may be consummated in terms of the *Marriages Act 25 of 1961*.

Most social work training prepares students adequately to practice in this particular space, and there is very little preparation for social workers to intervene in other types of marriages such as customary marriages and civil unions. The *Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998 Act*, for example, recognises both polygamous customary and monogamous marriages, if they are finalised according to 'the customs and usages traditionally observed among the indigenous African peoples of South Africa, which form part of the culture of those peoples'.

A customary marriage concluded under this act is currently the only means by which a polygamous marriage can be clothed with complete legal validity in South African law (*The Customary Marriages Act 120/1998*). One wishes to submit that there would be very few social workers who would be adequately prepared to intervene in marital problems that are concluded in customary law, let alone polygamous marriages.

Contemporary social work practice in (South) Africa needs to consider this when intervening in marital discord among couples, that too particularly in situations where cracks in the marriage are apparent and divorce looms; the extended family needs to be engaged in finding permanent and lasting solutions. To achieve this, social work students need to be firmly grounded in African cultural institutions to gain the respect, recognition and confidence of the custodians of the culture. At the moment,

custodians of such cultural institutions and practices do not engage the services of social workers because the profession is seen as Western and therefore foreign and hamstrung in dealing with the challenges of the intricacies of African life.

Whereas Western-based social work would recognise one type of marriage, people 'consumating' marriages that extend between the normative husband and wife configurations as contemplated in the Western world would find it difficult to assist people in marriages arranged to meet the requirements of sorority and leviracy.

## ■ Conclusion

The conundrum of decolonisation of the social work curriculum was largely viewed from an Afrocentric paradigm. Admittedly, the theory of Afrocentricity is not a silver bullet for all the perceived ills associated with colonised curricula, nor is it a panacea for all that is wrong with colonialism. One shortcoming of the Afrocentric paradigm is, in my opinion, its lack of universal applicability among Africans across the world. Karenga, for example, acknowledges that Afrocentricity has to be understood within the context of African American studies. For people outside this space, wholesale and unreserved application of Afrocentricity may prove to be a problem.

Secondly, another methodological issue is the fact that Afrocentricity is seen as a paradigm to challenge the oppression of African Americans who have to deal with the scourge of racism, exclusion and condescension daily. For Africans in 'liberated zones', it would seem that Afrocentrism will be of partial significance. One says this also in the full realisation and acknowledgement that even in these so-called African 'liberated zones', Africans are still oppressed, in that their languages and culture are marginalised by the dominant culture; the economies of these 'liberated zones' are in the hands of white minorities, to such an extent that one may also somewhat accept the notion that Afrocentrism is a philosophy of the oppressed.

Proponents of Afrocentrism need to be cautious of the error of reductionism, which should caution against equating the study of mere African phenomena as Afrocentrism. In Asante's (1992) own words:

[A] scholar who generates research questions based on the centrality of Africa is engaged in a very different research inquiry than the one who imposes Western criteria on the phenomenon. (pp. 20–29)

Finally, it is, therefore, recommended that the teaching and training of social work should be Afrocentric. To that end, compulsory modules on African studies should form part of the curriculum. These African studies would also include the study of one African language that is dominant in the locus of training or where the student wishes to practice after completion. This is critical because language is the repository of culture. In decolonising the social work training, the knowledge and value base of the curriculum will be Afrocentric or based on African indigenous values, experiences and knowledge.

## ■ Summary

The social sciences and humanities curricula remain Western and Eurocentric. Social work as an applied social science is equally trapped in the Western and Eurocentric paradigm. Social work is a culture-bound profession. For social work training among African students to be effective and relevant, the value and knowledge base must be African. African value and cultural systems pervade traditional and extant helping modalities, and these should be carried into the curriculum for relevance in the African context. Modalities of healing both instructors and students must be built into the curriculum of social work training to address generational trauma.

Decolonisation of the social sciences is the precursor to the liberation of social work from the clutches of colonialism. Therefore, the traditional African institutions must be explored as sites and *loci* for work-integrated learning.





# Embedding Indigenous Knowledge of sub-Saharan African destinations in rural tourism offerings

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## ■ Introduction

### ■ Purpose and perspectives

The global growth in demand for authentic tourism experience by the tourism market has implications for the sub-Saharan African (SSA) tourism industry. The unique natural and cultural attributes of rural areas in SSA provide settings to stage events for domestic and

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international tourists. Indigenous Knowledge and practices of host communities can be highlighted in these events to provide an authentic tourism experience. This chapter outlines the preconditions, conditions, challenges and opportunities inherent in this type of rural tourism development in SSA.

Kavita and Saarinen (2016) stated that in the course of the past two decades, the tourism industry has been vital for governments and regional agencies seeking social and economic development. This observation by Kavita and Saarinen (2016) pointed particularly to the Global South where the increase in tourism demand has become highly beneficial in creating direct and indirect income and has provided employment opportunities within the host regions that were mostly marginalised local communities. Some authors (such as Mtapuri, Giampiccoli & Spershott 2015; Rogerson 2014; Rogerson & Rogerson 2013) stated that there is a growth in the African tourism scholarship, the importance of tourism as an industry and increasing interests in community-based or rural tourism. Rogerson (2014) noted that rural areas have been used by governments to promote tourism as a driver for economic development and employment creation.

‘Rurality’ has been used as a concept that different rural areas cannot be homogeneously defined. ‘Rurality’, according to Chigbu (2013:815), is ‘a condition of place-based homeliness shared by people with common ancestry or heritage and who inhabit traditional, culturally defined areas or places statutorily recognised to be rural’. Communities with common ancestry or heritage living in rural areas have attributes, qualities or features that are a characteristic or inherent part of those who inhabit these traditional or culturally defined rural areas. Rural communities have a unique type of knowledge that can be termed local and equally indigenous. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2017) refers to local and IK as:

[T]he understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. (n.p.)

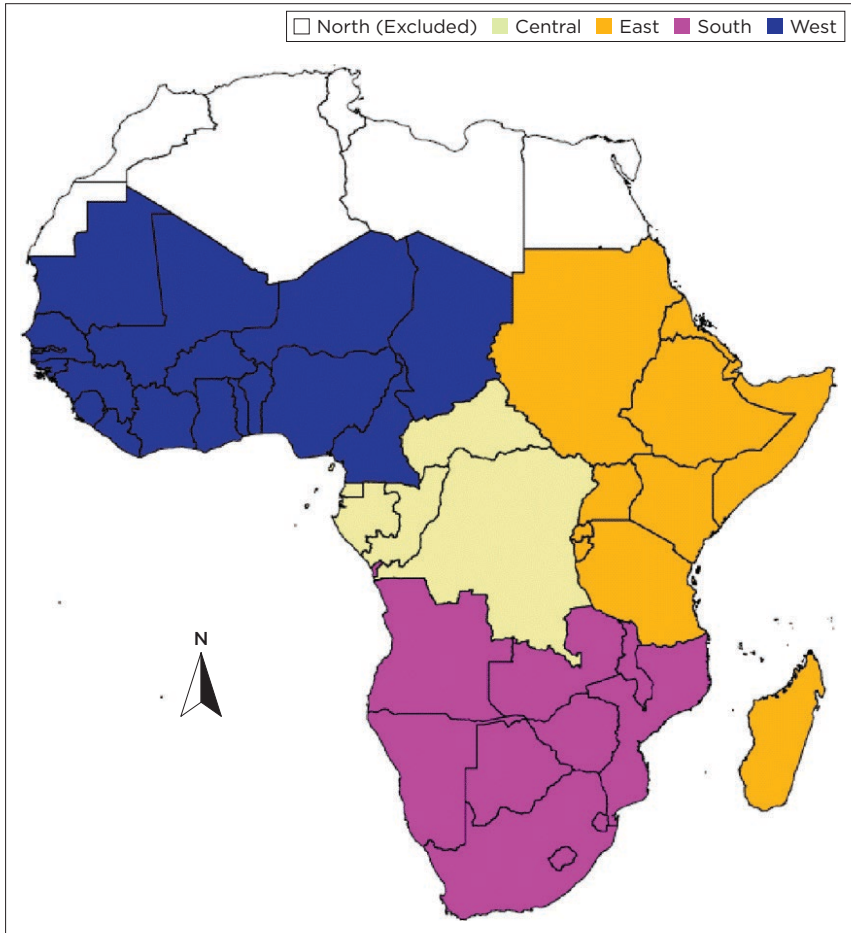
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 2017) further posits that:

[7]his knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also besets language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality. These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world's cultural diversity, and provide a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development. (n.p.)

Visitors to rural areas, especially international tourists, have perceptions or images of these places having 'rural idyll symbols' (markers or representations of the 'perfect rural' environment) and, in many cases, want to share in the local communities' unique knowledge, language, rituals, spirituality or way of life. This is one of the emerging conditions or opportunities for rural tourism, fostering a knowledge exchange between local communities and tourists or visitors, without eroding the identity and practices of such rural areas (see Rid, Ezeuduji & Pröbstl-Haider 2014). Rural areas have experienced major socio-economic challenges in the past few decades. This is mostly because of modernisation and deepening globalisation, and the significant decrease in the economic and employment potential of many traditional livelihoods (Saarinen & Lenao 2014). Hence, tourism has been viewed as an important vehicle for solving rural problems in many developing nations. It is also being used to encourage economic diversification and creating innovative ways to increase income levels and employment. Rural tourism consists of tourists' visits to rural areas to experience rural landscapes and also participate in the rural way of life. African rural tourism, therefore, comprises visits by tourists to rural Africa for the purpose of experiencing the natural environment and culture of the local African populations. This has been considered one of the critical strategies within the portfolio of sustainable rural development and management (Ezeuduji & Rid 2011). More so, tourism is perceived as an instrument to fight against rural poverty (Gascón 2015).

Rural communities in SSA undeniably have rural tourism resources in terms of cultural, natural and historical attributes. However, the capabilities needed to manage these rural tourism resources, to convert them into a holistic unique rural tourism experience, have been questioned by previous authors (such as Briedenhann 2009; Briedenhann & Wickens 2004; Ezeuduji 2017; Ezeuduji & Rid 2011; Lenao, Mbaiwa & Saarinen 2014; Manwa & Modirapula 2019; Nkwanyana, Ezeuduji & Nzama 2016; Schmitz & Tsobgou 2016; Spencer & Matela 2014). Sub-Saharan Africa includes African countries, with the exception of those in northern Africa, which are fully or partially situated south of the Sahara, but including Sudan and South Sudan (United Nations Statistics Division 2011) (Figure 8.1). Sub-Saharan Africa also includes those African island states that are offshore of the eastern and western coasts, namely, the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, respectively (Dieke 2013). Ezeuduji (2015a) stated that tourism is propelled by people and destination attractions, and these destination attractions are a function of the unique geographical features and diverse cultures. These unique geographical resources and diverse cultures of SSA cumulatively provide the sub-region with significant tourism development opportunities (Ankomah & Crompton 1990). Sub-Saharan Africa includes East African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda; Southern African countries such as South Africa, Namibia Zambia and Botswana; and West and Central African countries. From the foregoing, the uniqueness and diversity of natural, historical and cultural attributes of rural SSA can provide the setting for embedding IK of SSA tourism destinations in rural tourism offerings.

Many recent studies conducted in the field of cultural events tourism in SSA point to the increasing importance of using cultural events to make tourism more attractive for the socio-economic development of tourism destinations (such as Apleni & Henama 2020; Bob et al. 2019; Gozini & Tseane-Gumbi 2017; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa 2019; Mokoena 2020; Okech 2011; Tseane-Gumbi, Manwa & Dlamini-Boemah 2019). These studies



Source: Kunene, Ebomoyi and Gala (2018:4).

**FIGURE 8.1:** Map of sub-Saharan Africa.

were mostly not conducted in rural areas and did not explore deeper ways of incorporating the destination's IK into these cultural events to create opportunities for place branding. This chapter, therefore, explored ways of embedding and delivering indigenous and authentic rural tourism value proposition in SSA. This strategy will give rise to ways of establishing unique experience in SSA's rural tourism.

## ■ **Overview of some theoretical underpinnings of indigenous knowledge systems and how they relate to rural tourism**

The discussions in this chapter are informed by theories that underpin IKS in African context and how they relate to rural tourism. Theories play a critical role in shaping the nature of academic discourse, and the primary aim of a theory is to develop a deeper understanding of human endeavour as regards its empirical and explicit aspects. It has been reported that rationalism and empiricism theories being used in African philosophical standpoints unearth the significance of theoretical and practical frameworks in IKS (Mwinzi 2015). Logical empiricism, for example, posits that some of the most valid and reliable forms of knowledge originate from the direct experience through human senses (Audi 2006:515); however, postulated criteria of knowledge analyticity may not be valid in all domains of knowledge or different environments. Critical rationalism questions and examines the legitimacy of values, intentions and practices. Hence, in-depth thinking and extended discourse are important in obtaining solutions related to the human situation (Curren 2006:307). Authors such as Andersson (2009), however, argued that critical rationalism leads the way for a critical philosophy pointing to the imperfection of human knowledge. Critical theory hinges on an understanding of various power structures and power plays, and the results that such power structures and power plays have on individuals, society and social agencies (Curren 2006:495). Furthermore, the African philosophy theoretical framework expresses the significance of having the African thought perspective as a reaction to the dominating Western thought and unfounded claims of cultural superiority (Mwinzi & Higgs 2013:130).

From the rural tourism perspective, logical empiricism supports tourists' travel to rural areas where they can have

contact with local communities and direct rural tourism experience. This is generally considered more reliable than virtual travel or depending on other tourists to recount their own rural experience in a diluted form. When tourists are in a rural destination, they can apply critical rationalism and open discourse rationality to question the authenticity of rural tourism offerings, as tourists demand an authentic tourism experience. Examples of destinations in SSA which offer rural tourism experience to tourists are the Berefet and Njawara villages, situated along the River Gambia, in The Gambia. They offer staged traditional events (highlighting indigenous festivals, traditional dances and local food) to offer tourism experience and let the tourists get acquainted with unique African creative and performing arts and cultures, while generating income for local communities (Ezeuduji & Rid 2011). Another author (Nkosi 2019) explained how uMkhosi WoMhlanga (the Reed Dance) and similar Indoni cultural events in the villages of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, evoke the sense of national pride among the locals and have significantly contributed to tourism development and growth in this region. Other authors (Tseane-Gumbi et al. 2019) also narrated how African rural-based tourism in a South African province (North West) has allowed rural areas to host events with greater emphasis on social than economic advancements. These communities involve the tourists in showcasing their cultural dances, and they strongly believe that rural events tourism profiles and promotes the preservation of cultural heritage and knowledge exchange with tourists.

The authenticity of experience has been highlighted to be one of the key success factors for event-based rural tourism development in SSA (Ezeuduji et al. 2014). It is also crucial for the local communities who are willing to be involved in rural tourism development to fully understand the plurality of rural tourism stakeholders. Hence, critical theory supports the understanding of power structures and power plays among these stakeholders and the impact these can have on local communities and other stakeholders (plurality of rural tourism stakeholders is explained later in this chapter). Rural tourism offering can foster the African



philosophy theoretical framework as tourists visiting SSA rural destinations will appreciate the African IK and cultural perspectives first-hand. It can potentially disconfirm the negative but popular Western media perspective on African development or way of life.

## ■ **Essentials of service excellence and Indigenous Knowledge in rural tourism offerings in sub-Saharan Africa**

International visitors to SSA countries' rural areas have needs to satisfy. They want to experience unusual landscapes, tranquillity, foreign culture, IK and different ways of life (pre-visit demand) in their host communities. These visitors are intrinsically motivated and pulled to these destinations because of curiosity and the drive to fulfil their psychological needs. In most cases, these tourists are environmentally sensitive and want to behave according to the local norms and traditions of the host communities during their visit. Ultimately, they want to share the IK of the local population and compare their own ways of life with the host community's ways of life. Tourists' visit satisfaction at the destination is achieved through service excellence (service providers'/hosts' ability to consistently meet and occasionally exceed customers'/tourists' expectations). Their post-visit satisfaction is enhanced by the positive 'stories' emanating from their visit, which they readily share through traditional (face-to-face) and electronic 'word-of-mouth' (reviews and blogs). The telling of these 'stories' further fulfils their psychological needs of the feeling of accomplishment and occasional development of friendship bonds with some host community members. Hence, it is critical for host communities to incorporate service excellence in their rural tourism offerings. Tourists want to share in the local communities' unique knowledge, language, rituals, spirituality or way of life; hence, embedding IK of SSA destinations in rural tourism offerings is one way of achieving service excellence. It is important to design the service offering to

foster a knowledge exchange between host communities and tourists without eroding the identity and practices of such rural areas. To achieve service excellence in rural tourism offerings, certain operational preconditions need to be met.

Many nations in SSA, such as South Africa, have significant potential in attracting tourists in search of new and exciting experiences within rural areas. These areas have unexploited natural beauty and substantial cultural resources. However, several challenges need be overcome for the African rural tourism sector to achieve its vision. These challenges include, among others, a lack of capacity development at the local government level, the inherent difficulties of operationalising rural tourism in communities and the absence of entrepreneurial expertise, and the capital and management skills needed to expand the rural tourism infrastructure (Briedenhann & Wickens 2004). Authors such as Ezeuduji and Rid (2011), in The Gambia, argued that local communities in SSA have been perceived to be objects instead of drivers of rural tourism development. They, therefore, have no direct benefits from tourism. They posited that rural tourism development will require a clear value position (authentic and unique offerings), operational excellence (logistics) and good customer relations (tourists' relations) to become global market leaders, offering the region a competitive advantage.

Rural tourism may not become a panacea for rural development, but has the significant potential to contribute to a fairer distribution of socio-economic benefits to the rural communities. At the grassroots level, better capacity building, institutionalising and collaboration with other rural communities are some of the recommendations put forward by Ezeuduji and Rid (2011) to foster rural tourism development. Regarding the state or political level, they suggest that formulating a clear legal framework and implementing effective policies, especially regarding infrastructure provision and other public investments, are preconditions to sustain functional rural tourism and make it an integrated part of the regional tourism industry. Identifiable key success factors for

event-based rural tourism development in SSA were put forward by Ezeuduji et al. (2014) to include strong value position, perceived quality of offerings, accessibility, marketing communications, authenticity of experience, good operational capability and personal relationships with tourists.

Developing rural tourism is an entrepreneurial process, which requires rural communities to showcase and position their set of capabilities, their competitive advantage and critical knowledge necessary to kick-start tourism development. It has been stated that capabilities do rely on complex processes of institutional learning, and these are contingent upon prior stages and levels of learning, investment and development (Bakhru & Gleadle 2010). Capability building for rural tourism services performance will involve acquiring of tacit knowledge<sup>20</sup>. Tacit knowledge arguably demonstrates a valuable characteristic for developing resource-based sources of competitive advantage which are almost impossible for competitors to replicate or imitate (Bakhru & Gleadle 2010). For example, being able to stage local events to present or showcase IK and practices such as the traditional dances, folklore and poetry, traditional music, rural way of life, traditional festivals and rites within a rural landscape does involve the development of tacit knowledge. This will encourage the local communities' reliance on their particular tacit knowledge (IK) where local community members themselves become the focal point of knowledge creation, which is organic in nature.

Efficiency in knowledge production, especially in rural tourism offering, does require certain individuals to become experts in a particular or differentiated area of knowledge, and hence, the essential functions of the local communities are knowledge integration and coordinating the efforts of local specialists (Grant 1996). Ezeuduji and Rid (2011), therefore, suggested that one way to deliver authentic rural tourism value proposition in SSA is for

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20. Knowledge not made explicit, according to Bakhru and Gleadle (2010).

the local communities to stage events for the tourists that will provide a unique rural tourism experience and support the securing of a brand identity in the global rural tourism marketplace. Many local, indigenous tourism offerings can be highlighted and packaged by the local communities and delivered to the tourists in the event staging. For example, traditional dances, traditional healing and spirituality, local food, folklore, local way of life and other traditional activities can be sequentially or concurrently presented to rural tourists.

A study conducted in South Africa by Nkwanyana et al. (2016) recommended that local communities should carefully develop their cultural heritage tourism. They state that supporting effective collaboration among local stakeholders, creating viable opportunities for local community employment, making possible local access to infrastructure and services used by the tourists, enabling institutional capacity building and supporting local involvement and active participation are ways to stimulate inclusive cultural heritage tourism development (see also Akama & Kieti 2007). These are operational conditions that Nkwanyana et al. (2016:160) termed 'sustainable rural tourism critical success factors'. In the same vein, Spencer and Matela (2014), who did their research in Lesotho, recommended four ways of enhancing rural tourism economic activities:

- Strong stakeholder network in investment and attracting tourism inflows, training and capability building, eradication of corruption at the community and government levels.
- A dedicated tourism development funds from the government to assist tourism enterprises and activities.
- A compulsory tourism grading scheme to ensure the maintenance of minimum standards for facilities and services, working with international investors to build and maintain infrastructure.
- The development and implementation of strategies that promote destination as a quality tourism destination.

It must be noted that before the advent of tourism, rural communities have had their traditional means of livelihood (e.g. fishing, farming and hunting). Many rural communities are embracing tourism as an alternative or new means of livelihood. Indeed, rural communities' livelihood is not at risk because of the advent of tourism, as tourism becomes a complementary means of income for the communities. As stated by Ezeuduji (2015a), managing local transition from traditional livelihood activities to rural tourism, or embracing tourism as an alternative source of income, is a sensitive process, especially for rural SSA's local communities, where the complex commercial skills may be lacking. Hence, capability building is essential. It is also worthwhile to note the plurality of stakeholders involved in rural tourism development, their roles and their demands (see Table 8.1), and the power structures and power dynamics that are involved in managing rural tourism development and benefits. For example, Lenao (2017) found that in contrast to the general narrative about devolution of power in CBT, the state (Botswana) remains a very powerful stakeholder in the national decision-making process, and the artificial formation of local management structures appears to simply create new power units which continues the same legacy of community disempowerment.

**TABLE 8.1:** Stakeholders involved in sub-Saharan Africa's rural tourism development.

<b>Major stakeholder groups</b>	<b>Demands</b>	<b>Roles</b>
Local communities	Income from tourism	Creating touristic product/ experience
Tourists	What they pay for	Service consumers
National governments	Compliance to policy	Policy formulation
Local governments	Rural development	Monitoring and evaluation
National environment agencies	Environmental standards	Environment impact assessment
Tourism authorities	Popularity of destination	Marketing communications
Not-for-profit organisations	Equity, local empowerment	Initial funding, research and capability building
Tour operators and other tourism businesses	Returns on their investment	Tourists' acquisition

Source: Adapted from Ezeuduji (2015a:71).

## ■ Awareness of the plurality of rural tourism stakeholders

Power dynamics that may play out among different stakeholder groups needs to be duly acknowledged, as allocation of resources and influence on the national rural tourism strategy lie within the control of powerful stakeholders. The power dynamics, notwithstanding, there is a need for stakeholder groups cooperation in offering rural tourism experience to tourists.

The stakeholder cooperation for SSA rural tourism will definitely benefit from a combination of efforts from the public sector and not-for-profit organisations to kick-start good quality tourism infrastructural development (Ezeuduji 2015a). At the earlier stage of tourism development, it will be beneficial to have a better interpretation of all natural and cultural heritage sites that are needed to ensure that new infrastructural investments form part of a sustainable rural tourism development. It is important that public strategic actions are framed with proper sensitivity to acknowledge and represent local communities', tour operators' and environmental interests. From the foregoing, rural tourism in SSA requires local ownership to support rural communities' benefit from rural tourism. Stakeholders, having local communities at the core, can network and manage this development proactively and endeavour to retain revenue generated from rural tourism within rural communities (Ezeuduji & Rid 2011). Not-for-profit organisations could serve as the middlemen between tour operators and local communities to monitor unrestrained flow of cash from the tour operators to the local communities. This arrangement is much-needed, especially if local communities cannot attract tourists and tailor itineraries independently. However, providing products and services to deliver tourist experience and the actual management of rural tourism processes and financial accounts remain the responsibility of local communities and their local governments.

## ■ **Enabling rural tourism policy, community involvement and trade-offs**

Developing countries, such as many of those in SSA, experience many obstacles in relation to tourism development; these include a weak tourism image, poor tourism infrastructure, shortage of tourism facilities, a lack of know-how in tourism marketing and a shortage of financial capital (Schmitz & Tsobgou 2016). In addition, Silva and Khatiwada (2014) pointed to insufficient monetary benefits from tourism-related development. It is, however, common knowledge in SSA that rural areas are undergoing major socio-economic changes resulting in the need to transform and diversify rural livelihoods. The tourism industry has been used as a vehicle for local socio-economic development with a goal to improve the participation and integration of local communities in tourism planning and operations (Lenao & Saarinen 2015). These authors were seemingly pointing to existing conditions (weaknesses and possible threats) in SSA tourism industry that tourism planners and developers should take into account before and during tourism development. Hence, the tourism planners and developers' awareness of the plurality of rural tourism stakeholders, creating and carefully implementing enabling rural tourism policy, widespread community involvement and preparing communities for potential trade-offs are important issues to consider for successful rural tourism development.

Several authors have explored these aforementioned critical success factors, such as Briedenhann (2007), who investigated the public sector role in ensuring an environment suitable for rural tourism development in Britain and South Africa. South African focus group and semi-structured interview participants generally acknowledged a greater need of support by the public sector for rural tourism than did their British counterparts; however, many of the problems and concerns that emerged from the study were similar for both countries. Participants perceived the public sector as 'partner', 'leader', 'coordinator', 'strategist', 'mentor' and 'champion' in their quest to build the rural tourism sector.

The author, Briedenhann (2007), posited that where the facilitatory platform for rational policy, planning and support suitable to the sustainability of the sector is in place, then it will be easier to ensure uplifting the quality, viability and communal benefit of rural tourism. Nonetheless, local authorities are seen as ‘the enabler’ of successful rural tourism projects that support the diversification of the local economy and creation of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Participants acknowledged the role being played by the public sector; however, there is evidence of widespread ineffectiveness in the ways this role is fulfilled. Authors (Kavita & Saarinen 2016), who studied tourism in relation to rural community development in Namibia, argued that a ‘national tourism policy could provide an enabling framework which can integrate the tourism sector’s development aims to rural and community development needs in future’. In addition, they call for the coordination of a comprehensive vision of the type of rural tourism development that is most viable to benefit both local communities and the mainstream sector.

For SSA rural tourism development, there is a need to acknowledge and accept the public sector role; however, the involvement of the public sector should be at the local municipality level (guided by effective national tourism policy). This will help to cut down the tall hierarchical inefficiency that will be factored in, if this public sector involvement is at the national or provincial level. Local government authorities are closer to rural communities and can ensure an enabling environment for inclusive and successful rural development. A flat structure will indeed be more effective in achieving rural tourism development goals and foster widespread community benefits.

A well-integrated rural tourism development model is needed in SSA, to enhance the sustainability of this development process to achieve socio-economic and environmental benefits. Such an integrated rural tourism development model must take care of host communities’ human resource development, environmental concerns, inclusivity, socio-economic benefits and village renewal.



A study conducted by Oliver and Jenkins (2003) discussed the Integrated Rural Tourism (IRT) concept and posited that it 'captures the type of tourism that enhances links with economic, social, cultural, natural and human resources available in the localities where rural tourism takes place'. Integrated Rural Tourism upholds stakeholder networking, scale (not exceeding carrying capacity), endogeneity (using real resources of the area), sustainability (ecological enhancement), embeddedness (politics, culture and life of the area is a local priority), complementarity (local benefits) and empowerment (local ownership and political control). Integrated Rural Tourism shares some values with sustainability thinking (Saarinen & Lenao 2014). A 'well-integrated' tourism is assumed to be of more value than 'poorly integrated' tourism (Clark & Chabrel 2007). This is because a well-integrated tourism aims to empower local communities for the benefit of the overall rural economy through a type of tourism that uplifts high standards of environmental, economic and sociocultural sustainability (Saxena & Ilbery 2008). Roberts and Hall (2001) noted that policy-makers in many situations think of tourism development without necessarily embedding in their thoughts other components providing the social, economic and ecological contexts for holistic rural development processes. It is, therefore, necessary to think of the views of the local communities regarding issues like type, scale and nature of tourism development in their areas (Lenao & Saarinen 2015). Host communities who are custodians of cultural and natural heritage of their environments could be anything from hostile, welcoming to apathetic (Boniface 1999), and in each case, the attitude displayed by local community members towards tourism would have some consequences for its development. The fact that IRT has been marketed as something of a more realistic approach than the common 'sustainable tourism' (Saxena & Ilbery 2008) makes it even more interesting to think about its relevance in SSA (Lenao & Saarinen 2015). In as much as Mitchell and Reid (2001) supported the importance of high-level community control and the emanating benefits (comprising a broad-based and open democratic structure, an equitable and efficient decision-making process, a high degree of

individual participation and influence in decision-making, and a high amount of local ownership), nonetheless they acknowledge that these conditions are rarely found in their totality for any society. In as much as Mitchell and Reid (2001) were not very optimistic regarding achieving these conditions in full, these conditions can be mostly met where there is political will, strong leadership and honest engagement.

The hallmarks of a genuine CBT project include clear local control (instead of mere involvement), proper decision-making at all the stages of the project's life cycle, transparent and equitable sharing of the collective benefits, within the context of a holistic, bottom-up approach to community development (Giampiccoli 2015). Furthermore, Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018), and Giampiccoli, Saayman and Jugmohan (2014) stated that CBT focuses on disadvantaged local communities and not on external entities (i.e. nongovernmental organisations, government bodies and the private sector). According to Ivanovic (2015):

[A] successful implementation of pro-poor tourism development at the local-level will require an inclusive approach and developmental governance which relies on effective cooperation between tribal (traditional) authorities and the local government. (p. 37)

Likewise, a 'successful implementation of CBT development will depend on active participation of local community in all tourism-related issues including distribution of benefits' (Ivanovic 2015).

In SSA, we strive not to go the way of Western capitalism, as rural tourism development is not just a money-making venture. Besides economic benefits, there is a need to balance natural resource management and rural tourism development, as this development must be compatible in driving conservation and economic development. It must be ensured that the basis (natural environment) for tourism development is not destroyed. Not all rural areas in SSA are conducive for tourism development, with some being fragile regarding such development; also, not every local community member should participate in rural tourism development. Those that participate should have a logical reason

to participate (which may be informed by an expected individual or societal benefits), be willing to do so and derive meaning (not only benefits) from their participation. A study in Botswana (Lenao et al. 2014) regarding community expectations from rural tourism development suggests a significant degree of positive thinking within local communities as regards deriving economic benefits such as employment and infrastructural development. The authors state that in as much as this is desirable and expected for a CBT project, there is a need to inform the communities at the early stage about trade-offs that they may have to deal with when the project and related tourist activities evolve and expand. Hence, there is, according to Palacios (2013), a 'general need for capacity building and creation of awareness on tourism among local communities'. The awareness would help reduce any possible conflicts between hosts and tourists as well as provide for conflict resolution efforts in the future. While acknowledging the necessity of emphasising potential benefits, to ensure community support and buy-in at the initial stage of the project (Palacios 2013), Lenao et al. (2014) also noted the importance of preparing communities for potential trade-offs. They underline that local communities, especially those getting involved with tourism for the first time, should be given all the information that will help them to make informed decisions and carefully formulate expectations (Lenao et al. 2014). Therefore, Manwa and Modirapula (2019) called for the development of human capital and the buy-in of communities into tourism development.

With regard to further trade-offs and opportunities, Ahebwa and Van der Duim (2013) posited that in developing nations, rural communities around protected areas that attract tourists bear a disproportionate amount of conservation costs. Traditional community livelihood strategies such as hunting, logging and plant harvesting are perceived as major threats to protected areas (cf. Ervin et al. 2010). Hence, protected area management policies in SSA have evolved beyond the traditional model of strict biodiversity conservation to incorporate the improvement of local livelihoods. Institutional frameworks in certain communities

such as Buhumo-Mukono in Uganda have positively shaped people's livelihood capital assets, which in turn has positively affected livelihood outcomes in terms of jobs, income and well-being. The authors (Ahebwa & Van der Duim 2013), therefore, argued that for community tourism businesses to be successful, they do need to be combined with other conservation and development interventions and be built upon strong institutional prerequisites that meet the basic benchmarks of viable tourism enterprises. Community-based natural resource management and nature-based tourism are often compatible in driving conservation and economic development in SSA (Gronau, Winter & Grote 2017).

On a practical level, unless rural tourism projects are financially sustainable and operated according to broad business principles, local communities may bear the costs of rural tourism development without enjoying its benefits. The broad conditions that can be used to evaluate rural tourism projects include concern for society, culture and the environment, the practical commercial decisions and the need for approaching rural tourism projects primarily from a business perspective. Local communities after all will expect to reap more benefits and bear less costs (Briedenhann 2009).

## ■ Rural tourism setting and staging: Indigenous Knowledge at the core of strategic event-based rural tourism development in Sub-Saharan Africa

An effective vision for rural tourism development needs to have a reference to the local community's idealistic future but should be based in the present, and a value proposition to differentiate the specific products and services the local community is offering (Ezeuduji 2017). A paper authored by Ezeuduji (2015b) explored a generic competitive strategy with which rural SSA can position itself favourably within the global tourism industry. His strategic

analyses of the rural tourism resources and capabilities present in this subcontinent, rural tourism key success factors, the external environment of rural tourism development and the local institutional stakeholder groups led to the strategic choice of 'event-based rural tourism'. The author opined that event-based rural tourism in which locals can stage events (highlights of traditional practices) for tourists that leads to establishing unique rural tourism experience is an emergent strategy that could create a delicate balance between implementing some bottom-up values (local values and community ownership) and the actual need to utilise top-down resources (national governments and not-for-profit organisations as stakeholders in terms of business training and initial financing). Event-based rural tourism in which local communities can package and present their unique IK and practices has the potential to lead SSA nations to secure a competitive brand identity in the global tourism marketplace and at the same time preserving the unique cultural and natural heritage with which this subcontinent is endowed. Staging events have the potential to raise the profile of a destination, and for SSA, they have an additional benefit of reducing the 'legacy of Afro-pessimism'. Events is an experience good, and the demand tends to increase after the first consumption, if the destination actually delivers on the desired experience, which lies on the destination getting the basics right in terms of facilities and services (Bresler 2011).

Competitive advantage is increasingly aligned to less imitable and rare resources and capabilities. Socially complex resources, for example, cultural heritage, IK, local identity and friendliness of a population, are difficult to imitate (Ezeuduji 2015b). Intangible resources such as having the reputation of offering the authentic rural experience to tourists using indigenous cultural attributes, favourable climatic conditions and unique rural landscape are rare. Sub-Saharan Africa 'rural tourism' stakeholders will definitely gain a global competitive advantage with clear value position (embedded in event-based rural tourism), operational excellence (achievable through staging traditional events that portray IK

and practices, in demand by tourists, professionally within rural space) and strong customer relations (evident in the friendliness of the population). As stated by Ezeuduji (2015b), the success of this emergent event-based rural tourism strategy is reliant on trainings in customer service, operational excellence and product excellence (see also Ezeuduji & Rid 2011), which can be actualised through the stakeholder network and collaboration.

Rural communities stand to benefit from tourism skills development and be involved in tourism activities such as tourist guiding, arts and crafts production, selling of local dishes and, at the same time, organising, using and preserving the natural and cultural resources (Jugmohan, Spencer & Steyn 2016). In addition to these, and for the purpose of highlighting IK of the SSA through strategic event-based rural tourism development, rural communities can set and stage traditional dances, traditional healing and spirituality, local way of life, folklore and other traditional activities. These can be sequentially or concurrently presented to rural tourists. Setting and staging such events require capability building, and hence, Ezeuduji (2015a) pointed out that rural tourism stakeholders, namely, not-for-profit organisations who demand local empowerment and equity within local communities, can be appointed by local municipalities to enable capability building of the local community members for delivering rural tourism services.

## ■ Conclusion

This emergent generic strategy (strategic event-based rural tourism) for rural SSA tourism development, nonetheless, should be adapted with care in relation to specific local socio-economic and environmental conditions. The author notes that IK and the unique ways of knowing are crucial facets of the world's cultural diversity, and these provide a foundation for embarking on locally-appropriate sustainable development. Tourists visiting SSA rural areas attach 'rural idyll' perceptions or images to these areas, and in many cases, they want to share in the local

communities' new and unique knowledge, language, rituals, spirituality or way of life. This opens up a unique opportunity for SSA rural destinations to embed their IK and practices in rural tourism offerings. This will foster a knowledge exchange between local communities and tourists, without eroding the identity and practices of such rural areas, as staged events capture highlights of traditional practices and differentiate themselves from actual community events where only locals will participate in events as customs and traditions demand.

## ■ Summary

Visitors to SSA countries' rural areas have perceptions or images of these places having 'rural idyll symbols' and in many cases want to share in the local communities' unique knowledge, language, rituals, spirituality or way of life. Embedding IK of SSA destinations in rural tourism offerings is one of the emerging conditions or opportunities for SSA rural tourism. This can foster a knowledge exchange between local communities and tourists or visitors, without eroding the identity and practices of such rural areas. One way to deliver authentic rural tourism value proposition in SSA was for the local communities to stage events for the tourists. This will help to establish a unique rural tourism experience which in turn will lead to securing a brand identity in the global rural tourism marketplace. This was termed 'strategic event-based rural tourism' in this chapter, where a lot of local or indigenous tourism offerings can be packaged by the local communities and delivered to the tourists through event staging. Highlights of traditional dances, local food, folklore, local way of life and other traditional activities, for example, can be sequentially presented to rural tourists. This emergent generic strategy for 'rural SSA tourism development', however, as Ezeuduji (2013) puts it, should be carefully adapted according to the 'specific local socio-economic and environmental conditions'.

# The role of indigenous communities of practice in livelihood sustenance among the Shona people in rural Zimbabwe

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## ■ Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on social practices and processes among the Shona communities. The Shona people are the dominant Indigenous group in Zimbabwe, comprising several tribal subgroups, including the Karanga, Korekore, Manyika, Ndawu, Rozvi, Zezuru and other minority subgroups. The Shona people of Zimbabwe are predominantly agrarian, practicing mixed farming (crop and livestock husbandry) as well as hunting and gathering within their lived environment for livelihood sustenance. A key defining feature of their livelihood is the embodiment of belonging that extends beyond the immediate family [*mhuri*] to the extended family [*hama*, *dzinza*] and to the community [*dunhu*]. Shona people are connected by strong relational bonds of kinship and marriage in the extended family [*ukama*] and by sharing totems [*mutupo*], both on the paternal and maternal side, as well as living within the same area in the broader community context. A person who shares a totem becomes related to the extended family (as a brother, sister, uncle, aunt, cousin, nephew, niece, etc.). A close friend of a member of the family [*sahwira*] plays an important role in that member's and his/her family's life.

A continuum (web) of relational ties, therefore, permeates across the entire spectrum of Shona life from family level to the entire community as well as the lived environment (through an intimate relationship/connection to the ancestral land [*hukama nenyika*]). As with other Indigenous peoples (e.g. see Peers & Brown 1999), there is no end to relationships within Shona communities. A relational worldview characterised by kinship, totemism and an intimate relationship with the ancestral land, therefore, defines the Shona people and is a significant contributor to Indigenous community welfare and sustainability.

The emphasis among the Shona people is not on the individual but on the family or community, that is an individual within a community. The individual's character [*hunhu*] and role are,

therefore, defined by a sense of responsibility to the family and to the community. The individual as a social being exists within a community, and therefore, the individual is always considered in relationship with other people. This is captured in the saying '*munhuvanhu*' ([‘a person is people’], in Shona) meaning an individual’s survival is because of the people around him/her. However, it should be noted that an emphasis on family and community does not take away an individual’s personal wealth and progress. Rather, it harnesses these personal resources for the benefit of the extended family and community through an ethic of care.

Livelihood practices and activities within the Shona communities are characterised by cycles of family and community cooperation that involve the active participation of family and community members towards a common goal. This concurs with Wenger’s (1998) assertion that communities of practice exhibit mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. There are rarely any private individual or family activities that do not involve the extended family and the broader community. These community practices are critical in addressing issues of poverty, inequality, disability, orphans and widows in community contexts. Indeed, a common theme running through the Shona culture is a strong emphasis on equality, particularly a proactive family and communal sense of responsibility to protect and care for the powerless – the young, the poor, the orphaned, the widowed and the elderly. This chapter looks into some of these practices and activities to demonstrate how communities of practice among the Shona people are operationalised and proposes the application of Indigenous social models for sustainability, life learning and community development processes within Indigenous communities. It should be noted that while these communities of practice are still prevalent in rural communities, they have largely dissipated in modern urban communities. This is because of the sense of community being diluted by mixing with other cultures,

the isolating impact of distance and the pursuit of individualism that is driven by Western-derived modern capitalist systems.

## ■ Research methodology

This article arose from an informal discussion in which we (the authors) were lamenting how our transition to urban contexts and the busy work-life time schedules was giving us limited time for social activities as family and friends. This led to a retrospective view into how we grew up and how community activities kept people together. We then agreed to explore this further and to consult our extended family on it. An interactive conversation approach similar to collaborative autoethnography was used in this study with a specific focus on gaining knowledge on local livelihood strategies in indigenous Shona community contexts. Chang, Ngunjiri and Hernandez (2013:17) defined collaborative autoethnography as '[...] a qualitative research method that is simultaneously collaborative, autobiographical, and ethnographic'. The Shona communities of practice discussed in this chapter are therefore drawn from our own lived experiences as we grew up within Shona communities, namely, the Karanga, Korekore and Zezuru subgroups. These examples were corroborated and expanded through extensive interactive conversation discussions with elderly members in our immediate and extended families in the period 2015–2017. This chosen collaborative research process conforms to the Shona way of doing things as expounded in the chapter. Conversations are an oral means of sharing knowledge and information among the indigenous communities. Within the homestead and community context, men usually gather around the meeting place [*padare*], while women gather around the fireplace [*pachoto*]. It is in such gatherings that discussions of various issues concerning the home or village are usually discussed. However, conversations also continue during the undertaking of various livelihood chores. All these opportunities were utilised in gathering information and gaining insights on Shona livelihood practices.

References were also made to the existing literature on Shona people and their culture that supports the findings (as secondary sources of data).

The study is also decolonial in that its locus of enunciation is IK and its possible application in lifelong learning, community development processes and sustainability practices rather than drawing from hegemonic Western research approaches.

## ■ Communities of practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) developed the communities of practice as a social learning theory in which these communities comprise groupings of people who interact around their practices, aiming at improving them. However, the theory has been developed around modern communities of practice in business and industry involving processes of apprenticeship and legitimate peripheral participation, which is not the focus of this article. Within indigenous communities, such as the Shona people, the process of shared enterprise, or rather practices, is common, but the process of apprenticeship is more applicable to specialised knowledges and trades and not to everyday livelihood processes. The focus of this chapter is on indigenous communities of practice that characterise the everyday culture and livelihood of indigenous Shona people. These are based on reciprocal processes of working, doing and sharing together for the common good of the community as a whole.

## ■ Shona communities of practice

Traditionally, Shona life is lived in a community context (Chimuka 2001) as expressed in the proverb, *kugara hunzwanana* [living together is based on mutual relationships]. Collaborative action is embedded in the everyday life of Shona communities, and they respond to the various contextual socio-economic needs of community members. We have referred to these collaborative community practices as indigenous communities of practice.

These communities of practice are related to but do not necessarily conform to the aspects of the community of practice concept of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). Some examples of communities of practice embedded within Shona people's livelihood practices are narrated below. The given examples incorporate key emerging themes from the interactive conversations. However, they are not exhaustive, but are intended to highlight how communities of practice are the lifeblood of the Shona people as well as other indigenous peoples. This is epitomised by the Shona proverbs, *chara chimwe hachitswanyinda* [one fingernail cannot crush a louse - two fingernails are required to do this], *zano vaviri* [advice requires two people], *zano marairanwa* [advice is mutual] and *zano ndega akasiya jira mumasese* [Mr 'know it all' left his blanket at the beer party]. This reveals that learning and doing are not an individual process but a communal process of sharing and living together ('*kunzwanana*'/'*kugarisana*').

## ■ **Kurera vana**

Rearing children [*kerera vana*] is a family and community responsibility. When a child is born [*kuzvarwa kwemwana*], community members celebrate the event by visiting the home and bringing gifts to the parents and the newborn. The gifts include crop produce from the women such as pumpkins [*manhanga*], bottlegourd or butternut [*mapudzi*], maize [*chibage*], sweet reed [*ipwa*] and utensils such as reed baskets [*tswanda*], plates [*ndiro*] and clay pots [*mbiya*]. Men would bring gifts of implements such as hoes [*mapadza*], axes [*matemo*], bows and arrows [*uta nemiseve*], and livestock such as sheep, goats and calves. Some of the gifts given depended on the gender of the baby, as people would ask '*mwanaiko?*' ['what gender is the baby?']. For example, a boy would receive an axe, a puppy, and a bow and arrow (as symbols for a hunter). They would exclaim '*makorokoto*' ['congratulations'], and the parents answer '*ndeedu*

*tese'* ['the congratulations are for us all'], as the child belongs not only to the parents but also to the village.

From an early age, a child learns to be an integral part of the extended family system that goes beyond the father, mother and siblings to include cousins, aunt and uncles and grandparents (see Gelfand 1981). The child is taught the culture of love [*rudo*], sharing [*kugoverana/kupanana*], trustworthiness [*kuvimbika*], self-discipline [*kuzvibata*], industriousness [*kushanda*], reciprocity [*kubatsirana*], generosity [*mwoyo wakanaka*] and respect [*kuremekedza*].

Most foreigners are surprised that in Africa they become incorporated into the extended family structure of their African friends as aunts or uncles. Within the Shona community, every man is a father and every woman is a mother. A growing child is also naturally incorporated into the village community and is everybody's child in the village. Elders are revered for their wisdom. It is common and accepted practice in a community for an elder to send someone else's child on an errand. It is also common practice for any elder to admonish and chastise any child in the village for wrongdoing. A child learns to respect every elder in the village, and in turn, every village elder has the responsibility to groom children according to the accepted norms and culture of the community and to protect them from injury or abuse. Hence, the saying: '*Mwana ndewe munhu wese*' ['a child belongs to everybody'] and, similarly, 'it takes a village to raise a child'. In the Shona culture, there are no orphans as the children whose parents are deceased are looked after by a brother of the deceased husband or the sister or niece of the deceased wife who take over the role of the deceased parent.

As the child grows, he/she is coached in the ways of men (if he is a boy) or women (if she is a girl). This includes coaching from their peers and older children as well as from adults. A boy would be taught to herd cattle and look after other livestock in the veld [*kumafuro*]. A girl will be taught to collect water and firewood, to

cook, to serve and to wash dishes. Children, therefore, acquire life skills relevant for application in adult family, home and community life as they grow up.

### ■ ***Mitambo yevana***

Children had their own communities of practice. As children grew up in the village, they were involved in traditional children's games and play [*mitambo yevana*]. Such games were educative and were characterised by the role play in which the children played out family and community roles as observed in the home or the village. Besides having fun by playing these games, the children also learnt to practice their gendered roles as well as to articulate family and community values. *Matakanana* or *mahumbwe* [playing house] is a game where children imitate adult family roles and was considered an important rite of passage. The game socialised children into gendered roles that were vital to adult community life such as cooking and eating together according to custom, washing dishes, fetching water, sweeping, looking after children, cutting wood and making huts (Nyota & Mapara 2008; Tatira 2014). The game also taught them the values of family cohesion and neighbourliness. *Sarurawako* [choose your suitor] was a game in which children would choose a partner of the opposite sex. A song was sung in making the choice in which the chooser would describe the qualities she or he expected from the partner. These qualities depended on the gender and included appearance, character, as well as the ability to do chores such as washing up, cooking, hunting, fetching firewood and working hard. The game, therefore, taught children the characteristics expected of an adult individual by the community.

### ■ ***Kuvhima***

Hunting [*kuvhima*] is the domain of man. A hunt is usually an organised community effort. When men go hunting, they gather together to plan the hunt. Once the strategy is set out, the dogs

are then set out with the men following running behind them. Small prey was caught by the dogs and quickly taken from them. Huge prey was chased by the dogs, and when it was tired, the dogs would bring it down or the men would shoot it down with bows and arrows [*uta nemiseve*] and spears [*mapfumo*]. At the end of the hunt, the men would gather together and share the hunt such that no man went home empty-handed. Besides providing food for the entire community, such hunts also ensured that wildlife was not exterminated in the lived environment as the community hunters will only hunt what was necessary for that time. This practice, therefore, contributed to the sustainable utilisation of wildlife resources.

When boys went out to herd livestock, they would normally shoot down birds with catapults [*kupfura shiri*], hunt small prey with knobkerries [*tsvimbo*], trap birds with bird lime [*urimbo*] and set traps [*riva, muteyo*] to catch small animals. They would then bring their catch to their mothers to cook.

### ■ ***Kutanha miriwo nemichero***

Gathering was the domain of women and children. Women collectively go out on their daily chores such as gathering firewood, collecting water, doing laundry or weeding. During such chores, they would normally also gather wild leafy vegetables [*kutanha muriwo*], wild mushrooms [*hohwa*] and wild fruits [*kutanha michero*] in season for the family. Children also gather wild fruits and mushrooms to bring home when they go out herding or playing. Men would also occasionally bring wild fruits home for the family. Such food was used to supplement the diet of the home and to enhance food security.

### ■ ***Nhimbe/hoka/humwe***

*Nhimbe* or *hoka* is a common practice in crop husbandry or whenever a task at hand (e.g. weeding, harvesting, winnowing, de-husking and construction) and may be too cumbersome for



one family among the Shona. This approach is especially employed in assisting the elderly, the widows and orphans within the community to ensure they could also have a successful crop and would not go hungry. Generally, the host will prepare food for the fellow community members assisting him or her. For elderly people, the able-bodied daughters-in-law in the village will perform the duties of the host such as food preparation. There is no monetary payment in such activities but the duties are performed based on the mutual understanding that each member shall have his or her turn to be assisted. Communities work for each member in the same manner that the member works when performing duties towards others. Therefore, if one slackens at others' duties, all members will slacken when it is his/her turn. In this process, several sub-communities of practice emerge within this community of practice. For instance, the tasks could be subdivided according to gender. For example, the decorating of internal kitchen walls and floors was done by women being led and taught by a specialist among the community. The fencing [*kuvaka musasa, kusosa munda*] of a field using thorn-tree branches was usually done by young men. The ploughing of a field using spans of oxen [*kupindura munda*] was usually done by men.

## ■ ***Kupana mbewu***

The Shona relies on a diversity of Indigenous food crops that are traditionally grown in multi-cropped field for their livelihood, a farming process that simulates the species diversity of the natural vegetation in their lived environment. Within the Shona culture, it is a common practice to share good crop seed. A farmer who had a good yield in one crop would store the seed and share it with other farmers at their request. The farmer requesting the crop would normally bring seeds of his own crop to exchange. It is also a usual practice to send a child to ask for seeds from community member when in need, which would later be reciprocated during harvest by sending the child back with a basket of produce to the

farmer from whom the seed had been requested. Alternatively, farmers can exchange seeds for different crops, for example, groundnuts for traditional maize or millet varieties, as each farmer has expertise in the successful growing and preservation of seeds for a specific crop or his or her soil type is good for that crop. This sharing practice promoted seed sovereignty and food security within the community. However, this practice has been severely threatened by the introduction of hybrid seeds from seed companies, which are promoted by agricultural extension workers. Such hybrid seeds require the input of artificial fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and irrigation because they are not adapted to the local semi-arid conditions. Traditional crops, on the other hand, are adapted to the local environment, are drought resistant and do not require the input of agrochemicals. Promoting research into and the development of traditional food crops can, therefore, enhance local food security and sovereignty.

### ■ ***Majana/madzoro***

This referred to alternating herding of cattle by village men on a weekly basis. Households will take weekly turns [*madzoro*] to herd each other's livestock (Bere-Chikara 1983). The practice facilitates the freeing up of time among the community members to attend to other duties such as tending the fields and attending meetings. This is an efficient way of time utilisation and avoiding duplication of efforts. In cases where the member on duty has an emergency, he/she can request someone to take over but will return the favour when the need arises. Thus, the practice was anchored on the community values of trust and reciprocity.

### ■ ***Kupana zvekudya***

It is a common practice within the Shona culture to give a visitor food and drink [*kupana zvekudya*]. There is a common saying '*ukama igasva, huno zadzikiswa nekudya*', meaning a relationship is a covenant that is strengthened through eating together.

Generosity and hospitality are important and preferred aspects of humanhood [*hunhu*] among the Shona people. To not give a visitor food [*kunyima*] and shelter if needed was considered to be very unfriendly. Similarly, a visitor rarely comes empty-handed and never goes back home empty-handed. The Shona has the proverb '*kupa kuturika*', meaning to give is to lay store for tomorrow.

Within the Shona community, when a hungry stranger passed through a field with ripened crop, they could help themselves to the crop (sweet reed, watermelons, groundnuts, etc.), sit down and eat to fill their hunger, but they were not allowed to take anything with them. Nobody would chase them away or accuse them of theft. Instead, it is understood that they are famished and need nourishment and because people expect to reciprocally be treated the same way should such a fate befall them in the village of the stranger. It is from this practice that arose the saying '*mweni haaendi nedura*'/'*zuva rimwe haripedzi dura*' ['the guest does not carry away the granary'/'one day does not empty the granary'], meaning the belly of a sojourner does not deplete one's resources.

Sharing of food is essential to a way of life that ensures that nobody goes hungry within the community context.

## ■ ***Kuperékana momba***

It was a common practice among the Shona to loan cattle [*kuperakana/kukumbidzana momba dzekurima*] to members of the family or community who did not have them for draught power during the crucial farming period. This practice ensured that those who did not have draught cattle would still be able to plough their fields and provide for their families (Mhondoro 1983). A person could also ask a relative to keep his or her cattle [*kuchengetesa momba*] while he or she sojourned to seek employment in the urban areas [*kuenda kumarimuka*]. The person who kept the cattle had the privilege of milking them and using them for draught power but was not allowed to slaughter them.

In such cases, upon his or her return, if the cattle had multiplied, the owner would select and give a heifer [*tsiru*] to the keeper in appreciation [*mombe yekutenda*].

## ■ ***Kubaya mombe***

In the Shona culture, the slaughter of cattle [*kubaya mombe*] is a family and community affair (Bere-Chikara 1983). The selected beast is separated from the herd as no beast is slaughtered in the presence of the others. Then, an experienced person, usually an elderly male, is assigned to slaughter the beast. This involves a delicate process in which one cut of an axe or stab with a sharp knife (depending on the choice of the person) is used to sever the spinal nerve in the region between the head and neck, usually just below the horns (where the spine comes close to the surface to attach the head to the neck). The paralysed animal is then cut in the neck to finish off the slaughter process. Following this, the rest of the male members join in to expertly skin the carcass, separating the hide from the meat. The carcass is then divided into portions according to the cultural norms. The neck [*mutsipi*] is preserved for the team that slaughters and skins the beast [*vanovhiya*]. They normally light a fire, roast the meat [*zvinjonjo*] and eat it there. The duty of lighting the fire for braai is given to young men who will be learning the process of cow slaughtering, and these are tasked with the roasting of the meat. Furthermore, the young men are taught other stuff such as cooking the clotted blood [*musiya*] mixed with medicinal herbs aimed at strengthening their body systems and sexual potency [*mushongawe musana*].

The backbone [*musana*] is reserved for the mother, symbolic of the backbone that carries the children and does the hard work around the home carrying things on her back. Furthermore, the backbone symbolises the mother as the backbone of the family as the Shona people say: '*Musha mukadzi*' ['it is the wife that makes the home']. Similarly, the chest portion [*chityu/chirovadhumba*] is also given to the father but in some areas given

to the mother as the favourite person at the heart of the father or the child depending on the owner of the beast (Table 9.1).

The offal's stomach contents are emptied by men, the Bible or *omasum* [*susu*] is given to the herdboys, while the rest and intestines are given to women for further cleaning and cooking. Usually, the portions of the cleaned intestines [*matumbu*] are rolled around the portions of the cleaned tripe [*guru*] and then cooked and served as a delicacy. The spleen, pancreas [*rwatata*] and lungs [*mapapu*] are given to the *vazukuru* [nephews, nieces and grandchildren].

The allocation of the meat varies with regions, purpose of slaughtering and the owner. Table 9.1 shows examples of allocations.

It is important to note the symbolism of various parts and the roles played by each member or group of members in the activities. Such a chain of activities ensures efficiency and removes confusion and indolence among the communities. Community members pride themselves in performing tasks that are aligned to their groups. Any member slackening will be given an alternative lower task, which is usually discouraging to the extent that he or she will work hard to make the cut, for example, if someone consistently cuts the hide during skinning, he can be asked to join the young boys in making fire or to hold the leg of

**TABLE 9.1:** Selected allocations of meat portions among the Shona people.

<b>Body part</b>	<b>Recipient</b>
Testicles	Elderly men
Neck	Men that participated in slaughtering
Front leg	Daughters-in-law ( <i>varoora</i> )
Backbone	Mother
Chest	Father
Pancreas	Grandchildren/nephews and nieces
Lungs	Grandchildren/nephews and nieces
Clotted blood ( <i>musiya</i> )	Kids, males (if mixed with 'backbone' strengthening herbs)

the beast during skinning or to fetch water to be used for cleaning hands during the opening of offals.

The father of the household receives the rest of the meat which, besides reserving some for his family, he also distributes to the neighbours. The portions set aside for the neighbours are put in baskets [*rusero*] and the children run the errands of taking them to the neighbours. It is a common culture among the Shona that when the neighbour slaughters a beast, they will likewise distribute it to their neighbours. It is also a common culture that when the basket is returned it does not go back empty, the neighbour will share with the family from where the basket originates something that he/she has in abundance, hence the common saying *kandiroenda - kandirodzoka* ['basket goes - basket comes'] or *kandiro kanoenda kunobva kamwe* ['a plate goes where a plate comes from' or 'one good turn deserves another'].

While the ritual sharing of the carcass may differ among different Shona dialect groups, the common thread is that the slaughtering of the beast is a community practice and the meat is shared within the family and with the neighbours in the community. This is an important reciprocal practice in community livelihood sustenance as that ensures that nobody in the community is left hungry.

## ■ **Muchato**

The traditional wedding ceremony and the joyful gathering to welcome the bride [*muchato/kupemberera muroora*] are considered community functions, and as a result, all community members upon hearing of it come, invited and uninvited, to the wedding ceremony. In preparation for the wedding, the experienced elderly women would brew traditional sorghum beer [*doro*] and a fermented non-alcoholic cereal beverage [*mahewu*] for consumption on the wedding day. During the wedding feast, all the women will be involved in the cooking and distribution of

food and drink to the community. The community members who come to the wedding, particularly the elderly, would bring numerous gifts to the newlyweds. The women would normally bring gifts of household goods such as cooking utensils, mats, baskets, brooms, clothing, blankets as well as hens, sheep and goats. The men would normally bring gifts of implements such as hoes, axes, yokes as well as livestock such as sheep, goats and cattle. However, in the modern era, most of these traditional gifts have been replaced with modern utensils and gifts of money. The morning that follows the wedding day, the bride, with assistance, of elder daughters-in-law and her relatives will then offer hot water to her in-laws to wash their faces symbolising the motherly role she has just assumed.

In Shona marriage, the wife [*moroorā*] is now related to the husband's family, and similarly, the husband [*mukwasha*] is related to the wife's family. The brothers of the husband are fathers (*babamukuru* for the elder brother or *babamnini* for the younger brother) to his children and provide support to their brother's children as their own, more so if he is deceased or incapacitated. Similarly, the sisters to the wife are mothers (*maiguru* for the elder sister or *mainini* for the younger sister) to the children and they care for the children of their sister as their own. This extended family bond is a significant aspect for ensuring family cohesion, support and sustainability and is particularly important in dealing with losses of family members, particularly parents.

## ■ **Dare**

The Shona traditional court [*dare*] is a communal traditional governing system in which grievances are presented to the king or chief [*mambo*]. However, the decision-making process [*kutonga*] is not made by the king or chief alone as the king or chief makes rulings guided and informed by chosen community elders [*machinda, makurukota*] who serve as the jury. Consensus has to be reached among them, and the final decision is then

passed on to the king or chief to declare to the people. This provides the basis for a democratic ruling process and is guided by the proverb '*ishe vanhu*', meaning that a king(dom) or chief(dom) is made by people, reminding the king or chief of the value of people and the need to rule fairly. The guilty party is made to pay a fine [*muripo*] to the aggrieved and the gravity of crime determined the payment that had to be made. The lowest ranking case would require the payment of a chicken, with goats and sheep paid for cases in-between, while severe cases would be paid with herds of cattle. It was also possible for repeat offenders of serious cases of aberrant behaviour practices [*nhini*] to be banished from the village for non-conformance in order to maintain acceptable social conduct and community cohesion.

## ■ **Rufu**

When someone passes on, a message is spread to the community. Traditionally, a drum was played with a funeral tune to call together all community members. In the present era, people use other means of communicating to the community, such as tying a red cloth to the gate post. The grieving members of the family will be marked by either having a leather thong or strip of cloth tied to their head, arm or wrist, marking them in a manner similar to the Western dressing in black for a funeral.

Funerals are a community ceremony. Every member participates and contributes. The attendance of a funeral is called '*kubata maoko*', which literally means holding hands. This refers to the practice of assisting the bereaved. Elderly women from the village would go around the neighbouring homesteads with baskets collecting mealie-meal (maize meal) and whatever food the homesteads could offer for eating at the funeral gathering. Sons-in-law [*vakuwasha*] would take the leading role in performing duties such as cooking, ensuring enough firewood and water supplies. The men would collect firewood for making the fires and for cooking at the funeral. The women would help in dishing out the food and cleaning the dishes. It is a common practice to



slaughter a beast [*mombe yenheedzo*] at the funeral to provide relish for the mourners. The slaughtering is different from the usual slaughtering process. Here the beast's throat is cut, symbolising the pain of loss of a loved one. The slaughtered beast was or is believed to accompany the departed to the land of the ancestors (Bere-Chikara 1983; Makamure 1983).

During this mourning period, elderly family nieces and nephews will periodically assume comic roles, imitating what the deceased used to do during his or her life. This is meant to bring laughter, share memories and reduce grief. The best friend of the deceased [*sahwira*] also plays a significant role in making known to the family any secrets of the bereaved that he has been made to hold in agreement [*chitsidzo*] with the late friend, hence the proverb '*husahwira hunokunda hukama*' ['close friendship exceeds kinship']. These are shared jokingly with the family with the purpose of alleviating grief while at the same time being informative. The '*sahwira*' orally represents the hidden will of the (deceased) friend. Women play a significant role in comforting the bereaved female family members. They mourn with them and sing during the funeral process. Men would comfort the male members and would sit and console them during the funeral at the men's meeting place [*padare*]. Some funerals last for days while waiting for the parents, siblings or children of the bereaved to arrive. During this waiting, community members would sleep and stay with the bereaved to comfort and console them.

On the funeral day, the men would dig the grave at the chosen site, usually on an anthill [*pachuru*]. Generally, a family member would have been told by the deceased where he or she wanted to be buried. The demarcation of the grave [*kutara guva*] is done by someone from the parental lineage of the deceased. The measurements of the coffin or wrapped body, for internal dimensions of the grave construction, are taken by the nephew [*muzukuru*] of the deceased. Construction is done by builders from within the community. No one is paid for working at a

funeral. The work is performed on mutual understanding that in future such assistance will be rendered to anyone of the community members free of monetary value. Furthermore, the common understanding is that differences are set aside during these times and people come together for the common purpose of comforting one another and sending off the deceased with dignity. It is a common practice among the Shona to put enmity aside and speak good of the dead. Any speeches made during the funeral are about the good deeds of the dead, hence the common proverb ‘*wafa wanaka*’ [‘the dead become good’]. The men would take turns to carry the body of the deceased to the grave and bury him.

## ■ ***Bira***

*Bira* is one of the traditional ceremonies performed to appease the mediums and/or seek guidance from the departed. There are variants of this ceremony, and the authors will not discuss these. However, it is important to note that this is a community event where members, based on the relation to the host, are given specific tasks. The *bira* ceremony is characterised by the brewing of beer, a role performed by elderly women in the village at the behest of the family. On the day of the ceremony, beer is given to community members, while some is reserved for the ritual pouring of beer as libation to the ancestors. Either drums or mbira music, or a combination of both, is played by community members known to be experts [*vana gwenyambira*] in these instruments for the spirit medium, accompanied by singing [*kushaura*]. In the heat of the music, the medium becomes possessed and dances to the beat of the song. She or he then speaks in the voice of the ancestral shade possessing him or her and delivers a message to the family amid clapping in reverence of the ancestors and urging from the family members, who will ask for forgiveness to appease the ancestors where necessary and speak in agreement to the message delivered.

## ■ **Mukwerera**

*Mukwerera* [rain-making ceremony] is a ceremony to ask for rains from God (*Mwari* [God], *Musiki* [the Creator], *Musikavanhu* [the Creator of humankind], *Nyadenga* [he who dwells in the Heavens]) that is performed when drought threatens. It is believed that the occurrence of drought in an area is a result of sinful deeds by the community. A rain-making spirit medium [*svikiro* or *mhondoro*] leads this community ritual of appealing to God for rains. The *svikiro* is easily identified by having natural dreadlocks (their hair is never cut) and regalia – she or he wears only black cloth wrapped around his or her body accompanied by a red, black and white sash [*jirareretso*]. When drought is eminent, people inform the *svikiro* that they would like to perform the ceremony and he or she grants them permission. To conduct this ceremony, traditional beer was brewed. The steeping of the sorghum or millet grain is performed by girls who have not yet reached puberty [*vasikana vasati vashamba*] under the guidance of elderly women. Traditional beer [*bira regasva*] was then made by the experienced elderly women and part of it that remains after sieving [*masvusvu*] is taken together with snuff [*bute*] at sunset to the place of the ceremony, usually a sacred hill, mountain, cave or under the *muhacha* tree [*Parinari curatelifolia*] by elderly women of the village who pour it onto the ground for the ancestors and return to their homes. In the morning, they go back and spread blankets on the sacred spot. Later during the day, the whole village gathers there with the brewed beer, being led by the *svikiro*. As they arrive, the *svikiro* sits on the blankets at the centre, with the village gathered around him or her, and they sing and dance to the beat of *mbira* and/or traditional drums [*ngoma*] and rattles [*hosho*]. During the *bira* ceremony, the *svikiro* intercedes for them to *Mwari*, pleading for their forgiveness and asking for rain, and pours out a gourd of the beer on the ground as libation. When this is being done, the women will clap and ululate. After the *svikiro*, the king/chief and elders had their share of the beer; the rest of the people were then allowed to join

in the drinking of the rest of the beer, with the exception of one beer pot<sup>21</sup> that was left behind for the ancestors [*hari yevadzimu/yemadzitateguru*] (Gombe 1986). During the ceremony, the *svikiro* usually becomes spiritually possessed and would inform the people to go back to their homes because a thunderstorm was on its way. Usually, as they do this, heavy rains begin to fall, but it will not fall on the *svikiro*. The whole process, while deeply spiritual, reveals community unity and togetherness towards the goal of getting rains.

## ■ Conclusion

The Shona people exhibit diverse, though intertwined, communities of practice embodied within their everyday lives. These communities of practice demonstrate a well-structured and efficient social system that reveals the complex level of community organisation and governance of the Shona people (Chimuka 2001). Shona communities of practice enable the equitable distribution of labour and resources among community members, covering all aspects of Shona livelihood practices.

Within Shona communities of practice, the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger 1991) does not apply or rarely applies. Rather, the communities of practice are Indigenous learning institutions defined by age and gender roles, grounded on learning and knowing by doing through working and sharing together (an emphasis on participation and numbers). People within a particular age and gender group equally participate in a task. Exceptions are when members within a community of practice, such as in the slaughter of cattle, are proven to be inefficient or to lack expertise and are then relegated to perform minor tasks. Another unique feature of Shona communities of practice is the existence of several sub-communities of practice within a bigger community of practice,

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21. This pot was usually found mysteriously empty the next day.

for example, in events such as a wedding, funeral or the slaughter of a beast.

The Shona community of practice system is based on a cyclical relational foundation that sustains community livelihood and ensures that every community member is actively involved and their needs are catered for in communal livelihood practices. The notion of reciprocity is deeply embedded within Shona livelihood and demonstrated through existing communities of practice, from working together to sharing resources, in repetitive cyclical reciprocal processes of giving and receiving (see Mauss 2002). This cyclical reciprocity is an aspect that has practical implications for lifelong learning and community development processes among close-knit Indigenous communities as it enhances solidarity, cooperation, unity, mutuality and a true sense of belonging among family and community members. These communities of practice are critical social support systems in alleviating issues of economic inequality, disability and loss of family members (that affect widows and orphans) and enhancing community well-being. We believe that there are similar communities of practice within indigenous communities in the global context. Local communities have an in-depth understanding of social issues within their context, and in working together to support each other, they capitalise on inherent systems of communities of practice to improve their own environmental (socio-economic) circumstances. In conclusion, we argue that lifelong learning, community development and sustainable development processes within indigenous communities can benefit from looking into, working with and enhancing already existing communities of practice as social capital in Indigenous community contexts.

## ■ Summary

Shona communities are characterised by relational bonds that are expressed through multiple communities of practice that span across different livelihoods and cultural practices. Such communities of practice situate the individual in the broader extended family and community context, providing necessary social and emotional support.



# Uplifting the voices of rural African women through community-based tourism research in rural areas of South Africa

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## ■ Introduction

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a subfield of a broader discipline of tourism that gained popularity because it was seen as one of the participatory approaches that promote practices

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that address the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in society and the development of underdeveloped localities (Giampiccoli 2020; Saarinen et al. 2009). According to Tasci, Semrad and Yilmaz (2013), the descriptors of the target groups for CBT 'include remote, rural, impoverished, marginalised, economically depressed, undeveloped, poor, indigenous, ethnic minority, and people in small towns'. CBT was also commended for its ability to create opportunities for rural communities to individually and collectively benefit from tourism and gain sustainable livelihoods through the development of their natural and cultural assets into tourism activities (Spencer, Steyn & Jugmohan 2016; Stone and Nyaupane 2014).

Community-based tourism also became increasingly popular as a way for rural communities to preserve their cultural and natural heritage while generating needed income (Mannon & Glass-Coffin 2019; Spencer et al. 2016). It, therefore, creates opportunities for the conversion of the cultural and heritage assets into authentic tourism activities and products with an ultimate goal of preserving IK of local communities and contributing to the decolonisation agenda of tourism offerings. Through CBT,<sup>22</sup> the skills possessed by rural communities can be used as significant assets that can be packaged into tourism products (Mearns, Du Toit & Mukuka 2006). In this way, CBT enables local communities to get the most out of their natural and cultural heritage environment. Most of this knowledge and skills that are passed down from generation to generation are sometimes adapted to changing circumstances to satisfy the changing needs of tourists.

One of the key issues in CBT is its ability to reach beyond the resources when considering other livelihood issues that matter to marginalised segments of local communities (Lindström & Larson 2016). In essence, CBT should reach out to rural communities, particularly the marginalised groups, and contribute to their

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22. See <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jtr.477>.

livelihood challenges. The marginalised groups have been defined in various ways which include the very poor, women and girls, ethnic minorities and other groups that lack 'power and/or voice' (Scheyvens & Biddulph 2018). The plight of marginalised rural communities and women, who in this context are referred to as rural African women, cannot be ignored because, in terms of land area, South Africa is over 80% rural and about 40% of the country's population still resides in rural areas (National Planning Commission 2012; South Africa Info 2016). In addition, research also indicates that over 70% of the country's poorest people live in rural areas (Kepe 2016; Kepe & Tessaro 2014).

The South African tourism landscape exhibits the fact that African communities still remain marginalised in terms of gender and geographic location. The voices of the rural African women are still not distinctly heard in terms of their participation in CBT initiatives and in tourism research. Inclusive growth approach seems to have continued to reproduce the 'business as usual' (Giampiccoli 2020). Community-based tourism is supposed to empower rural African women so that their voices and perspectives filter through the tourism literature and research and at an operational level. Currently, the research on CBT is about local communities, how they should be involved in CBT initiatives, but voices of African rural women are glaringly missing.

It is important and necessary to reflect on the relevance of CBT to the challenges of tourism development of local rural African women who constitute a major part of rural communities. It is also important to ponder about what CBT means in real and practical terms to the people about whom research is conducted. Has there been any move from theory to practice? As an approach, does CBT address the socio-economic challenges of rural African women in various local communities? Is it inclusive enough to create opportunities for rural African women to participate in the generation of sustainable livelihoods of their households? Does it create opportunities for the preservation of IKS of various local communities?

Tourism, of which CBT is a subfield, remains one of the largest industries in the world and continues to be seen as a vehicle and a tool for poverty alleviation through the provision of new opportunities, jobs and economic benefits for local communities (Goeldner & Ritchie 2011; Saarinen et al. 2009). Subsequently, tourism has received a lot of attention in academic publications (Oviedo-Garcia 2016).

Natural and cultural resources are the primary foundation of tourism activities, and most of these are located in rural areas. It is through these resources that IK can be integrated as part of CBT initiatives and subsequently preserved. It is also through these resources that local communities can push the decolonisation agenda by producing packages that reclaim and project their identity. Most provinces in South Africa have a plethora of natural and cultural resources that create opportunities for providing sustainable livelihoods through tourism development. Local communities, particularly in rural areas, are the custodians of these resources that form the springboard for tourism growth and development. The growth of tourism must respond to the development imperatives and create opportunities that would result in tangible benefits that enhance local economic development of rural areas.

An increase of tourists to various destinations, some of which were pristine environments, led to a call for tourism that is sustainable, inclusive and not detrimental to the destinations. This call led to the birth of various types of tourism that would focus on saving destinations from degradation, creation of opportunities for beneficiation by local communities, contribution to people's livelihoods and bring local communities from the periphery to the centre of tourism activities. These types of tourism which include CBT provide a springboard for African rural women to participate in various tourism activities through which IK can find an expression that would lead to its preservation. Community-based tourism in this regard becomes the core around which African rural women express themselves and also forms the basis for tourism research.

## ■ The context of community-based tourism

Community-based tourism came up as one of the types of tourism that would contribute to poverty alleviation, job creation and empowerment of marginalised segments of local communities (Stone & Stone 2011). It is for this reason that Karim, Mohammad and Serafino (2012) argued that the community-based development approach has its foundation in the broad tradition of alternative development as a response to problems associated with mass tourism. There is no agreement about the precise time at which CBT came to the fore but literature points its origin to the 1950s and 1960s with its popularity reaching a peak in the late 1970s as a strategy for environmental conservation and social inclusion (Baktygulov & Raeva 2010; Giampiccoli & Mtapuri 2012; Mtapuri, Giampiccoli & Spershott 2015). As a concept, CBT has its roots in the alternative development approach of the 1970s (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri 2012). Community-based tourism is sometimes seen as part of the ‘new’ specialty in tourism research which came up as a consequence of the evolution and sub-specialisation of the field.

An increase in CBT research was accompanied by the spread of the implementation of various community-based projects around the world (Lukhele & Mearns 2013). From its inception, CBT was supposed to be inclusive and open opportunities for participation of all categories of local communities in tourism development initiatives (Harwood 2010). Inclusivity was and still has not been clarified and entrenched in the practical implementation of these projects. This lack of clarity perpetuates the situation where some segments of these communities such as African rural women remain disadvantaged and marginalised and are unable to participate in CBT decision-making processes (Lukhele & Mearns 2013).

Much as CBT cannot be seen as panacea to all challenges of sustainable livelihoods in rural areas, it has a significant role to play if properly implemented. Studies such as those conducted

by Saarinen (2006), Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2012) and Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018) have reflected on the opportunities that are created by the national government in various ways and at various localities but there is no indication of the voices of rural African women in any decision-making process that would lead to their participation in sustainable tourism development, which includes integration of IKS tourism initiatives and intended decolonisation of tourism offerings. Issues that relate to the transformation of CBT in terms of embracing African rural women as participants in decision-making processes of these community projects seem to have fallen between the cracks and steered away from the plight of rural Africa women and their socio-economic conditions as observed in various local communities (Lukhele & Mearns 2013; Ndlovu & Rogerson 2004).

This chapter aims at paving new perspectives and approaches in the directions taken by research on CBT strongly calling for the representation of the voice of rural African women and the creation of platforms for IK preservation and decolonisation of tourism offerings. Community-based tourism as defined in tourism research has a potential of creating opportunities for women to participate in decision-making processes that would make their voices heard so as to enhance their participation in tourism initiatives.

## ■ Definitions of community-based tourism

Community-based tourism has been defined in many ways by various experts in the field of tourism. Different meanings and interpretations have led to criticism of CBT (Stone & Stone 2020).

Table 10.1 depicts various definitions and interpretations as indicated in CBT research.

Most definitions seem to point to the direction that CBT should be socially and environmentally sustainable, create opportunities for inclusivity, support local control and participation in tourism

**TABLE 10.1:** Selected definitions and interpretations of community-based tourism.

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Source</b>
A type of tourism that aims to ensure that the members of the local communities have a high degree of control or even ownership over tourism activities, its limits and resources.	Saarinen (2006)
A type of tourism that has two goals - it should be socially sustainable; and it should respect local cultures, identities, traditions and heritage.	Telfer and Shapely (2007)
A mode of tourism that is initiated, managed and owned by local communities and drives to empower local communities to realise and appreciate the environment as the local economy.	Athlopeng and Mulale (2009)
A strategy for environmental conservation and social inclusion, given the presence of various projects on CBT around the world.	Baktygulov and Raeva (2010)
A type of tourism development that must be started, planned, owned, controlled and managed by local community members towards the fulfilment of their needs and wishes.	Giampiccoli and Nauright (2010)
A type of tourism that highlights the significance of community development as a means to sustain community progress.	Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2012)
A type of tourism that is planned, developed, owned and managed by the community for the community, guided by collective decision-making, responsibility, access, ownership and benefits.	Tasci et al. (2013)
A type of tourism that provides services or facilities should remain wholly owned, managed and controlled by community members. External parties should offer facilitative and other supporting services but should not be partners in the ventures themselves.	Lukhele and Mearns (2013)
A type of tourism that involves direct local participation (collective action) in the development, management and benefits of tourism activities that are integrated into the local economy.	Oliver and Giampiccoli (2019)

Source: Oliver and Giampiccoli (2019); Wearing and McDonald (2002).

Table 10.1 continues on the next page→

**TABLE 10.1 (Continues...):** Selected definitions and interpretations of community-based tourism.

Definition	Source
A type of tourism that is aimed at poor communities. It is a type of tourism development that must be started, planned, owned, controlled and managed by local community members towards the fulfilment of their needs and wishes.	Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018)
Any tourism business or activity that is located within a community. It may either be privately owned or managed or operated with the involvement of the local community members.	Hamzah (2014)

Source: Oliver and Giampiccoli (2019); Wearing and McDonald (2002).

operation and promote shared economic benefits (Boonratana 2010). There is a common thread that is explicit in all these definitions that local communities should be participating in some aspects of tourism activities. None of these definitions go deeper to identify categories of local communities and the nature of benefits from CBT activities. Local communities have their own categories that are determined by the traditional sociocultural structures which in most cases exclude women. To avoid marginalisation of certain categories of the community, participation in CBT processes should be clearly defined and easy to implement.

There are, however, studies that provide practical ways and models that can be used to promote, measure or assess participation, while others provide theories such as the ‘ladder of citizen participation’, power redistribution, collaboration processes and social capital creation (Arnstein 2019; Odunola et al. 2018). While these theories are useful in understanding the format of community participation, they do not mention how rural women, who in most cases are left out of decision-making processes, can be brought in as participants from the planning to the implementation phase of the project. The literature and research on which these definitions are based (Abdul Razzaq et al. 2012;

Athlopeng & Mulale 2009; Baktygulov & Raeva 2010; Giampiccoli & Nauright 2010; Giampiccoli & Saayman 2018; Hamzah 2014; Mtapuri & Giampiccoli 2013; Saarinen 2006; Telfer & Shapely 2007;;Moren et al. 2020) evidently scratch the surface of the issues that would determine the success or failure of the community-based initiatives to include rural African women.

There should be a concerted effort on the transformation of the CBT initiatives and clear platforms for rural African women to participate in tourism development initiatives. It is through their participation that they can express the format in which they can confidently contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of their households and the preservation of IK of their communities (Lukhele-Olorunju & Gwandure 2018). The sustainable livelihood approach can be used as a framework within which CBT initiatives can be implemented.

## ■ Integrating community-based tourism and the sustainable livelihood approach

The sustainable livelihood (SL) approach is widely used in implementing various projects that are directed at poverty reduction and rural development in general. The successful implementation of these projects using the SL approach relies heavily on various types of assets that the community has. This approach gained popularity because it promotes an integrative way of thinking about strategies for poverty reduction and the understanding of ways of supplementing livelihoods for survival (Carney 2002; Petersen & Pedersen 2010; Sati & Prasad 2017; Shen, Hughey & Simmons 2008). Also of importance is the ability of this approach to display how 'sustainable livelihoods are achieved through access to a range of livelihood assets which include natural, economic, human, financial and social capital' (Mbaiwa 2004; cf. Fujun, Hughey & Simmons 2008; Kabir et al. 2012).



This approach also places emphasis on the sustainability of the livelihoods and addresses the ‘dynamic dimensions of poverty and well-being of communities through establishing a typology of assets which individuals, households and communities utilise to maintain livelihoods under changing conditions’ (Serrat 2008). Clearly, this approach encompasses, according to Serrat (2008), people and the overall enabling environment that influences the outcomes of livelihood strategies.

Chambers and Conway (1992; cf. Kabir et al. 2012) defined a livelihood as capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood has to be sustainable which means it should be able to (Chambers & Conway 1992):

[C]ope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, provide livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and contribute net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels in the short and long-term. (p. 15)

The SL approach, therefore, highlights the ability of the community to use its assets and capabilities to respond to the shocks and stresses over time (Norton & Foster 2001). Studies by Meinzen-Dick, Quisumbing, Doss and Theis (2019) indicated that ‘women with strong land rights are more resilient to adverse shocks that affect their communities and households’.

Because of the seriousness of the challenge of tackling poverty reduction, it cannot be left in the hands of the women or those communities but it should be addressed by involving various stakeholders. This multi-stakeholder engagement presents an opportunity for livelihood activities at local levels to inform policy development. The involvement of various stakeholders also enhances a possibility of creating a conducive and an enabling environment which may lead to the establishment and even diversification of livelihood activities.

In order for the SL approach to be used effectively, people should take the central and leading role and be in a position to identify assets that can be used for livelihood activities. The lack of ownership of assets among women limits their ability to

capitalise on the opportunities that would provide sustainable livelihoods for their households.

## ■ **Current directions in community-based tourism research**

### ■ **Relevance of rural African women's voices in participatory approaches for community-based tourism development**

Despite the fact that CBT is a recent subfield of tourism, it has enjoyed rapid changes in its evolution and development. It is, therefore, important to understand research directions that tourism scholars have investigated and continue to investigate. The growth of CBT within the broader discipline of tourism continues to show an upward trajectory in terms of quantity and quality of research and literature. According to Mtapuri et al. (2015), the number of articles published specifically on CBT in 2015 had grown phenomenally with 400 articles in 136 different journals, which was a clear indication of the growth in popularity of CBT as a topic for research. In these publications, researchers and authors have tended to link CBT with various disciplines as a reflection of the multidisciplinary nature of tourism as a field of study.

In addition to tourism journals, CBT research publications have filtered through journals of a wide range of disciplines such as tourism education journals, management journals, law journals and journals related to the environment and tourism geographies. Indeed, over the past 20 years, the most research produced about tourism across the region of southern Africa has, according to Rogerson and Rogerson (2013), 'appeared outside of the mainstream journals in tourism studies' (cf. Yankholmes 2014).

Much as all journals put emphasis on the centrality of local communities, there is a gap in linking CBT and gender issues with specific reference to rural African women. Gender equity in CBT, issues of cooperation, distribution of benefits, employment and

community empowerment should be central to CBT development literature and research. Unless gender issues that have implications to the successful implementation of CBT, rural African women will remain disadvantaged economically and socially and on the periphery of tourism development (Ivanovic 2015). This is one of the reasons that Jugmohan and Steyn (2015) pointed out that the CBT concept is good in principle but its successful implementation has proved to be problematic.

It is, therefore, important that literature and research indicate how CBT as an approach has created opportunities for rural African women individually and collectively to participate and benefit from tourism development initiatives. The current community-based research and literature have evidently stifled the voice of rural African women who in many ways are still on the periphery of tourism development.

## ■ **Some limitations to inclusive participation of rural African women in community-based tourism initiatives**

Despite the growing interest in CBT, the concept and its practice continue to be as confusing as that of community participation (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri 2015). There has been less emphasis on the challenges that limit the inclusion of rural African women in CBT research. Ndlovu and Rogerson (2004) argued that, 'while scholars, entrepreneurs and practitioners understand the need for placing greater emphasis on community empowerment in tourism planning and implementation', focus has not been on African rural women. Some studies had mentioned marginalisation of women and minorities in community decision as a challenge that has a direct effect on African rural communities (cf. Lukhele & Mearns 2013). Without a distinct voice in the literature and evident presence in grassroot operations, rural African women will remain marginalised, disadvantaged and disfranchised.

Community-based tourism research has identified many challenges that hinder the effective implementation of CBT projects which among others include some of which would apply to African rural women. These include community definition problems; issues of access to information; deficiency in business acumen; and lack of tourism expertise, traditional concentrated structures of authority and passive community participation (Lukhele & Mearns 2013; Stone & Stone 2020; Ianniello et al. 2019). Of these challenges, there are those that would apply to women in rural areas such as the following.

### ■ **Lack of empowerment**

Lack of empowerment of rural African women imposes a serious challenge that leaves rural women on the periphery of the tourism landscape. Giampiccoli (2020) argued that participation by marginalised and disadvantaged groups in ownership, planning, controlling, management, decision-making of CBT ventures and projects is necessary. The observation is that despite the growing interest in CBT, there is no evidence in CBT research of the inclusion of rural African women in CBT projects. This lack of evidence limits a distinct voice in the tourism literature and in the decision-making structures on grassroot operations. Without this distinct voice, rural African women will remain marginalised, disadvantaged and disfranchised, and their contribution to IKS preservation through tourism activities and products will also be minimal (Seleti & Tlhompho 2017).

### ■ **Limited access to the resources that are required for participation in community-based tourism projects**

Community-based tourism projects require a variety of resources for their successful implementation (Scheyvens 2002). Self-reliance and independence are some of the requirements that are necessary for the successful implantation of CBT projects

(Giampiccoli 2020). These include land, financial, natural and sociocultural resources which can be listed as assets that can form the basis for the implementation of community-based projects. Land, as an example of a resource, is required for various tourism development initiatives with the potential to contribute to sustainable livelihoods of rural communities.

Land is evidently one of the ‘most valuable assets in most rural households and is a foundation not only for agricultural production’ (Akinola 2018) but also for tourism development. Lack of land ownership by women limits the capacity of women to participate in certain tourism projects such as those that require erection of a building. Studies indicate that women with strong land rights have the ability to withstand and protect their households and communities from shocks (Meinzen-Dick, Quisumbing, Doss & Theis 2019; Norton & Foster 2001).

## ■ **Practitioners’ limited capacity for and understanding of tourism**

The success of any tourism endeavour is an outcome of a collaborative effort between the government, the private sector and local communities. Lindström and Larson (2016) argued that:

[/]nvolvement in tourism development is both a democratic right and a strategic destination management tool which emphasises the significance of a collaborative approach in implementing community based projects. Community based practitioners should have knowledge and practical experience of community-based tourism as a bottom-up approach. (n.p.)

The demise of some community-based projects has been because of the lack of capacity and understanding of how the tourism sector functions by the local government officials and service providers who are sometimes tasked to implement these projects.

If those that are supposed to lead and implement community-based projects lack a broad understanding of tourism specifically

CBT issues and opportunities, then the outcome of their efforts will be negligible. This lack of capacity also minimises the chances that realistic support can be given by the local government to communities to maximise the potential of tourism opportunities and to develop sustainable funding models for CBT projects to thrive (Iorio & Corsale 2014),

## ■ Lack of capacity

Community-based tourism is an increasingly popular way for rural communities to preserve their cultural and natural heritage while generating needed income (Spencer et al. 2016). Research has indicated that most rural African women participate in a number of profit-generating activities, mainly for subsistence purposes. There is a need for capacity building so that these women engage in activities that will lead to the commercialisation of their products, which is more sustainable. Studies have indicated that a lack of skills can jeopardise any strategy and hope of expanding and growing budding businesses to thriving businesses. Capacity building becomes instrumental in ensuring the success of a CBT implementation effort (Hamzah 2014).

## ■ The voice of African local communities engaged in community-based tourism initiatives

Tourism should not only give women economic independence and empowerment but also foster a sense of pride in local resources (Manwa 2009). Rural African women play significant traditional roles in every local community which makes them aware of the natural and cultural heritage assets that can be used to promote sustainable livelihoods while simultaneously focusing on the preservation of IK through CBT initiatives.

## ■ Case study: uPhongolo local municipality

This case study is an example of a CBT project that created an opportunity for rural African women to contribute to their livelihoods and simultaneously preserve their IK through craft development. The study was based on the project that was implemented in uPhongolo Local Municipality. This is one of the five local municipalities within the Zululand District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This municipality has 86% of households in the rural areas and a high unemployment rate. The purpose of implementing the project was to address social challenges such as poverty and unemployment for people that reside in rural areas using natural resources that are readily available in the area. The project targeted crafters most of whom had, for many years, been producing craft for subsistence purposes. Craft is a heritage resource, and craft making is a skill that has been passed from generation to generation. Through this project, women had an opportunity of creating tourism products that are based on their IK thus contributing to its preservation.

The findings of the study indicated that all crafters who joined the craft development project were females. These women were mainly heads of their families responsible for the livelihoods of their households. The findings also indicated that the level of education of these women was low with the majority having passed only primary education (48%) which contributes to a high unemployment rate in the area. None of the participants had a full-time job, and the majority of them (44%) earned not more than R1000 per month which is not adequate to support their families. To reduce the start-up costs, the project sought to use natural resources that were readily available in the area which in this case were hardwood and soap stone. Both types of natural resources were perceived to be in the male domain; however, through determination, these women crafters resolved to use the soap stone to make different types of craft products for consumption by the tourism industry.

All these women crafters indicated that they had never carved the soap stone before but were willing and determined to learn. Some of them (58%) believed that the soap stone will increase their chances of creating unique products because the market is flooded with craft items made out of grass, which is what they had been producing all along. All participants indicated that they had never used any design/pattern to develop the products but expressed their readiness to learn how to design and package products for the market which was a move towards commercialisation of their products instead of producing items for subsistence purposes. The products that these women developed were based on knowledge that is handed down from generation to generation.

To ensure the sustainability of the project, these women were taught both practical and entrepreneurial skills, which included, among others, the skill of designing products, translating mental images to the chapter to facilitate replication in case there are orders of a specific shape and size; the significance of producing attractive and unique designs to create a demand, pricing, packaging, to always match supply with demand; and strategies of mass production.

This is an indication that CBT has the potential of creating opportunities for rural African women to participate and benefit from projects that are implemented in their localities. Further, there is also an opportunity to create products that contribute to the preservation of IK and the decolonisation of tourism products. These are the efforts that should be recorded in CBT literature and research as a way of creating platforms where the voices of rural African women are heard.

## ■ Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to make a contribution to the new perspectives and approaches in the directions taken by CBT research strongly calling for the representation of the voice of rural



African women and the creation of platforms for IK preservation and decolonisation of tourism offerings. Community-based tourism has the ability to create opportunities for rural communities to individually and collectively benefit from tourism and contribute to sustainable livelihoods. It is recommended that emphasis should be not only on the empowerment of disadvantages and marginalised categories of the rural communities but also on the conversion of the cultural and heritage assets into authentic tourism activities and products, which lead to the preservation of IK of local communities and decolonisation agenda of tourism offerings. Through CBT, unique traditional local knowledge and skills of indigenous communities can be used as significant assets that can be packaged into tourism products. It is further recommended that the centrality of the participation of communities in CBT be clarified so that the role and space for rural African women are clarified and their ability to contribute to sustainable livelihoods, preservation of IK and decolonisation of tourism offering is recognised.

## ■ Summary

Community-based tourism is used to address socio-economic challenges such as poverty alleviation, job creation and empowerment of rural local communities. It creates opportunities for rural communities to develop their natural and cultural heritage assets into tourism activities and products. It is through the development of these assets into tourism activities that rural communities can preserve their cultural and natural heritage while generating needed income. Through the sustainable use of these assets, CBT presents local communities with the potential to contribute to sustainable livelihoods of their households and preservation of their heritage as part of their IK and to serve the decolonisation agenda. Successful implementation of CBT culminates in active participation of communities in all tourism-related initiatives, empowerment and socio-economic upliftment of marginalised segments of local communities, such as rural African women.

# Indigenous psychosocial care among African families raising children with Down syndrome

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## ■ Introduction

While the debate on decolonisation of African social work is raging, scholars are battling to find contextually rooted theories, methods and models for social work in Africa. Historically, social services stem from the existence of real or perceived social problems in a specific context and the desire to ameliorate such problems in constructive ways (Brydon 2011). Whether documented or not, all

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human beings, regardless of race or creed, have demonstrated some ability to develop distinct responses to address prevailing social problems within their sociocultural context. The distinct responses described above constitute indigeneity or denote what is referred to as indigenous. Brydon (2011) argued that all forms of support, including mainstream Western/Eurocentric professional aid, are situated in specific social and indigenous context.

Similar to a range of congenital and later-onset mental illnesses, the experience of giving birth to a child diagnosed with Down syndrome (DS) tends to be emotionally debilitating to the biological parents and the family at large (Ben-Zeev, Young & Corrigan 2010; Corrigan, Druss & Perlick 2014). The emotional debilitation stems from the psychosocial and financial difficulties normally experienced by parents when raising a child with DS. For the African families, this is further compounded by the poor socio-economic conditions and the stigma that generally characterises their experiences with disability.

It is widely recognised in the literature on disability that conditions involving mental illness are generally associated with stigma (Matsea 2017). Corrigan et al. (2014) defined stigma as a negative perception of a person with a certain condition, either by themselves (self-inflicted) or others (public). Moreover, Ben-Zeev et al. (2010) distinguished between public and courtesy stigma, with the former implying a general tendency by others to stigmatise a person with a condition and the latter relating to stigmatisation of the significant others who are close to a person with a condition, such as families and professionals (Ben-Zeev et al. 2010).

Despite the widely publicised negative stories of children with disabilities hidden, abused and/or killed because of stigma, positive stories of special love and care for people with disabilities among African families are more prevalent but seldom documented (Geiger 2010). As usual, the isolated incidences of negative treatment of people with disabilities in some African families and communities get generalised to mirror overall attitudes of Africans to disabilities.

The above situation is further aggravated by the fact that there is a general lack of literature on how the African worldview, culture and traditional heritage influence the way Africans make sense of their experiences (Geiger 2010; Malatji & Ndebele 2018; Ross & Deverell 2010). It is on the basis of how Africans make sense of their experiences that they construct responses to deal with challenges associated with looking after their significant others living with disabilities.

The paucity of research on the above issues in social work implies that the African experience is silenced in the social work helping process. This hinges on the reality of the coloniality of social work that continues to this age. It was through this realisation that, on the one hand, the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI) resolved to host a conference on decoloniality in social work in 2017. While, on the other hand, the *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, in partnership with ASASWEI, devoted a special issue to decoloniality in social work education (Van Breda & Qalinge 2018:1).

Thus, the thrust of the case advanced in this chapter is to illuminate how the African worldview as a frame of reference, unveiled through their lived experiences, shapes the way African families dealt with the task of raising children with DS. The chapter, therefore, employs data gathered from exploring the lived experiences of African families living with a child with DS. It is hoped that the findings may be further developed to inform work on a possible decoloniality social work practice typology.

## ■ Overview of Down syndrome as a form of disability and its implications on African families

The DS condition is characterised by the presence of three (trisomy) chromosomes instead of a pair at the position of

chromosome number 21 (Mueller & Young 2005). Cytogenetics literature confirms DS as the common chromosome abnormality found in children (Harper 2004; Mueller & Young 2005). Clinically, children with DS present with mental retardation, heart problems, unique facial features and high susceptibility to leukaemia and tend to develop Alzheimer's disease with an early onset (Harper 2004; Lampret & Christianson 2007).

Thus, psychosocial support is required not only by the mother of a child with DS but also by significant other members of the family whose hopes for a healthy child may have been thwarted by the birth of a child with DS. Cowles (2000) confirmed this stating that psychosocial support is a necessity for families of a child with DS. As argued by Cowles (2000), part of the reason why the birth of a child with DS is often accompanied by serious emotional distress is the association of DS with mental retardation, as well as the fact that the condition can be diagnosed shortly after birth or during the prenatal stage.

The word 'African' is used in this chapter to refer to people of African descent, sometimes referred to as black people. This is in line with the South African constitution (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996) which classifies South Africans into four racial categories, namely, Africans meaning black people, white people, Indians and coloureds. Furthermore, the word 'family' is used in this chapter to refer to the African conceptualisation of an extended kinship network or clan system, whereas the White Paper on Families (RSA 2013) defines a family as:

[A] societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a particular physical residence. (p. 11)

As contended by Amoateng and Richter (2007:4), 'families never fit nicely into any single model', and as conceded by the White Paper on Families (RSA 2013), the concept 'family' is difficult to define.

As noted by Mathebane (2016), African mothers and, by extension, their families have not always known and understood DS as a condition. Thus, the author reckons that, in the past, without the luxury of currently available professional psychosocial support, African families raising children with DS were compelled to rely on their IKS to make sense of and manage the DS condition. The vast majority of African families have only recently begun to obtain exposure to the scientific detail relating to DS (Mathebane 2016). Consequently, it follows that African families of children with DS require ongoing psychosocial support.

The paucity of research on social work services in healthcare, particularly research relating to services offered to African family raising a child with DS highlighted by Mathebane (2016), forms part of the motivation for exploring the study that formed the basis of this chapter. This lack of research on the experiences of African families raising a child with disabilities was further confirmed by Malatji and Ndebele (2018).

Existing studies of African children, however, report that half of the infants diagnosed with DS are delivered by mothers with advanced maternal age, referring to age above 35 years (Christianson, Howson & Modell 2006). The findings by Christianson et al. (2006) imply that most of the African children diagnosed with DS are delivered by elderly mothers. These mothers are generally more inclined to African cultural thought and traditional practices.

The difficult task of raising a child with DS among African families in South Africa is further compounded by historical socio-economic disadvantages that left Africans marginalised (Department of Social Development, Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities & the United Nations Children's Fund 2012). This is aggravated by stigmatisation linked to the congenital malformations and/or mental retardation characterising children with DS (Christianson et al. 2002; DSD, DWCPD & UNCF 2012; Matsea 2017; Rosenkranz 2004). As pointed out by Matsea (2017), the fear of shame generated by

stigmatisation drives some families to keep their experiences of mental illness a secret.

As highlighted by several authors (Cowles 2000; DSD, DWCPD & UNCF 2012; Rosenkranz 2004), some African communities tend to perceive the birth of a child with DS as a curse. African families commonly believe that ancestors/God may punish families with a child with mental illness following their transgression of some traditional rules (Christianson et al. 2002). Rosenkranz (2004) reported incidences of abuse and neglect of children with mental illness among African communities in South Africa. Family abuse and neglect reported include, among others, the chaining and locking of children with mental illnesses in houses for a very long time to block them from being seen by the general public because of fear of stigmatisation (Rosenkranz 2004).

This, together with other common behavioural and interaction patterns among African families, has not been documented from lived experiences. Consequently, the underlying African worldview, culture and traditional precepts driving the experience have not been adequately explored, described and understood (Ross & Deverell 2010). However, sweeping generalisations continue to be drawn about African families and disabilities. Similar sentiments were expressed by Geiger (2010) when she asserted that there are cultural variations between Western and African ways of responding to disability. Substantiating on their argument, Ross and Deverell (2010) distinguished between two main types of health conventions found in South Africa, namely, modern approach linked to the Western medical paradigm and the traditional approach commonly used by Africans emanating from their IKS.

## ■ The African worldview

A lot has been written about the importance of contextual relevance in social work literature. As intimated by Osei-Hwedie

(1997), the effectiveness of social work interventions depends greatly on its compatibility with the client's sociocultural, economic and political context.

Consequently, the lack of contextual relevance between mainstream social work, thought to be Western oriented, and the distinct African worldview may justifiably compromise the effectiveness of social work interventions and cause role confusion (Gray 2005; Kuse 1997; Osei-Hwedie 1997; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo 2008; Ross 2008; Thabede 2008).

Similarly, African families raising a child with DS would benefit greatly from social work services tailored to their context, as defined by their sociocultural, economic and political dimensions. As a people, African families have a worldview underpinned by unique cultural and traditional practices. Their experience of DS is accordingly shaped by their worldview. Therefore, it is prudent that social work services to Africans raising children with DS mirror their worldview (Mathebane 2016).

In acknowledging the important role of cultural relevance, several scholars indicate the need to create contextual relevance as the biggest challenge facing contemporary social work practice worldwide. In the same vein, Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2008) emphasised that social workers must adequately understand the context of their work to appropriately formulate the basis of their interventions. As intimated by Ross (2008:17), 'without knowledge of the client's cultural context, professional intervention is likely to become an intercultural collision of values, attitudes, expectations and definitions'.

The literature on DS characterises its impact on families as stressful (Cowles 2000). For instance, Rosenkranz (2004) reported numerous incidences of abuse and neglect among African families in South Africa to illustrate the stressful nature of the condition. The association of DS with stigma among African families testifies to the assertion made by Matsea (2017) that health conditions associated with mental illnesses are generally



stigmatised in South Africa. Numerous authors researching on the health behaviour of Africans support this, revealing a generally negative attitude towards illness (Bruns, Jhazbhay & Emsley 2011; Malatji & Ndebele 2018; Mzimkulu & Simbayi 2006; Rosenkranz 2004; Ross 2008).

Some authors argue that the negative connotations to illness among African families can be attributed to their belief in witchcraft and/or generally held views that illness may be a curse by ancestors (Bruns et al. 2011; Mzimkulu & Simbayi 2006).

It is important to consider that, while some Africans attribute illness to superstition, objective truth remains an important part of the African worldview (Ani 1994; Schiele 2000). As purported by the above authors, there seem to exist alternative sources of knowledge over and above objective knowledge within the African worldview. Alternative sources of knowledge include spirituality and intuition/affect (Schiele 2000).

However, as noted by Ani (1994), the relationship between all different sources of knowledge is harmonious and complimentary. There is, therefore, no perceived or real conflict between the different sources of knowledge. Thus, the belief in God does not negate science or vice versa. Scientific knowledge provides practical expression to the belief in God as the creator of everything. In other words, science helps us comprehend what God had created (Schiele 2000). Thus, any helping professional offering support in the African context considers the above argument presented by Schiele (2000) as it defines African health behaviour.

Additionally, Penn et al. (2010) indicated ethno-cultural barriers as key among the many factors that deter Africans from accessing healthcare services. Ross (2008) observed that Africans tend to use both Western and African traditional medicine concurrently, while a similar sentiment is echoed by Penn et al. (2010). Moreover, Ross (2008:17) reported an estimate of '[...] 8 out of every 10 South Africans consult with traditional healers in conjunction with or in preference to Western-trained

medical professionals'. Consequently, Ross (2008) emphasised that social workers in South Africa should understand the beliefs and practices of traditional healers about health, illness and disability as they represent a microcosm of the African worldview and, by extension, the African clientele.

## ■ Culture and kinship

Culture and inheritance are regarded as some of the factors influencing the health behaviour of Africans (Penn et al. 2010). These authors point out that the African understanding of inheritance is based on a distinct family kinship system, contrary to the Western model of inheritance. It is the same kinship network system, as a central organising structure, that coordinates decision-making related to health issues. The African kinship system generally places elders in highly esteemed positions of influence in the community (Penn et al. 2010). Thus, elders, particularly grandparents, have a very strong influence on the health behaviour of African families (Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu 2007). Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu (2007) indicated teaching, raising children and counselling during illnesses as some of the responsibilities allocated to elders. Barratt and Penn (2009) concurred with the previous authors, arguing that grandparents are custodians of knowledge about illness and treatment and are often consulted first when illnesses arise. In recent times, with the advent of the AIDS epidemic and its resultant demise of many parents and the resultant increase in the number of orphans, the role of grandparents has been strengthened. Consequently, grandparents become breadwinners given that their old-age grants may be the sole income for some African families (Barratt & Penn 2009; Bock & Johnson 2008).

Studies also point to ethnic differences regarding issues of autonomy, protection of confidentiality and decision-making for health in African families (Port et al. 2008; Ware et al. 2009). It is thus imperative for social workers assisting African families to take note of the issues discussed so far. As argued by Ross

(2008), a more open approach by social workers, prompting new ways of knowing, would create a conducive environment that enables African clients to openly discuss issues from their frame of reference, without fear of being judged.

## ■ Theoretical framing

The African existential philosophical lens (Sithole 2016), also known as Africana existential philosophy by More (2008), was used concurrently with the African cosmology (African worldview) as theorised by Ani (1994). The cobbling together of the African existential philosophy and the African cosmology was contextualised using Afrocentricity to feed into the so-called Afrocentric social work perspective.

The Africana existential philosophy is premised upon the need for the re-awakening of black selfhood and identity as well as the liberation of black subjects (More 2008). The theory has its origin in Fanon's ([1952] 2008) conceptualisation of 'existential phenomenology', which argued that the existential conditions of the black subjects can only be best engaged and understood from their lived experiences as well as their lives that is reduced to non-living (lack of ontological density) but possessing the ability to emerge. In agreement with Fanon's concept, Biko ([1978] 2004:29) lamented that real African subjectivity should emerge 'not from a detached point of view and an oversimplified premise [...], but from and by blacks themselves, a living part of Africa and of her thought'. Therefore, the chapter uses the theoretical lens provided by Fanon's 'existential phenomenology' (the life world as experienced) to tap into the actual experiences of the African family's dealings with DS as effectively and subjectively accounted for and articulated by them. The author conceptualised the distinctive way of being and knowing shaping the manner in which African families manage the experience and the subjective meanings thereof, and accordingly use such experiences to inform theorisation about African families in a grounded manner.

Additionally, the African cosmology as a theoretical perspective is used to compliment the Africana existential philosophy. Please note that the African cosmology is used interchangeably with the African worldview to mean the same thing. This perspective allows one to unmask the cosmic view of reality among African families, as contrived by Ani (1994). The African cosmology is foregrounded on several characteristics that Ani (1994) delineates, but cautions that although discussed sequentially, in reality they are interlinked. The first being sacredness and symbolism, meaning that within the context of the African cosmology, every phenomenon is perceived as sacred and symbolic (Ani 1994; Graham 2002; Mungai 2015; Schiele 2000). Secondly, the African worldview is holistic in its outlook, seeing everything as connected. Thirdly, the African cosmology is integrative, oppositional and characterised by complementarity (Ani 1994). As argued by Ani (1994), the African worldview emphasises that any difference in capabilities, attributes, gender, ability, social roles and age provides an opportunity for complementarity and oppositional arrangements, rather, as opposed to a sense of confrontational and oppositional relations seen on the Western worldview (Ani 1994). Lastly, within the African worldview, spirit and matter are joined, while the Western worldview effectively separates spirit from matter (Ani 1994).

Afrocentricity refers to ‘a way of being, including thinking and writing from the standpoint that privileges Africa as a starting point of subjectivity and analysis thereof’ (Asante 2006:648). It is also a theory advancing the affirmation of African subjectivity (Sithole 2016). Building on the above definition of Afrocentricity, Afrocentric social work can therefore be defined as a method of social work that utilises traditional African philosophical assumptions to explain and solve social problems (Schiele 2000). Additionally, Afrocentric social work calls for the centering of any analysis of African people on African epistemologies, ideals and values (Graham 2002).

Asante (2006) delineated key characteristics distinguishing Afrocentrism from Eurocentrism. Firstly, that Afrocentrism does

not have either racial or ethnic consciousness nor any hierarchy. As such, Afrocentricity does not claim to occupy all spaces and times. Secondly, Afrocentrism is a pluralist philosophy that embraces and respects all cultural centres (Asante 2006). Thirdly, cultural context and location are more important than information in the Afrocentric world. Fourthly, culture is the main driver in the orientation to centredness. Finally, the individualism, nuclear family and competition found in the Eurocentric paradigm are countered by collectivism, communalism, cooperation and an extended family system in the African context demonstrated through *ubuntu* (group consciousness and cohesion).

Following on the key characteristics of Afrocentrism, Schiele (2000) contrived the following as assumptions underpinning Afrocentric social work: That individual identity is conceived as a collective identity; that the spiritual aspect of humans is just as legitimate and important as the material aspect; and that the affective approach to knowledge is epistemologically as valid as the objective empirical approach.

It is on the basis of the above assumptions that Afrocentric social work argues that social problems in contemporary society emanate from oppression and spiritual poverty. It is Schiele (2000)'s assertion that the oppression and spiritual alienation suffered by Africans is a direct result of their adoption of the Eurocentric value system which is characterised by materialism, objectification, individualism and inordinate competition.

## ■ Methodology

The study on which this chapter is based was aimed at developing a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and coping strategies adopted by African families raising children with DS. The objectives were to explore, describe and interpret the lived experiences and coping strategies inherent in the African family system participating in the study. The study utilised a qualitative research approach. A phenomenological research design was adopted from an interpretive paradigm (Creswell 2013).

## ■ Population, sampling and sampling techniques

The study was conducted in four of the nine South African provinces (Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West). The research population consisted of African families raising a child with DS, older than a year, residing in one of the four provinces. Purposive sampling was used because the researcher looked for specific attributes in participants (Neuman 2006). The participants needed to be: (1) family members of a child diagnosed (confirmed) with DS, (2) older than a year and (3) selected from social work case files and existing support groups.

## ■ Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, guided by an interview guide and focus group prompts.

## ■ Data analysis

Qualitative data were analysed following the methods by Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (eds. 2006). The first step was familiarisation and immersion, which involved perusing the transcripts, noting, representation in the form of tables and pictures, and putting things into perspective for a bigger picture of the data. The second step was to induce themes, which entailed deducing general rules from specific instances in a grounded manner that allows the researcher to move to conclusions through a bottom-up approach. Coding was the third step, which involved arranging information into themes generated from the data. Step four was elaboration, arranging information in a logical and linear sequence, while the final step was data interpretation and checking. This step basically meant going back to check that everything makes sense and correcting where necessary.

## ■ Data verification

The process of data verification enables the researcher to establish the extent to which collected information represents the true meanings conveyed by participants. The study adopted Guba's model, as described in Krefting (1991:214), to assess trust worthiness, following the criteria of truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

## ■ Truth value

Truth value was addressed through building good working relationships with participants, creating a conducive environment for open and honest conversations, and addressing all issues that may potentially hinder openness such as fear, mistrust and discrimination. The participants were encouraged through a conducive and enabling environment to share their experiences more openly and freely. Additionally, triangulation was also used to assess and attain truth value. The combination of different data sources and collection tools provides ample opportunities for assessing and addressing truth value. The use of semi-structured interviews with families as well as focus group discussions (FGD) with primary caregivers is one case in point. As these different tools were used, the researcher consistently compared the data generated as well as consistency between data generated and found that they were all pointing to truth value.

## ■ Applicability

The presentation of ample descriptive data for comparisons provides one way in which this criterion can be addressed (Krefting 1991:216). In line with the above criterion, dense descriptions of participants including their particular experiences were presented in-depth as far as possible. The descriptions covered details of the context, process and settings to enable the transferability of findings.

## ■ Consistency

Consistency relates to the probability of findings generated from research data generated or repeated in similar contexts with similar participants to remain consistent. Coding procedures are normally used to address trustworthiness in this regard. The use of a code-recode procedure during data analysis was employed. For instance, the researcher would wait for a while after coding a segment of data and then revisit and recode the same data. After coding a segment of the data, the author would wait for a while (two weeks) and then return to recode the same data. The results would be compared to assess consistency.

## ■ Neutrality

In qualitative research, there is always a risk of researchers bringing themselves onto the findings and contaminating collected data during collection and analysis. The neutrality criterion is one way of mitigating the risk of data contamination. This criterion was automatically addressed through true value and applicability. In addition to the two criteria already addressed, reflexivity was also employed. With reflexivity, researchers use their own personal experiences to understand the research data and personal meanings that come with it. In this way, researchers become consciously aware of their own personal meanings and bracket them out. Bracketing implies separating out own personal meanings from those of the participants.

## ■ Ethical considerations

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from an accredited research ethics committee of UNISA (ethics approval reference number: DR&#C\_2014\_005).



## ■ Results

Most participants in the FGD were females. This is because women generally serve as primary caregivers for children, whether their own children or offsprings of their significant others. However, a small number of male participants were involved in supporting their female partners. Although most of the participants (35) were biological parents, a significant number of participants (9), who served as guardians for the children with DS, were not biological parents, but significant other family members, usually a grandmother or aunt. It is common practice among African families to share the responsibility of raising a child, particularly with the elder members of the kinship network, be it grandparents or aunts. No demographic information was captured for the family interviews, as the unit of analysis in this case was the lived experiences of the family as a system or entity, rather than that of households.

The findings are presented in the themes generated from the data, namely, the centrality of clan identity consciousness and loyalty, a view of illness beyond causality, a distinctive approach to managing illness and an inherent family-based system of psychosocial support.

### ■ **The centrality of clan identity, consciousness and loyalty**

A common thread emerging from the research data was the importance of clan identity, particularly regarding clan consciousness and loyalty as primary determinants of thought, attitude and behaviour. A deeper analysis of the data revealed an organising logic that breaks down clan identity into at least three elements, namely, clan name, totem and a practice of family praise singing or the reciting of family praise poems that celebrate common personal characteristics and traits. Interestingly, the data also showed how clan identity is intertwined with spirituality.

The participants reported that clan identity is instrumental in prayer and communication with ancestors. Furthermore, they reported that their clan identity that includes family kinships, praise songs and totems was taken from the paternal side of the kinship system. There was no evidence of any family tracing their kinship identity through the maternal line. However, in cases where the biological parents were never married, families were compelled to stick to the maternal kinship identity. This confirms an assertion of Meiser et al. (2008) and Penn et al. (2010) that a patrilineal kinship system is found in African families. The findings uncovered a consistent phenomenon among African families that family identity is derived from the paternal side of the family. From the family interviews (F11), one of the participants (P2), an unmarried mother of a child with DS, made the following remarks regarding her family identity:

'A surname is bought with cattle [...] I remain 'Mokgakga' (clan name) [...] until such time that I am married (lobola paid usually using cattle).' (F11-P2, female, 2016)

The above participant (F11-P2) formed part of family or clan 1 and coded as 2 in the family interview conducted on 4th July in Limpopo province. She had children out of wedlock (including the child with DS) and was a school teacher by profession. The interview occurred at home with the rest of the family which included her parents, brothers and their wives and children.

Further to the above, the following quote shows that the paying *lobola* does not only represent formal recognition of the marriage and transfer of family identity from one to another but also represent a spiritual ritual uniting the ancestors of both families:

'Without lobola [...] the biological father cannot be recognised [...] the ancestors of both families are not united and therefore the father or his family have no say in the affairs of the child or the child's mother...'. (F14-P4, female, 2016)

The participant (F14-P4) was coded number 4 and formed part of family 4 interviewed on 15 July 2016 in the North West province. She was an unmarried mother of the child with DS and lived with

her mother and maternal uncles as her mother was never married. She was unemployed and depended on her parents and brothers for financial support.

## ■ View of illness beyond causality

The findings showed that the African families held views about the illness that transcended causality to embrace purpose and function. This relates to their acknowledgement that everything comes from the creator (God). When asked about how they made sense of the birth of a child with DS, almost all families reported that they appreciated the medical explanation from experts, including doctors and nurses. Yet, they maintained that the birth of a child with DS was not sporadic but served a particular divine purpose, as shown here:

‘While I appreciate the medical facts, I am mindful of the fact that God has a purpose with this. He gave me this for a particular purpose and it will become clear as time passes.’ (FI3-P6, male, 2016)

The participant (FI3-P6) formed part of a family interview number 3 conducted in Limpopo province during the first week of July 2016. Coded as number 6, this was an elderly male (paternal grandparent to the child with DS) interviewed with the rest of the family.

Interestingly, some even believed that the birth of a child with DS sought to perform a particular function in their lives. The following quote is taken from one of the participants in the FGD:

‘I believe God wanted to open doors for me through this. I lost my job just before this child was born and when the child came and she had DS, I was linked up with the special school and eventually was offered employment at the special school as a care giver. So, God wanted to secure my future and used this child to do just that.’ (FGD3-P5, female, 2016)

The above participant (FGD3-P5) was part of an FGD held at a special school for the disabled in the North West province. She is a mother to a child with DS at the special school and also works there as a caregiver.

The following quote details how the birth of a child with DS brought relief and empowered her spiritually to lean on God:

‘Through this child I got to know who is really on my side. My family dumped me, including my own mother. While wondering around helplessly, I found God and surprisingly my child is also spiritually gifted. I believe he can prophesy, and I was told at church to watch him.’ (FGD3-P2, female, 2016)

The participant FGD3-P2 was also part of the same FGD conducted at a special school in the North West province.

Different family members had different explanations for the DS condition, ranging from spiritual reasons to punishment for transgressions by parents.

The above findings are a testament to the assertion by Schiele (2000) that the African worldview draws its knowledge from a variety of sources, including objective truth, spirituality and affect. Essentially, the findings on this theme imply that everything happens for a reason, and it is important that such reasons be reflected upon and understood.

## ■ A pluralist approach to managing the condition

The findings revealed that participants had a multi-pronged approach to managing the DS condition. They all consulted doctors to understand the medical diagnosis and access various medical treatment and therapeutic options. At a more subjective and spiritual level, the findings revealed that African families also consulted with traditional healers, diviners and faith-based/spiritual healers to seek spiritual intervention. All participants, regardless of religious affiliation, were involved in spiritual activities of some sort relating to the child with DS and beyond. Participants indicated that various family rituals and ceremonies are performed to acknowledge ancestors/God and to seek spiritual guidance. Interestingly, the idea of the choice of termination of pregnancy (ToP) was rejected by most in relation

to the child with DS as well as future pregnancies. This confirms earlier findings by Lampret and Christianson (2007). The rejection of ToP and institutionalisation was mainly for spiritual reasons. Responses included the following:

'The child attends the clinic and also received heart surgery but at home we consulted a traditional healer and later arranged a ceremony to thank our ancestors and ask for his protection. We also asked God and our ancestors to guide us on how best to look after him.' (FGD2-P2, female, 2016)

'I will never abort my child and future ones regardless of their condition. I leave everything to God and do the best I can to care for the child. Whatever the doctors can help with is welcomed as long as it does not involve killing my child who is a blessing from God.' (FGD2-P3, female, 2016)

'The child receives different kinds of treatments from doctors. The only problem we encountered was when the social worker suggested that we send him to a sheltered/residential special school. We cannot throw away our child. It's our burden, we will carry it ourselves. We cannot dump him in a shelter.' (FGD2-P4, female, 2016)

The participants FGD2-P2,3 and 4 were all female and were part of an FGD number 2 held at a Gauteng hospital in early June 2016.

There is some overlap between the current theme and the first one which is related to causality as they mutually reinforce each other. The understanding of causality of the condition influences how the family chooses to manage it. The pluralist view of causality leads to a pluralist approach to managing the condition.

## ■ An inherent family-based system of psychosocial support

The data further revealed that the African families in this study have established protocols on how different family challenges are resolved. The findings indicated an established system of division of social roles within the network of family kinship system.

The system allocates problem-solving and psychosocial support responsibilities, privileges and social status to certain designated individuals. This also has spiritual connotations and forms part of the clan identity consciousness and loyalty. Not only are family members expected to be aware of their roles but also they must fulfil these roles with honesty, integrity and genuine commitment. Although there is no defined reward for such roles, the families believe that they are spiritually rewarded. For instance, data showed that grandparents, as do aunts and uncles, play special roles in certain specified situations. Several of the families interviewed were under the guardianship of grandmothers who also served as breadwinners for the households. Some who did not live with their biological parents were under the care of a grandmother, and, in some cases, the grandmother was also the sole provider for the child's material needs.

Some children with DS were voluntarily taken over by grandparents to shield the younger biological parents from emotional and social distress. Several of the grandmothers interviewed confirmed that they generally served as midwives when children were born at home. Indeed, several of the children with DS were reported to being born at home with the assistance of grandmothers, particularly those based in rural areas. A common thread that emerged from data of all ethnic groups interviewed was that elders (usually grandparents) were regarded as custodians of wisdom and information for the family kinship system. They are highly regarded problem solvers and often provide counselling to young couples when the problem of DS was discovered. While the biological parents consulted with the medical fraternity, they also interacted with elders to hear what they had to say about the condition of the child with DS. Although fewer biological mothers of children with DS reported that they did not always agree with some of the advises given by the elders, they confirmed that they could not openly defy their advice, given that such defiance is generally viewed as abominable.

Another common theme that emerged was the role of elders in leading the rituals performed following the birth of a child in a family. This was confirmed to be a standard cultural practice across all ethnicities interviewed, although variations exist regarding the way the ritual is performed. Some families use traditional systems, while others rely on Christian practices, such as a prayer service, to conduct the ritual. Those following traditional systems spoke about *lesiko* or *isiko*, which is a traditional ceremony to petition the ancestors to intervene and protect the child. This particular ritual is performed by grandmothers. It is known as *go thusa ngwana* in Sepedi. This is what a participant from the Bapedi ethnic group highlighted:

‘[...] female elders perform rituals to strengthen the baby a week after birth and also lead a ceremony to expose the child to the environment outside the house in which he/she was born [...] this is very crucial [...] because if they do not do that [...] the child may have problems.’ (F18-P6, female, 2016)

The participant F18-P6 is a female elder (pensioner) from the Mpumalanga province interviewed as part of a family. She is also a breadwinner and primary caregiver for her granddaughter with DS whose mother is unmarried and unemployed.

## ■ Discussion

Studies by earlier African scholars (Ani 1994; Asante 2006; Graham 2002; Mungai 2015; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo 2008; Ross 2008; Schiele 2000; Thabede 2008) asserted the existence of a unique African worldview among the people of African descent. The findings on the subjective experiences of African families raising a child with DS seem to concur with the earlier studies among African scholars on the existence of the African worldview. All suggest that a unique way of being and knowing exists among African people. This unique way of being and knowing has a way of reproducing and developing itself in a distinctive way from one generation to another.

The chapter revealed four key themes summing up the lived experiences of African families, namely, the centrality of clan identity consciousness and loyalty, a view of illness beyond causality, a distinctive approach to managing illness and an inherent family/clan-based system of psychosocial support.

There is no evidence in social work literature in South Africa acknowledging the symbolism embedded in various family facets, such as the clan name, the African family or clan totem and clan praises, and particularly how these facets influence how people deal with difficult life experiences. The chapter shows how crucial and instrumental these facets are in defining and setting a tone for everything done or not done within the African family such that no helping intervention with the African family can be effective and responsive without tapping on them as vital resources.

The absence or silencing of the vital social reality of African families in social work theory and practice effectively unmask the coloniality of social work and affirms what Fanon conceptualised as the existential condition of the black subject (African). This implies that these African families should be understood from their lived experiences and their form of living that is reduced to non-existence (lack of ontological density), but of course possessing the ability to emerge. Indeed, the chapter symbolises and effectively ignites the re-emergence of 'black selfhood, identity and liberation' (Fanon [1952] 2008), 'from and by blacks themselves, a living part of Africa and of her thought' (Biko [1978] 2004:29).

Therefore, the chapter represents decolonial engagement as it brings to the fore that which has been silenced and ignored. The chapter does so by making a contribution towards closing the knowledge gap with regard to the absence of the social realities of African families in social work theory and practice. The chapter takes further a discussion aimed at uncovering the symbolism and underlying meanings which are crucial when considering how the African family deals with psychosocial challenges.



African family members' attachment and awareness of the clan identity form the basis for their sense of collective being (identity), knowledge and power, hence the common adage among Africans that 'I am because you are' (own clan). The focus on a collective identity ('I am where I belong', 'I am where I am') is supported by a traditional African belief in *ubuntu* (Mangaliso 2001). It appears that the reliance on spirituality and affect, as additional sources of knowledge over and above objective truth, is one feature that sets the African worldview apart as compared to the dominant Western worldview where everything revolves around objective truth (Schiele 2000). It is therefore imperative that social workers in Africa take these matters into consideration when dealing with African families.

Taking the analysis further, the findings revealed that African families tended to focus on three aspects when making sense of the challenge of raising a child with DS, namely, causality, purpose and function. Causality relates to the family's need for information about the aetiology of the condition. All the participants wanted to gather as much information as possible to help them understand DS as a condition from a scientific point of view, including its causes and effects. This relates to what Schiele (2000) referred to as their interest in objective truth. However, the data also showed that they went beyond causality to embrace a spiritual meaning of the experience of giving birth to a child with DS.

Purpose, on the other hand, relates to the family's attempts at understanding at a spiritual level what God's intentions were when gifting them a child with DS. The third aspect, function, relates to the family's understanding at a spiritual level of the specific role that the birth of a child with DS serves in the broader scheme of things. It is clear from the findings that African families have a long-term view of the incidence of birth of a child with DS as connected to other aspects of their lives.

Thus, as intimated by Biko ([1978] 2004), one of the key aspects of the African culture is the positive mental attitude to problems presented by life in general. He argued that contrary to

the Westerner's use of a problem-solving approach, the African culture is characterised by what he calls 'situation-experiencing' given that Africans do not recognise any conceptual split between the natural and supernatural. 'We experience a situation rather than face a problem' (Biko [1978] 2004:44).

Furthermore, the findings of the study confirm the several characteristics underlying the African worldview as delineated by Ani (1994) including the notion of viewing phenomena as sacred and symbolic. It has been clearly demonstrated by the findings that a child with DS is generally perceived as a gift from God. There has always been a sense of gratitude and appreciation that God has a purpose with the child over and above it being bad news or a curse.

However, this does not suggest that African families turn a blind eye to the anguish brought forth by the birth of a child with DS. As would be expected, and similar to the findings of previous studies, this study showed that some family members did resort to dysfunctional coping mechanisms, while others experienced heightened levels of stress and underwent a grieving process; yet, they also embodied a spirit of gratitude to the idea of the child as a sacred and symbolic gift from God. Few of the families interviewed would accept the choice of ToP if offered following a positive diagnosis of DS during early pregnancy. This finding affirms an assertion in the literature that fewer Africans tend to opt for elective ToP, while many of them express outright abomination of it, compared with its prevalent use among their white counterparts in South Africa (Mathebane 2016). This confirms the assertion that the African worldview perceives every phenomenon as sacred and symbolic (Ani 1994).

The findings also demonstrated that the African families viewed the birth of a child with DS as connected to other events in the family. Some viewed it as God/ancestors communicating a message to them, while others saw it as instructive and a call to action. The families reported that each member of the family, with his or her strengths and weaknesses, is connected with and

interdepend on others, as well as on physical, natural and spiritual forces in the environment. Equally, the present and future, as well as the material, spiritual and affective aspects are connected, related and interdependent. This affirms the view espoused by Ani (1994) that the African worldview sees everything as connected.

An attitude of bias towards openness to the bigger picture, rather than to specifics, was evident among African families. Although they wanted to receive detailed information about the condition, they tended to focus on the condition of disability within a family context and its interplay with other aspects of the family system. They did not worry about focusing separately on a specific aspect of the problem, but rather viewed it in its totality. It would seem that they preferred to view disability in its generic form, without pinning it down to a specific type. All aspects of the disability were attended to in an integrated manner. This was clearly demonstrated by the fact that at the family level, while pursuing medical treatment, they also addressed psychosocial and other therapeutic interventions.

It was clear from the findings that the child with DS was not treated as a bad element despite the many challenges that came with it. There was a general sense of openness to dealing with its associated challenges head-on, rather than adopting an oppositional stance and attitude. Moreover, none of the families compared the child with DS against other children perceived as normal. A general attitude of acceptance was revealed that viewed a bad or negative experience as complementary to a positive one in the same way that a loss compliments a gain. The attitude demonstrated by African families was that those who have the ability stand with and compliment those who do not have the ability. As argued by Ani (1994), the African worldview emphasises that any difference in capabilities, attributes, gender, ability, social roles and age provides an opportunity for complementarity and appositional arrangements, rather as opposed to a sense of confrontational and oppositional relations seen on the Western worldview (Ani 1994).

The findings showed how African families relied heavily on their spirituality to make sense of their material experiences. The connection between spirit and matter was so strong that none of the participants viewed the incidence of the birth of a child with DS exclusively from an objective material view. There was always a spiritual aspect to it. The common understanding is that matter is created and controlled by a supernatural being for a purpose. This confirmed an assertion by Ani (1994) that, within the African worldview, spirit and matter are joined, while the Western worldview effectively separates spirit from matter.

## ■ Conclusion

Consistent with assertions made by various scholars (Brydon 2011; Graham 2002; Gray 2005; Marais & Marais 2007; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo 2008; Thabede 2008), this chapter illuminated the entanglement of African families with a system of Westernised social work that does not adequately tap into their inherent strengths and resources embedded in their worldview and cultural experiences. The use of the lived experiences ensured a grounded view that tapped into the African families' existential conditions. It can be concluded that a culturally specific, spiritually inspired clan-based approach characterises the manner in which African families raise a child with DS and deal with associated psychosocial challenges. This indigenous psychosocial care and support system found among African families raising children with DS is undergirded by a communal value system and principles.

Thus, one can conclude that there is a paradigmatic crisis for social work in Africa stemming from the hegemony of Eurocentric theory and the resultant silencing of the experiences of Africans and their ways of being and knowing. Such paradigmatic crisis calls for decolonial intervention that would yield epistemological options accommodative of the African worldview and by implications, the lived experiences of African families. It is not the purpose of the chapter to blindly dismiss the current system of

mainstream social work as totally irrelevant, but rather to highlight its weaknesses and contribute towards a discourse on decoloniality and social work in Africa. The value of mainstream Western social work cannot be ignored. However, the debate about its relevance and appropriateness needs to be taken forward.

## ■ Summary

The chapter utilised the lived experiences of African families raising children with DS to illuminate distinct elements of indigenous psychosocial care. A qualitative and phenomenological research design was adopted. Data were sourced through semi-structured family interviews and FGD and analysed using a thematic approach. The centrality of clan identity and loyalty, a distinctive approach to managing illness and an inherent family-based system of psychosocial support emerged as main findings.

The chapter demonstrated that African families raising children with DS have a distinct way of dealing with challenges relating to the birth of a child with DS. There is an effective, efficient and sustainable culturally specific, spiritually inspired clan-based approach to addressing psychosocial challenges undergirded by inclusive communal value system and the principles enshrined in the African cosmology such as sacredness, symbolism, complementarity, appositional arrangements and a holistic, integrative view of phenomena. All the above were identified as enabling factors in African family's endeavours when raising children with DS in their specific social and cultural geography. These findings provide an eminent platform for the construction of grounded theories of Afrocentric social work appropriate and relevant to the sociocultural landscape surrounding African families raising children with DS. The existence of the culturally specific approach to addressing psychosocial challenges confronting African families raising children with DS does not in any way presuppose that there may not be dysfunctional coping mechanisms. Like in many other cultural contexts, including the

Western context where the Eurocentric approaches originated, you still find evidence of dysfunctionality despite the existence of ample contextual theoretical constructs for addressing psychosocial challenges. It is expected that some will resort to a variety of dysfunctional coping mechanisms depending on the levels of stress generated by the challenges associated with raising a child with DS versus available resources to deal with the challenges.

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# Stokvel as a contemporary concept of community of practice

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## ■ Introduction

As described by Moodley (1995) and Thomas (1991) in Irving (2005), the concept 'stokvel' is an innovation designed to generate money for a group of people who share common ideas, dreams and a similar vision. What is more, various names like '*mogodisano*', social clubs, '*gooi-goois*', investment clubs, '*kuholisana*' and '*makgotla*' are used to describe the concept 'stokvel' in the South African context. In another vein, Achemfour (2012) also pointed out that Africans in general and women in particular are the ones who often come together to form a credit-rotating scheme, popularly called stokvels in the townships and villages. Moreover, stokvels are currently used even by colleagues in various institutions and also by business people as a means of increasing the amount of money they have, in order to finance end-of-the-year activities, ceremonies or to pay their children's school fee. There is no doubt that stokvel has become a money-making scheme that is used to promote the development of self-help organisations by Africans so as to meet their expectations and needs. In this regard, Mashigo and Schoeman (2010) interestingly opened with these words:

A Stokvel can in general terms be defined as an umbrella term used to describe informal savings organisation in the African community in South Africa. Stokvels operate mainly in black areas, and have social, economic and entertainment functions. (p.1)

From the quotation, the places where the stokvel is found are described together with the many roles it is fulfilling within the groups that have embraced it. No doubt, the stokvel is described as a money-making scheme in ways that are legally allowed. A stokvel is significant in that it acts as a source of cash and security against unemployment and abject poverty. It also encourages members to even offer material goods in case they do not have cash to offer or contribute. The material goods can be in the form of groceries (non-perishables) during burials, weddings or parties. The stokvel plays an important financial role in caring for those excluded from the formal financial sectors like

insurance brokers and banking institutions. Accordingly, Schulze (1997) pointed out that:

Being deprived of the opportunity to participate in the mainstream insurance sector, has led to the development of self-help organisations by blacks to meet their expectations and needs in this regard. (p. 18)

On the other hand, Mashigo and Schoeman (2010) were also instructive when pointing out that:

A Stokvel can in general terms be defined as an umbrella term used to describe informal savings organization in the African community in South Africa. Stokvels operate mainly in black areas, and have social, economic and entertainment functions. (p. 2)

Again, from the above quotations, the concept 'stokvel' is contextualised and its many roles are described. To crown it all, Matuku and Maseke (2014) in their study revealed that:

Stokvels are self-help initiatives designed to respond to the problems of poverty and income insecurity in communities. Stokvels are thus a form of informal social security. (p. 17)

In support, Schulze (2016) also defined a stokvel with words that are insightful and also meaningful when viewed against the problems faced by the disadvantaged communities that have no access to financial institutions because she pointed out that:

A Stokvel is in essence a type of informal credit-rotating association in which a group of people enter into an agreement to contribute a fixed amount of money to a common pool on a weekly or monthly basis or as frequently as the members may agree upon. (p. 21)

In this chapter, the contributions of researchers like Schulze (1997, 2016), Mashigo and Schoeman (2010), Matuku and Maseke (2014), and many others on the topic of the stokvel are noted. However, the contributions of the present chapter are totally different, in that this chapter aims to show that the stokvel, like the community of practice, has a lot in common. The point is that the two concepts clearly incorporate the spirit of *ubuntu* in their operations albeit not exactly in the same way. Therefore, the thrust of this chapter is to present both concepts, namely, the stokvel and a community of practice as contemporaries, even

though they emerged from completely different environmental settings. Briefly, in this chapter, the aim is to show how the two concepts have almost similar objectives, despite using different approaches.

Furthermore, this chapter will show that even the elements or components that constitute each of the two concepts are also exhibiting similarities. In other words, this chapter intends to expose their commonalities or similarities with regard to their nature, structure, purpose and function. That said, their similarities seem to remind us of the old adage or the proverb that is contained in the *American Idioms Dictionary* (1987:36) which says: 'birds of the same feathers flock together' meaning that: *people of the same type seem to gather together*. To contextualise the issue, the stokvel brings together people of the same ideas just like a community of practice brings together people sharing a common goal.

However, the bone of contention is that, in the field of research, only the concept of community of practice is recognised by being used in many disciplines and by many researchers, while the concept 'stokvel' is completely overlooked. This chapter aims to popularise the stokvel as a construct having equal abilities just like the concept of community of practice.

## ■ A background perspective

From the abstract, the origin of the current concept of stokvel is traced from the term 'stock fair', which described the rotating method of auctioning cattle by the English settlers in the Eastern Cape during the early 9th century. On the other hand, Lave and Wenger (1991) dusted and polished the old concept of community of practice and made it a popular strategy in the field of research, especially in the domain of the humanities that includes the teaching profession. Our awareness of the similarities between the concepts 'community of practice' and 'the stokvel' surfaced while lecturers were supervising postgraduate students doing research studies in the College of Education. Our supervisory

tasks made us to get acquainted with the concept of community of practice, as it was regularly used by students doing research studies that involved the active participation of the community in projects meant to improve their lives.

The context in which this chapter is coached is within the discipline of education, which is found in the domain of the Social and Human Sciences. The argument raised is that the *stokvel* like the community of practice can be used by institutions of education to raise fund or to source assistance of some kind in order to uplift themselves. To give an example, in his study, Lumphoko (2014) pointed out that:

The school management teams are able to fund raise for the school and to influence parents to play an active role in the education of their children. (p. 19)

Lumphoko (2014) tried to demonstrate the fact that learning institutions do feel the need to raise funds, and they expect parents to play an active role in such projects. As already alluded to previously, the concepts of community of practice and the *stokvel* are based squarely on the concept of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* as a motive force or ground force has the power to propel a community in a particular direction. In other words, as authors, we boldly make our claim that only a community driven by the spirit of *ubuntu* can organise itself and together raise funds for its schools because, most importantly, *ubuntu* teaches that (Mathipa, Matjila & Netshitangani 2018):

The human self only exists and develops in relationships with other people [...] so we live and let live, we forgive and forget, and we give and take. (p. 66)

In this respect, the concepts of community of practice and of the *stokvel* as the embodiments of the spirit of *ubuntu* can bring together teachers, learners and parents into a unity of purpose that may successfully raise funds for their school. The key message here is the notion from Webster's *New World Dictionary of Quotations* (2005:206) that says: *United we stand (conquer) but divided we fall or we are defeated*. This is the phrase used by leaders to rally

around their follows in times of strife, a stokvel as well is like a weapon to defeat unemployment and poverty by a group of people who are united in their purpose and vision. The same applies equally to the concept of community of practice which is used to fight against adversity by a united community of people.

That said, the other contention is that the two concepts may play an important role in smoothing relationships between and among the teachers and the parents within the School Governing Body (SGB) because Duma in Thekiso (2015) argued that:

Educators and parents in school governing bodies often have uncertainties about the roles that each should play in the governance of schools. Educators have different perspectives on the role of parents, some educators appreciate it when parents are actively involved in the education of their children, while others feel that too much parental involvement will impede the smooth functioning of the school and also undermine their professionalism. (p. 2)

In this regard, both concepts, namely, the concept of community of practice and that of the stokvel, can bring learners, teachers, parents and the community at large together in a spirit of *ubuntu*, which says (Mathipa, Matjila & Netshitangani 2020):

*Ubuntu* articulates our inter-connectedness, our common humanity and the responsibility to each other that flows from our connection because [...] *ubuntu* is inspiring us to expose ourselves to others, to encounter the difference of our humanness so as to enrich our own. (p. 66)

Thus, by their ability to bring together people of different age, gender, status, qualification, creed, race, colour or orientation under the umbrella of the spirit of *ubuntu*, these concepts have the potential to play a huge role in raising funds for the institutions of education within the entire education system. Factors that motivated the authors to write this chapter are discussed further.

## ■ The motivating factors and the significance of the chapter

As authors of articles, monographs and chapters of academic books, and as supervisors of masters and doctoral students, we

often come across articles, theses and dissertations that have used the concept of community of practice to underpin their theoretical frameworks. The concept community of practice is often used when community participation is involved in fundraising processes for the schools. Sometimes, community participation takes place when the community comes together to paint the school and to clean its surroundings. To cut the long story short, a lot has been researched and written on parental participation in their children's education from an educational angle, using the concept of the community of practice.

The many written research projects on how the concept of community of practice was used to generate parental interest in their schools have motivated us to advocate for the use of the stokvel as a scheme that can also be used as a strategy for generating funds for the school. The stokvel is a legally designed tool for generating money or cash because money talks, while the Afrikaan speakers crown it by saying that '*geld maak reg wat krom is*' [money fixes everything]. In another vein, Verhoef (2002) averred that:

Cash and access to cash or credit is central to economic life. Because of its peculiar nature, cash is needed for day-to-day consumption and plays an indispensable precautionary role in the smoothing of consumption. (p. 2)

To this end, Schulze (2016) added by positing that:

A recent census has estimated the existence of some 24 000 Stokvels in major metropolitan areas attracting members' monthly contributions of around R52 Million and on a national scale the total amount of monthly contributions may well be in the region of R200 Million. (p. 23)

In this context, the significance of this chapter is to indicate the fact that stokvel has the potential to be used to generate funds for an institution of learning on a sustainable basis. In other words, by using stokvel as a fundraising process, the institutions of education could at the same time be imparting knowledge and skills to the learners/and students on how to generate money for themselves instead of aimlessly loitering or being involved in crimes like robbery, theft, fraud, hijackings and other evil activities.

Finally, the significance can be seen when the stokvel brings together teachers, parents, learners and their communities in harmony in pursuit of a common objective. The stokvel has great potential in bringing the community together in a spirit of peaceful co-existence. In a way, the stokvel can engender what Mathipa and Monyai in Mathipa et al. (2018) described as:

A culmination of the principle of unity; a maintenance of the survival instinct of the Batswana; and is also a means to conscientising people in their search for a way forward on the basis of the all-embracing principle of *ubuntu/botho*. (p. 163)

That said, what comes next is an exposition of the statement of the problem and the research questions that are driving and directing the aim and objectives of this chapter to its logical end.

## ■ Problem statement and the research questions

The problem that this chapter intends to tackle is that of providing the institutions of education with an alternative strategy for fundraising as a reliable means of augmenting their meagre financial resources. More often than not, the historically disadvantaged institutions and the non-white institutions of learning find it challenging to raise funds for their institutional upkeep. Therefore, the main research question raised in this chapter is: ‘What were the main reasons for the emergence of the stokvel?’

The subsidiary research questions for this chapter are as follows:

- Why are the financially struggling institutions of learning not using the stokvel to raise funds?
- What is the legal nature of the stokvel?
- Can the stokvel be used to improve the finances of the institutions of education?

What follows below is an exposition on the aim of the chapter and its various objectives.

## ■ Purpose of the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to sell the stokvel as a scheme that the institutions of education can utilise for a variety of reasons.

## ■ The conceptual framework underscoring the study

By employing the constructive and interpretative paradigms, the authors used the qualitative approach to conceptually interrogate the stokvel concept in terms of its origin, nature, purpose and function. The concepts underpinning this chapter are cash, finances, risks, legality, fundraising, scheme and security.

Cash and access to cash are powerful concepts that can be transformed into instruments of managing institutional risks and insecurities that often paralyse an institution of learning and render it dysfunctional. The finances of an institution of education rely on the ability of the institution to raise funds, and this article argues that the stokvel can be used as one of such fundraising schemes. Seen in this perspective, Mashigo and Schoeman (2010) were compellingly instructive when boldly arguing that:

Stokvels' current ability to meet the financial needs of poor households can be considered an opportunity to help to bridge the irreducibly uncertain economic environment which limits access to credit by the poor. Stokvels provide the opportunity for government and banks to develop mutually beneficial relationships or linkages with such informal associations to make them more effective and efficient in mobilising premiums (savings) and advancing credit to poor communities. (p. 8)

It is of no doubt that stokvels can be harnessed by institutions of education which are formal by nature to easily raise funds for themselves as does the poor informal associations. This is how the above conceptual frameworks of cash, finances, risks, legality, fundraising, scheme and security can be used by institutions of education to figure out how to manage and raise extra funds for themselves. In his inaugural address on 02 January 1961, the



former American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1961) said the following inspiring words: 'Do not ask America what it can do for you, but ask yourself what you can do for America'. Briefly, the American President was urging the American people not to fold their arms and expect the country to do things for them. In other words, he was making it clear that the prosperity of America depends entirely on their efforts. The moral of this address is that institutions of learning should not fold their arms and expect the government to do everything for them. Thus, through a stokvel or a community of practice institutions of education can in some way meet some of their financial needs rather than expect to get everything from the government.

That said, nowadays the problem is that, institutions of education expect the government to practically do everything for them without themselves making any effort to improve their lot. Hopefully, the stokvel as a scheme used effectively and efficiently by poor communities who are denied access to banks and are without jobs can inspire institutions of education to pull themselves out of financial problems through their bootstraps. The next section discusses the research methodology applied in this chapter.

## ■ The methodology of accountability

The content analytical method was used and is not empirical by nature. The content method relies heavily on literature review and lived experiences as sources of information towards data collection. Mathipa, Mampuru and Mukhari in Mathipa, Netshitangani and Matlabe (2017:35) were of the view that 'the content analysis method is used to investigate and interrogate information contained in a variety of sources [...]'. The content analysis method was used in collaboration with the hermeneutics method, which according to the submission by Higgs and Smith (2002:21), its function surfaces 'whenever we deal with other human beings, or things created by human beings, we are involved in hermeneutics'. On the other hand, Davies (2007:237)

added that ‘hermeneutics is the research activity of interpreting whatever in target situation is seen, heard, or sensed’.

The two methods of data collection were used together with common sense and the lived -experiences of the authors. This was augmented by information gathered from discussions with colleagues in the field of the education profession. A lot of reflection went into weighing issues and in choosing the best ones from competing alternatives. The next section presents the data that were collected using the above research questions and research methods.

## ■ Data collection

The following data were collected by using the main research question which read thus: ‘Why are the financially struggling institutions of learning not using the stokvel to raise funds?’

The answers are varied and straightforward, and they are:

- lack of knowledge of what a stokvel is
- lack of knowledge on how stokvels operate
- lack of knowledge of the fact that a stokvel is a legally recognised scheme
- fear of using stokvel as a fundraising scheme because of the mere fact that the Department of Education does not recognise it
- the fact that a stokvel has never been used by institutions of learning in the past, so it is somehow risky.

The following are the answers sourced using the subsidiary research questions. The first sub-question read thus: ‘What could have been the main reasons for the emergence of the stokvel?’

From the research report by Matuku and Kaseke (2014:1), the collected data about the main reasons why the stokvels emerged are hereunder given in a modified or expanded way as follows:

- A stokvel emerged as a self-help initiative that was designed to respond to the problems of poverty and income insecurities.
- A stokvel came about as a form of informal social security.

- A stokvel came into being as a means to enable members to meet their basic needs.
- A stokvel emerged as a means of providing members with opportunities to save and invest, and ultimately to accumulate assets.
- A stokvel came about as a medium that was able to promote the empowerment of women.

These points or factors are of an important nature because they are universal and can apply even to the institutions of education that are constantly experiencing financial constraints and hardships.

The second sub-question reads as follows: 'What is the legal nature of the stokvel?'

Schulze (1997) expanded by stating that stokvels are:

- Legal schemes because they emerged as a response to the inequalities of the past in which the rich continue to become richer while the poor are becoming poorer.
- Legal schemes for they emerged as a reaction to the economic principles of discrimination, exclusion and exploitation which continue to make financial markets and institutions to be the exclusive playing ground for a privileged elite few.
- Legal schemes as they emerged because the banking sector was not assisting the poor financially.
- Legal schemes because they emerged among black communities as a strategy to assist poor families with financial aid in, for instance, celebrations of weddings and parties, and also in vital and serious unforeseen events like burials and sicknesses.

The last and final sub-question reads thus: 'Can the stokvel improve the finances of the institutions of education?'

If the stokvel can assist the poor financially and also in kind, then there is no reason why it cannot help the financially hard-pressed institutions of education to raise funds in order to finance

some of their programmes and activities. All that is needed is for the Department of Education to adopt it and also design parameters for its effective use by the institutions of learning. The above said, the intention was not to try and exhaust everything, but to merely indicate how a stokvel can be utilised to generate funds. The context in which the stokvel has emerged within the black communities which are by and large excluded from accessing funds from the banks and insurance facilities was also broadly canvassed.

The next section is about data analysis and interpretation in order to ascertain whether or not the stokvel can be one of the answers to the financially needy institutions of education.

## ■ Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis was done by way of critically examining, scrutinising and probing the responses that were gathered through the use of the research questions. As per the research methodology, the answers to the research questions were mostly sourced from the reviewed literature. To this end, data gathered from the first research question indicated that stokvels could be used even by institutions of education. This can be done by using a well-structured approach that is even more controlled and regulated by the Department of Education as happens generally with other important issues. Seen from this context, a simple manner of interpreting the above research finding is that: *The Department of Education should take time to explore, interrogate, assess and evaluate whether the use of a stokvel by institutions of learning could be a possible scheme of generating funds for themselves.*

Data that were gathered using the second research question pointed out that the stokvel emerged as a reaction to the financial hardships experienced by mostly poor black communities in South Africa. Similarly, the historically disadvantaged institutions of education which are serving mostly black communities, just

like the black communities who are having financial challenges, could also use the stokvel to address some of their financial needs. From reviewed literature, there are clear examples of how the stokvel has assisted poor communities in addressing their financial challenges. Therefore, the interpretation could be that stokvels have the potential to help the institutions having financial challenges to cope without every time expecting the Department of Education to do everything for them.

The third research question's response when analysed shows that the stokvels are regarded as legal institutions with a good standing in law. In other words, the stokvel is a legitimate scheme to use when raising funds and it is not a scam or rip-off. The interpretation could be that a stokvel can be used openly and officially to raise funds by educational institutions.

The last research question's response clearly indicated that the stokvel can surely improve the financial position of the institutions of education as it did for the poor black communities who were excluded from financial markets, the banking and insurance sectors of the land. Schulze (2016) instructively pointed out that:

Most, if not all, Stokvels have elected officials to take care of records, to bank the funds generated by way of contributions by members, and to perform other administrative functions. (p. 22)

By electing office bearers, the members are indeed formalising the stokvel into becoming a contractual agreement between the registered members. Accordingly, Schulze (2016:32) emphasised the fact that 'the stokvel has legal standing in Common Law and Customary Law, but does not have legal personality'. However, only its officials are, therefore, allowed to litigate on its behalf as they are the ones who are legally liable. This means that the institutions of learning which desire to use the stokvel as a means of raising funds will have to do so by involving the most senior personnel in their institutions. The next subheading deals with the tabulation of the components that constitute a stokvel.

## ■ The components of the concept of stokvel

1. It is a voluntary association that is legal because it constitutes a contractual agreement between members.
2. A stokvel is a contractually legal scheme used mostly to raise funds.
3. It has the potential to address financial challenges.
4. It is a legal means of promoting networking, partnership and collaboration.
5. It empowers women and, in so doing, introduces them into the economy of the country as stakeholders with their own assets.
6. It affords members the opportunity to socialise and to be entertained.
7. A stokvel is a legal means or strategy for the eradication of poverty.
8. It is a legal means towards the realisation of equality and equity.
9. A stokvel is a popular institution that has outstanding credentials and an impressive record that has stood the test of time and found to be exceptional and stupendous.

## ■ The main features and components of the concept community of practice

Firstly, the main features of the concept of community of practice would be illustrated by way of being tabulated as follows:

1. **Its domain:** A community of practice is not a mere club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest.
2. **Its community:** In pursuing a common interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other.
3. **Its practice:** Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems, in short, a shared practice.

From the National Learning Infrastructure Initiative at EDUCAUSE,<sup>23</sup> the Bridging VCOP; the American Association for Higher Education<sup>24</sup> and communities of practice<sup>25</sup> are important because their components are listed as to:

1. **Connect people** who might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact, either partially or fully.
2. **Provide a shared** context for people to communicate and share information, stories and personal experiences in a way that builds understanding and provides insight.
3. **Stimulate learning** by serving as a vehicle for authentic communication, mentoring, coaching and self-reflection.
4. **Create or enable dialogue** between people who come together to explore new possibilities, solve challenging problems and create new, mutually beneficial opportunities.
5. **Introduce collaboration** processes to groups and organisations as well as between organisations to encourage the free flow of ideas and exchange of information.
6. **Help people** organise themselves around purposeful actions that deliver tangible results.
7. **Generate new knowledge** to help people transform their practice to accommodate changes in needs and technologies.
8. **Capture and diffuse** existing knowledge to help people transform their practice by providing a forum to identify solutions to common problems and a process to collect and evaluate best practices.

The components provided above are the trademarks distinguishing a community of practice from other approaches. These trademarks given in Table 12.1 will be used to determine the similarities existing between its components and those of the stokvel.

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23. See <https://www.educause.edu/iii>.

24. See <http://www.aahe.org>.

25. See <http://www.icohere.com>.

**TABLE 12.1:** The similarities of the components of the two concepts.

Similarities	Stokvel	Community of practice
1.	Forming voluntary associations.	Connecting people.
2.	Generating cash.	Generating new knowledge and ideas.
3.	Initiating self-help projects.	Financially helping one another.
4.	Forming partnerships, networks and collaborations.	Introducing collaborations.
5.	Promoting social friendships and organising entertainments.	Promoting dialogue.
6.	Providing women with opportunities for self-empowerment.	Providing a shared vision.
7.	Stimulating the grassroots economy through the participation by the poor or the less privileged.	Stimulating learning.

**TABLE 12.2:** Differences between the components of the two concepts.

Differences	Stokvel	Community of practice
1.	It involves mostly the poor section of the population.	It involves all the members of the community.
2.	It is mostly a fundraising scheme.	It can be used to tackle any economical/financial problem faced by the community.
3.	It aims to eradicate financial inequalities or disparities.	It is for addressing all problems without exception.

In Table 12.1 and Table 12.2, the idea was not to exhaust the list but to indicate components or elements that are similar or different. Below are the research findings, recommendations and conclusions.

## ■ Research findings and recommendations

Seen in the light of the collected data from the research questions, analysis and interpretation of the data, the following research findings were revealed in this chapter:

1. A stokvel can indeed generate cash for the financially challenged institutions of education.



2. A stokvel has the potential to initiate self-help schemes or projects to generate funds.
3. A stokvel is capable of bringing institutions of education together in the form of voluntary associations that are geared at assisting each other in raising funds.
4. A stokvel can promote networking, partnerships, collaborations and friendships that are committed to assist each other in raising funds.
5. A stokvel can stimulate institutions of education to promote the financial standing of their institutions through joint projects.

Logically speaking, the following recommendations can be made from the above research findings and they are as follows:

1. Stokvel is made an option for use mostly by the poor and financially challenged institutions of education.
2. The historically advantaged institutions should take the historically disadvantaged institutions by hand and form partnerships that would mutually benefit both through a variety of money-generating projects.
3. The stokvel can be used to reduce the problem of dependency among communities by empowering the SGBs to raise funds and maintain their own schools.
4. Institutions of education should stimulate each other through collaboration and mentorship activities that use stokvel schemes to generate funds.
5. Learners are provided with skills to raise funds for their sport activities.
6. The stokvel is promoted by all, concerned in the institutions of education, as a strategy to generate funds in a well-managed and controlled manner that allows no corruption.

## ■ Conclusion

After coming out with the above research findings and recommendations, the logical conclusions to make are that the

chapter has succeeded in making a good case for the adoption of the stokvel as a fundraising scheme by the institutions of education. Finally, this chapter urges the leadership of institutions of education to think laterally because thinking, unlike linear thinking, allows people to think out of the box, while linear thinking does not. Precisely, linear thinking is logical, systematic and sequential in nature, whereas lateral thinking is multifaceted and convergent in nature, and as such, it allows for creative and innovative thinking to take place. The stokvel needs our lateral thinking process more than the usual linear one.

## ■ Summary

The chapter explored the concept and practice of stokvel and its use within a community of practice. Using a stokvel in a community of practice in educational institutions can help teachers, administrators, parents and learners to build networking communities, while generating much-needed funds. It also helps in forming a partnership between historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions of education to coordinate ideas and learning, as well as use the stokvel to promote fundraising for the benefit of children's learning.



# Decolonisation of social work research: An exploratory application

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## ■ Introduction

Social work researchers are entrusted with navigating between practice and research. Much of the research social workers conduct is on those who are most marginalised, oppressed or who otherwise are not held in regard to having valued knowledge. In research, social workers can forget the practice of strengths-

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based perspective and the elevation of the assets, knowledge and ways of doing and knowing. Further, social workers can forget during research their ethics of social justice in regards to the use of a person's knowledge as paramount. Social work researchers can sometimes position the strengths and knowledge of the peoples they are studying as secondary to the problem. Social work researchers find themselves in a quandary as the research they do does not meet their ethical practical guidelines.

Ethically, social work practitioners must consider the strengths of each individual they work with and also the strengths of community and systems (Kim & Whitehill-Bolton 2013). Practitioners, therefore, do the work of elevating the assets, knowledge and ways of doing and knowing (Kim & Whitehill-Bolton 2013). The elevation of such strengths helps change the dynamic from only fixing the problem to using the strengths of people to change the problem. Using held assets or strengths helps social workers position individuals and their communities in a different light. In practice and research, the positioning of assets/strengths can allow the people's rich, dynamic strengths and knowledge to be used in ways that create peoples' own sustainable answers to problems within their own context.

Social work research, however, often studies people to understand problems and/or studies interventions to understand the effect of the interventions on the problems. In these studies, peoples' ideas, thoughts, strengths, assets or knowledge are often not utilised in any portion of the research. Here there is a division between social work practice ethics and research ethics. The division can be an important one in order to adhere to Western, scientific views of what is correct and factual. However, the division can also have social workers further subjugating those who are being studied as important only in their problems not in their capacity to solve the problems. There are several ways in which social work researchers can decolonise research and help to elevate the knowledge held within these populations. One methodology is the use of participatory research methods.

In an ongoing study in South Africa in a rural area of Malawi, CBPAR was the chosen method to incorporate co-researchers in design, research subject and ways to co-produce and capture knowledge. A preliminary finding from year 3 shows the ways in which social work researchers can use their *practice skills* of reflective and reflexivity to ensure the elevation of IK, potentially furthering the decolonisation of social work.

## ■ Theoretical background

### ■ Strengths-based theory

Strengths-based theory is fundamentally a Western approach to social work practice and research that positions the social problem in a very specific way. Historically and prior to strength-based perspectives in social work, approaches to solve a person's problem was to see the problem as intrinsic to the person and therefore the change needed to happen by the person to change *their* problem. Here the focus is on all that a person is lacking, unable to do or needing help with. In strengths-based theory, however, the problem is framed as outside of the person, because of lack of access to opportunities and the ways in which systems oppress or marginalise people (Hammond & Zimmerman 2012).

Strengths-based theory categorises the problems as part of the systemic, cultural, social, political and economic structures. The approach is holistic to the person that labels can further hurt rather than help and that social workers might work with clients and communities with their strengths and assets at the forefront (Kim & Whitehill-Bolton 2013). In typical strengths-based practice, a social worker would identify the strengths a client and their community possess to help the social worker and client to then know-how these strengths can change the problem. In other words, the client would use their strengths to help remedy the problem. Additionally, the community would also support the individual in addition to recognising the larger structural or

system changes that need to happen to help the community as a whole (Kim & Whitehill-Bolton 2013).

In a decolonised approach, strengths are used to solve problems but instead of only considering the individual, the strengths of a community as a whole are considered. Decolonisation using strengths-based theory encompasses using a community's knowledge and expertise based on historical, generational and iterative practices (Duara 2004). It further allows the community's knowledge to stand on its own as viable, factual and real and to be as relevant and as true as Western tested knowledge (Duara 2004; Ross 2018; Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Decolonised strengths-based perspective acknowledges, positions and privileges IK for healing as part of an integration of community, the earth and the spiritual world (Duara 2004).

The promotion of strength-based theory might help focus on the strengths of peoples and communities, even elevating Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing as desirable and valuable to the work that social workers do in practice and research. It might help reframe a problem or a strength through an Indigenous framework using the knowledge that is separate from their colonised history.

## ■ Reflective practice in research

Reflection and reflective practice is one that social workers readily use as a core framework. In reflective practice and research, social workers must think about their own thoughts, feelings, privileges and biases to understand at any given time, how these are influencing their practice. It includes the ideas that life experiences, culture and class inform the views of social workers and the views of clients and their communities. Reflective practice checks assumptions, connects and interacts with and learns about clients and their communities. The reflection occurs when the social worker in practice thinks about the difference between their own orientation to the world and their own bias

and how they might differ from the client and community. Reflection is an important compliment to participatory and action forms of research. In these participatory/action types of research, the process of research with co-researchers considers the influences of assumptions between the researchers as part of the research process (Reed, Davis & Nyabanyaba 2002). Reflection using decolonised and IK frames would be based less on an internal, individualised process and more on a collective process using oral communication.

## ■ Reflexive practice in research

In social work practice and research, the follow-up to reflection is reflexive practice. Being *reflexive* is taking the information you gathered, reflecting on how it informs your practice and *then providing an action that is informed by the reflection* – called *reflexivity*. In the case of research, in CBPAR or other participatory research methods, reflection and reflexivity do not seem to be discussed in the literature or conducted as a step in research. The social work practice of reflection and reflexivity could have influential outcomes for decolonised social work research.

As a use in research, reflexivity should promote actions that investigate the researchers own power and how that power can undermine the knowledge that they hold, the positions they hold and how that is conveyed during research, while also considering the institutional effects of the knowledge and how it is conveyed (D’Cruz, Gillinham & Melendez 2007). To decolonise research, social work researchers would reflect on the ways in which knowledge is collected, analysed and shared. Further, decolonising considers in which context and for whom and then to take action that is specific to this reflection, to reflexively orient the knowledge in ways that are responsive to and meaningful for those who will use it. The process in decolonised social work research would be iterative and largely oral and share tacit knowledge as fact.



## ■ Decolonised social work research

Social work practice and research in Africa is largely influenced by Western epistemologies and Eurocentric ways of producing and replicating knowledge. Even with strengths-based practice as a paradigm and reflection and reflexivity skills being taught and used, social problems and interventions are from a Western and Eurocentric ontology. The positioning of the ways in which social workers interact with clients, families and communities can be a recolonisation of them, if social workers do not orient to using strengths-based perspective and reflective and reflexive practice that responds to ontology of the people in Africa. Using reflection and reflexivity in practice, one can potentially add to the decolonisation of research (and thus practice, if we follow that research informs practice and practice informs research) with African peoples and the social problems they are working to solve. Additionally, using an Afro-sensed approach to inquiry and approaching IK as equal to Western knowledge also decolonises social work research (Shokane & Masoga 2018).

## ■ Afro-sensed and Indigenous Knowledge System approaches

Afro-sensed approach refers to the ideas put forth by Masoga (2017; cf. Shokane & Masoga 2018) about an orientation to:

[O]ne's innate awareness, a 'sense', of one's identify, that is, being African; without making it 'centric', at the exclusion of all else, implicating oneself in another hierarchical regime structure, where one is better than another. (p. 7)

In other words, for research, orienting the ways of gathering data, the ways of knowing and knowledge production would include African local ways of this knowledge production. In this, IK becomes an additional way of knowing and producing knowledge as well as an approach to conducting research.

The use of IK in research is wrought with difficulty, especially given that a co-researcher and/or funders are often from the westernised view that scientific knowledge is true and correct, while IK is alternative knowledge built on non-scientific methodologies. Likewise, the co-researcher or those who are being studied are often holders of this same IK (Islam & Banda 2011; Muhammad et al. 2015; Ngulube 2003). Decolonising includes the acceptance, transmission and use of IK and Afro-sensed perspective during research. It includes not only the held knowledge that might be beneficial in the research but also the way in which the IK is transmitted as a way in which it can be included in methodological research epistemology (Ngulube 2003; Nobles et al. 2016).

Research methodologies that are participatory and action based can be a way to be sure to take an Afrocentric approach to inquiry. For example, CBPAR can use co-researchers with IK so that they are intimately involved with the inquiry and are acting as agents of inquiry as opposed to being agents who are the subject of investigation (Muhammad et al. 2015; Shokane & Masoga 2018). The use of CBPAR and co-researchers holding IK can be an act of decolonisation (Pyles & Svistova 2015).

Using Afro-sensed perspective and IKS situates them as paramount knowledge that suggests a move away from Western, scientific and/or generalisation of knowledge as the only knowledge (Islam & Banda 2011; Masoga 2017; Shokane, Masoga & Blitz 2020). Indigenous Knowledge embraces the knowledge that is made, used and part of day-to-day knowing, doing and being that is passed on through generations in local communities (Masoga, 2005). Altogether, it situates the researchers and the knowledge as owners of and producers of new knowledge.

Indigenous Knowledge is set apart as a knowledge system that is different in its worldview and is organised in ways that make sense to a specific, dynamic and adaptive, holistic, local community context (eds. Boven & Morohashi 2002; Breidlid 2009; Islam &

Banda 2011). Likewise, altogether, decolonisation happens when local contexts and the knowledge held in these local contexts are shared as valuable and equal to Western scientific knowledge (Nobles et al. 2016; Shokane & Masoga 2018).

## ■ Summary of the current study

The current study is a three-year qualitative study and a CBPAR study in three rural communities in Malawi, Africa. With a long history of colonisation and recolonisation, Malawi is one of the world's financially poorest countries, with periods of drought and flooding caused by climate change, large-scale famine because of lack of access to subsistence farming caused by climate change, human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)-related crisis and deaths of a 'middle generation' and children orphaned because of AIDS (Ministry of Health 2020; World Bank 2020). The setting is within a community school for children orphaned because of AIDS and community members and Mafumu (chiefs) from three surrounding villages (Blitz et al. 2018). The ongoing study continues as a qualitative study and a CBPAR study.

In years 1 and 2, the qualitative case study suggested findings around ongoing trauma for children and their caretakers (Blitz et al. 2018; Lee, Blitz & Srnka 2015). Beginning in year 2, the larger study included a CBPAR component for teachers, staff and some community members around trauma-informed care. As part of the study, co-researchers identified ongoing issues around children's behaviour and trauma causing this behaviour (Blitz et al. 2018; Lee et al. 2015). Co-researchers from the United States and from Malawi (from the community school) suggested from their CBPAR findings several action steps: community/school interaction on a more regular basis to help share information, child rearing and teaching practices, a women-run

soap-making business at the school, a young women's initiative at the school and professional development for school staff by the US social work researchers (Blitz et al. 2018). The latter action is the subject of this chapter: professional development by the US social work researchers for Malawian school personnel and co-researchers.

## ■ **Preliminary finding: Action step of community-based participatory action research**

The finding related to the CBPAR action of trauma-informed care professional development is the subject of this chapter. The finding initially positions the expertise in a Western context and perceived elevation of that expertise. The finding itself shows that the expertise, even in a carefully crafted CBPAR study, can still unintentionally position the Western expertise over the co-researchers' own expertise - Afro-sensed and Indigenous (Shokane et al. 2020; Muhammad et al. 2015).

In years 1 and 2, part of the research was with core research staff and teachers of the community school in trauma-informed care. The research was conducted as participatory, in that Malawian co-researchers suggested the need for understanding of trauma as it is related to the ongoing extreme poverty, orphaned children who had witnessed one or both parents dying of AIDS with little healthcare and the ongoing risks associated with living with limited resources including food, access to clean water, housing and schooling (Blitz et al. 2018, 2020; Lee et al. 2015). Findings from years 1 and 2 of the study suggested an action of professional development to be conducted by the Western researchers, because of their expertise in trauma-informed care (Blitz et al. 2018, 2020). In this study, trauma-informed care was from a Western perspective on defining trauma and the ways in which you care for trauma in individuals.

Trauma-informed care from a Western perspective is the idea that all individuals have had trauma in their lives and that at any given time or with any new event, a person can be re-traumatised. Therefore, organisations (hospitals, community centers, etc.) consider trauma-informed care to include physical environments that support relaxation, the use of a person's own coping mechanisms, and supports in place in all areas of a person's life to help remediate the trauma (Oral et al. 2016). Trauma-informed care is a holistic type of treatment, in that supports are put into place to support the whole person at the individual level.

The trauma-informed care training was requested from Malawian school staff, after the findings showed difficulty working with children who may have had traumatic experiences. In the third year, trauma-informed professional development was scheduled to be conducted as an action effort with co-researchers as presenters and as audience. The professional development was oriented in a Western knowledge base on trauma-informed care but included a positioning of care in the lived context of Malawian co-researchers and school staff.

## ■ **Use of Afro-sensed/Indigenous Knowledge to reposition the action step**

Prior to the action of professional development during year 3, ongoing research continued between Malawian, South African and United States researchers around trauma-informed care as well as additional research efforts concerning community, IK, community schooling and a rainwater catchment project (Blitz et al. 2020). As the research was continuing in the form of data collection contemporaneously as the CBPAR action step of professional development prep, an important finding came about. This finding showed that while Western ideas about trauma-informed care which were being planned for presentation during the professional development, the presentation might come in

direct disagreement to Indigenous ways of knowing in the school and the communities. In this, social work practice and research using an Afro-sensed approach became an important component in providing ways to elevate the IK during the action steps of the CBPAR research.

## ■ Using reflectiveness and reflexivity in decolonised social work research

The finding as outlined previously showed that the community and school adult caretakers all provided local, community and Indigenous ways of providing trauma support and care. With these iterative, preliminary findings, the co-researchers met on several occasions to discuss these as it was related to the action part of research for professional development.

The first step included reflection by a US researcher, as main presenter of the trauma-informed care professional development and the Western ontology that was brought to the training (Bennet, Zubrzycki & Bacon 2011). As a social work practitioner and researcher, reflection was used to examine what was being observed and shared through interviews and focus groups about the ways in which children were taught and cared for. Secondly, the US researcher shared this reflection with co-researchers from South Africa, Malawi and the United States to understand if this was a perception or a shared understanding from the data being collected. The reflection now included multiple perspectives and ways of knowing, including Indigenous ontology. Here the reflection used the data collected, recognising the myriad of ways in which children were guided daily to promote health, well-being and active learning. In this, orally based co-reflection by researchers became a starting point to decolonisation of research attending to reflection including critical self-awareness and recognition of power dynamics (Bennet et al. 2011). Also of importance in the decolonisation during reflection was understanding the incongruity between Western scientific

knowledge and IK, especially given the context of research. In this case, decolonisation potentially further occurred, because the reflection included the understanding of how the action component of research could have far reaching and damaging practice implications for students if only a westernised training for trauma-informed care was offered.

There are dilemmas involved in using Western-based practice, knowledge and research within an Indigenous context (Bredlid 2009). The dilemmas are complex and can include the following: (1) A mismatch of meaning and understanding of a problem as an actual problem (in this case child trauma), (2) the way in which it is problem solved (in this case, one way was through trauma-informed care professional development), (3) the understanding of how meaning is made and then replicated, and (4) the way in which 'fact' is held.

In this study, it was found that the Western knowledge around trauma-informed care was potentially supplanting the IK. In this case, that could have detrimental effects to owning the IK as true and relevant. Further, it could hurt the children when the adults used Western approaches to trauma care. Here, the reflection and reflexivity came into play to help circumvent the use of Western only knowledge by a proactive planning intervention that is based on IK. In this case, being reflective and reflexive helped to circumvent mistakes or remedy them, especially when there was a mismatch between held knowledge of the community and the knowledge of a social work practitioner-researcher.

## ■ Explanation of the preliminary finding

As the chapter is about preliminary findings and is more conceptual in nature, a brief overview will provide examples of the ways in which children were guided and supported to show the data collected and the items that were reflected on.

Throughout the day, while in school, observational data showed that children engaged in learning and supported through

the use of their minds, bodies, spiritual/religious and with one another during planned and unplanned learning activities. Examples of this include use of multi-modality learning in the classroom, use of multiple subject integration during a planned lesson, use of movement during class times and use of peer-to-peer support during classroom instruction. Outside of the classroom, during unplanned learning in the school and community, children were supported through use of their bodies, play and work socially supported by elders and peers, and through spiritual/religious songs, dances and proverbs. These are suggested in the literature to be forms of trauma-informed care and are culturally relevant trauma-informed care (Banda 2008; Hill et al. 2010; Payne, Levine & Crane-Godreau 2015). Altogether, the children's minds, bodies and spirits were potentially processing trauma on a daily basis in their school and communities and were doing so with adult guidance and support in a mix of primarily IK with some westernised approaches to trauma care. Interview and focus group data supported the observational data.

Therefore, the researchers together recognised that the Western approach to trauma-informed care that was to be provided to the co-researchers and school personnel (through professional development) might supplant these Indigenous ways of caring for children who had trauma as part of their childhood experiences. Here all of the co-researchers began discussing, reflecting and member checking; all the ways, each had witnessed and collected similar data about Indigenous ways to support trauma-informed care.

As the discussion proceeded, the planned action of westernised trauma-informed care professional development was also reflected on to compare and contrast Indigenous trauma care and Western forms of trauma care. The discussion promoted reflexivity planning in action to promote the use of and elevation of Indigenous forms of trauma-informed care, instead of the planned Western ontology to trauma-informed care professional development. Here, research decision-making and the action of



knowledge creation for practice were critical to changing outcomes for both teaching staff and the children who are under their care (Bennet et al. 2010).

Through the reflection it was found that the IK included ways of coping that are based on locality and specific to a local community (Shokane et al. 2020). Storytelling, song, dance, spirituality and narrative sharing can be a source of coping as well as the South African way of collectively sharing in care ‘*ubuntu*’ (Bacchus 2008; Ishengoma 2005; Nobles et al. 2016; Shokane & Masoga 2018). *Ubuntu* is a term in South Africa to describe that no individual is by himself/herself an individual but through the relationships with others that all are dependent on each other so that each individual can realise their potential and true spirits goodwill (Ross 2018). In essence, it means that all things in the world are connected, and others’ hardships or blessings are connected to our own hardships and blessings; therefore, we work together to make the best outcomes for all.

## ■ **Action step for use of Indigenous, Afro-sensed knowledge**

The Indigenous expertise of trauma-informed care was used as the main component of the professional development, while the delivery was in a narrative form with collective sharing of perspectives, knowledge and ways of Indigenous care. Here because of the reflexivity during the research process, the training was turned on its head so that it was provided in an Indigenous manner with IK. Additionally, the use of oral tradition was an added way to decolonise professional development as an Indigenous method of delivery of knowledge. In this, the oral knowledge delivery helped the co-researchers and teaching staff be fully present in their learning and make connections to real-life events and ways that IK was informing Indigenous ways of caring for and supporting children through trauma (Ishengoma 2005).

## ■ Conclusion

Social workers are ethically bound in both practice and research to elevate strengths and assets. During research, it is critical to provide equal, if not increase, opportunities for IK sharing. Decolonising social work research means in many, if not most cases, that IK needs to be elevated over Western and European epistemologies. In this, the practice skills of reflection and reflexivity should be used during research to ensure that holistic knowledge that is considering the ways in which Western ontology covers or forgets the IK. Reflection allows the social work researcher to think about their own perspective, power and understanding of a problem as one avenue and to consider other ways of understanding the problem or area of research. Further, using reflexivity helps promote action that uses IK (all of the ways of knowing, being, doing, and producing and sharing knowledge). Decolonisation can potentially begin to happen as social worker's researchers consider other than Western ontology and, instead, use an Afro-sensed approach to their research.

## ■ Summary

In the chapter, an ongoing qualitative and CBPAR research study in a rural school and community in Malawi, Africa, yielded an action step of professional development by a Western-trained social worker from the United States on trauma-informed care. However, preliminary, on-the-ground findings suggested that adults at the school and in the community were providing Indigenous, local care to children daily. The Malawian, South Africa, and the US researchers were able to apply reflection to the new data collected and how the IK in the form of care needed to be elevated as superior. Further reflection yielded reflexivity, whereby researchers together decided to use an Indigenous action and IK in place of the planned action of Western trauma-informed care as professional development. The Indigenous action of professional development included oral dialogue and

storytelling of IK. The elevation of both the Indigenous action and IK supported a decolonised research action step. Exploration of reflection and reflexivity might be used by social work researchers as a technique to promote decolonisation. Further reflection allowed the team to understand that the research might have been further decolonised to suggest that the use of professional development was a Western approach and also understand the ways in which 'trauma' might have or have not been part of a collective worldview by the IK holders in the community and school.

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This book explores the value of advancing the course for multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary perspectives, methodologies, theories and epistemologies of knowledge pathing. The discourse on knowledge pathing remains critical in advancing debates and dialogues in the humanities and social sciences spaces of research and studies. This book makes a significant contribution to the scholarly understanding of indigenous knowledge research by focusing on problematising local indigenous community research from Afro-sensed perspectives. The field of indigenous knowledge research and higher education in Africa is complex. Yet, across the continent, higher education has been the sector to least embrace Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) or regard indigenous science as a legitimate source of inspiration for the development of youth and local communities. Higher education institutions and local indigenous communities should thus generate knowledge and power through research. On the other hand, higher education researchers should use their research processes and skills for cross-beneficiation when engaging local indigenous communities. This book embodies the current discourse on decolonisation and the use of indigenous knowledge in research, and is intended for research specialists in the field of indigenous knowledge systems.

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The book enhances to the existing literature, scholarship and discourse on knowledge pathing in the field humanities and social sciences. The book also delivers the reader with clear thoughtful of indigenous knowledge research, its challenges and prospects in the era of globalisation. This book diagnoses and concedes the fact that much of the history of research in indigenous knowledge was piloted by foreign researchers who did not understand the African indigenous ethics, worldviews, cosmologies, epistemologies, philosophical frameworks and the significance of indigenous languages. Research in the past was used to dictate, ostracise the indigenous communities, dismiss and deride local knowledge systems. It highlights the fact that most of higher institutions of higher learning in Africa are still well-ordered and dominated by Western oriented academics and intellectuals who do not have the aspiration, strategies, policies and programmes in IKS, hence the need for decolonisation and transformation. This book provides uncontested evidence of the value of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in higher institutions of learning and the community. The book addresses and demystifies the public opinion that Africa does not have its own science, philosophical frameworks, worldviews, etc. The book is a must read for IKS ambassadors, researchers, scientists, educators to proof that indigenous knowledge research is relevant and will contribute colossally to the global knowledge economy. The future of indigenous knowledge research is in the hands of indigenous communities, indigenous knowledge holders and practitioners in partnership, collaboration with higher institutions of learning, research and scientific councils.

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