

THE TEACHING OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AS A TOOL FOR CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION AND AFRICANISATION

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ABSTRACT

The debate on teaching of indigenous knowledge and its associated benefits has been recognised for a long time. Not much has been said about how the teaching of IK in both theory and practice can be tailor made for any subject of scientific enquiry. At the same time, the debate on curriculum transformation and Africanisation has made it critical for scholars and students alike to seriously consider IK as a catalyst in education that can empower communities to participate in their educational development since it respects diversity and acknowledges the challenge of hegemony of Western Eurocentric forms of universal knowledge.¹ This paper comprises of a literature study focusing on the role the teaching of IK in transforming the education system in Africa, which in many respects is out of touch with the realities of respective communities. The paper also draws from the experience of the author, who teaches at one of the IKS Centres in South Africa. The paper concludes with a realisation that African Universities and the education sector as a whole must become a vehicle for improving the socio-economic and political landscape of its people.

Keywords: indigenous knowledge (IK), curriculum transformation, Africanisation, decolonization, Ubuntu, African knowledge systems

1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is a fast-growing field of inquiry at both national and international level. At the same time there

has been a robust debate on curriculum transformation and Africanisation. In South Africa, full degree programmes on IK at both undergraduate and postgraduate level are already being offered at different universities. In some cases, these courses are offered as electives in other programmes. Students from across all scientific enquiry areas are using IK courses to understand the context of their knowledge fields especially those that define their upbringing as African people. In true fashion for the call of transformation of the Africanisation of knowledge, students and academics are demanding a shift from Eurocentric knowledge systems. Most African academics and their students have started vigorously to question the definition of IK. This is the case notwithstanding the fact that this debate has been ongoing in the past and current academic discourse.

There is no universally acceptable definition of IK. The definition of IK is mostly influenced by context and in most cases; Eurocentric scholars seek to understand it as a cognitive system that is alien to them. According to Noyoo, the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) refers to the complex set of knowledge, skills and technologies existing and developed around specific conditions of population and communities indigenous to the particular geographic area.² IKS constitutes the knowledge that people in a given community have developed over time and continue to develop. This is contrary to the Eurocentric context where IK is interchangeably defined as traditional knowledge (TK) which suggests an unchanged old and static body of knowledge that has been passed from generation to generation. This is not how IK is perceived in the African context. The Eurocentric approach only targets knowledge, practices and techniques used by indigenous peoples, recording their local names, and cataloguing their reported

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¹ V Msila, 'Africanisation of Education and the Search for Relevance and Context' (2009) *Education Research and Review*, 315.

² N Noyoo, *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Their Relevance for Sustainable Development* (2007) A Case of Southern Africa.

uses.³ The teaching of IK is thus biased through this cognitive process. African scholarship has now started to go deep into an enquiry that proves this bias. Beyond the pursuit of knowledge, many scholars are now seeking to ensure that the African voice is heard. The understanding that African challenges need to be viewed within the context of African solutions has become paramount.

Related to the above, Africanisation is now understood as a renewed focus on Africa and it entails salvaging what has been stripped from the continent.⁴ It is a process of restoring the original 'living or people's science' as per the earlier discussion. No one can deny that IK has been negatively affected by colonialism. Africanisation is a regeneration of that which was good and respected in African culture.⁵ The realisation that Africa and its people existed in contemporary peace and harmony before colonialism prompts the need to investigate how this was experienced. Colonialism was holistic and cross-cutting in nature. All aspects of life were affected with the most dangerous trend being that Africans were voluntarily and, in many cases, forced to abandon their entranced knowledge systems under the impression of it being labelled barbaric, backward and ungodly. IK was vilified. Ramose⁶ opines that for the colonial conqueror and successor in title thereto, the indigenous conquered peoples had neither an epistemology nor a philosophy worth including in any educational curriculum. For many decades, the African values have been marginalised by an education system in favour of Western values only.⁷ As early as the 18th century, the coloniser was intent on disposing the blacks of anything African.⁸ In South Africa, the 'Bantu education' system for black Africans had been a means of restricting the development of the learners by distorting school knowledge and ensuring control over the intellect of the learners and teachers.⁹ Africanisation is thus a viable proposition to

change this state of affairs. There is a call for a regeneration of that which was good and respected in African culture, as well as a rejection of sub-service to foreign masters and the assertion of the rights and interests of the African.¹⁰ Colonisation has caused multigenerational trauma.¹¹

Notwithstanding this, African knowledge systems have a rich heritage in that they have shaped and defined the way of life for African people for many centuries. It is because of the nature of the 'way of life' that IK refused to die and be erased from the face of the earth. IK is gradually being re-evaluated and it is considered an inspiring source of strategies for sustainable development.¹² African knowledge systems have the potential to contextualise any knowledge field to the environment it is offered. It presents a system that would meaningfully involve students in the discovery of their own environment.¹³ Thus, it was difficult to completely erase it from the face of the earth despite the best efforts of the colonial master. Post-independence, many African countries have battled to realise economic and social emancipation. In most cases, only a level of political independence exists. It is thus critical that in order to deliver true emancipation, Africans are called upon to tackle the colonial knowledge system. In linking it to higher education, it can be viewed as a call to adapt curricula and syllabi to ensure that teaching and learning is adapted to African realities and conditions. Thus, teaching of IK can be a viable tool in the decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum. Transforming education in Africa would be truly meaningful if Africans realise the importance of that which belongs to the continent.

Given the decontextualised state of curricula and Eurocentric nature of knowledge production and dissemination in South African higher education and Africa in general, the concept of 'Africanisation' is contemporary. This paper discusses the importance of integrating IK into the classroom while pointing

³ R Barsh, 'United Nations Seminar on Indigenous Peoples and State' (1989) 3 *Journal of International Law* 599.

⁴ M Letseka, 'African Philosophy and Educational Discourse,' (2000) *African Voices in Education*, 92.

⁵ GEF Urch, 'The Africanisation of the Curriculum in Kenya (1968) Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

⁶ MB Ramose, 'In Search of an African Identity' (2004) 3 *South African Journal of Education* 138-160.

⁷ V Msila, (n 1) 312.

⁸ V Msila (n 1) 311.

⁹ P Kallaway, 'From Bantu Education to People's Education' (1988) Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

¹⁰ GEF Urch (n 5) 71.

¹¹ A Tamburro, 'Including Decolonization in Social Work Education and Praxis' (2013) *Journal of Indigenous Social Development* 1-16.

¹² JL Fernando, 'NGOs and the Production of Indigenous Knowledge under the Condition of Postmodernity' (2003) *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 590 (1), 54-72.

¹³ V Msila (n 1) 313.

at the contemporary debate of Africanisation of the curriculum. The use of insider perspectives on knowledge generation gives us the edge in developing relevant African curricula. According to Seepe¹⁴, a radical restructuring of education in Africa which makes education relevant to African challenges can hardly be complete without a serious consideration of IK. IK can become the true catalyst of modern pedagogy if seriously considered.

2. SHAPING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The contemporary discourse that depicts IK as less scientific and backward is equally portrayed through inappropriate and irrelevant current curricula. The call for recognition of IK and its teaching is also supported by the desire for the Africanisation of higher education. Both these aspects can be understood as the adaptation of the subject matter, and teaching methods, geared to the physical and cultural realities of the African environment.

3. DEFINING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

A universally accepted definition of IK is hard to find. The definition given here is one that is supported by the context of this paper. IK is described as the knowledge systems developed by a community as opposed to the scientific knowledge that is generally referred to as 'modern' knowledge.¹⁵ Indigenous knowledge is the basis for local-level decision-making in many rural communities. IK constitutes the knowledge that people in a given community have developed over time and continue to develop. It has value not only for the culture in which it evolves, but also for scientists and planners striving to improve conditions in rural localities. Accordingly, IK is defined as a combination of knowledge systems consisting of technology, social, economic and philosophical learning. Indigenous communities themselves

believe that their IK is their constantly refined wisdom that has been passed on from their ancestors and the elders in their communities with a capability to survive for many centuries in the unique locations they identify as their homelands.

This knowledge is naturally passed down from one generation to another. In addition to this definition, Ellen and Harris¹⁶ conclude that IK is localised to a particular place and is generated by people living in those places. It is manifested through trial and error and deliberate experiment.¹⁷ IK is alive to evolution that stands the test of time. In its full realisation, IK is holistic, integrative, situated within the broader cultural traditions, and is empirical rather than hypothetical.¹⁸ This is also to say IK is a 'living science' or a peoples' science, it is not static but changes with the times. Linking the above explanation to Africanisation means IK is compatible with African knowledge systems that are now a big reference point of research in Southern Africa and beyond.

4. DEFINING AFRICANISATION

Africanisation is defined in relation to educational reform that brings African culture into formal schooling.¹⁹ Makgoba²⁰ defines Africanisation as a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in the world community. He adds some characteristics that include it as a learning process and a way of life for Africans. In it there is no exclusivity but involves the incorporation, adaptation and integration of other cultures into and through African visions to provide the dynamism, evolution and flexibility so essential in the global village. Thus, African knowledge systems are not exclusively indigenous since they are able to incorporate other knowledge systems beyond the continent of Africa. By implication, it means that westernisation needed not to discard IK since the two can be

¹⁴ S Seepe, 'Editorial Notes' (2004) 18 South African Journal of Higher Education, 15.

¹⁵ LT Ajibade, 'A Methodology for the Collection and Evaluation of Farmers Indigenous Environmental Knowledge in Developing Countries' (2003) African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, 110.

¹⁶ RF Ellen & H Harris, 'H. Introduction' in R Ellen, P Parkes, and A. Bicker (Eds.), *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 2000), 33.

¹⁷ K Mehta, TR. Alter, LM. Semali, and A M Academ, *IK Connections: Bringing Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives into the Classroom* (2013) <<http://jces.ua.edu/academik-connections-bringing-indigenous-knowledge-and-perspectives-into-the-classroom/>> accessed 18 July 2020.

¹⁸ *ibid* 73.

¹⁹ E Van Heerden, 'Cultural Diversity and Schooling' in EM Lemmer & DC Badenhorst (Eds), *Introduction to Education for South African Teachers* (Kenwyn: Juta, 1997).

²⁰ Makgoba, 'Makoko: The Makgoba Affair: A Reflection on Transformation,' (Florida: Vivli, 1996).

infused when this is good for the Africans.²¹ Ironically, African knowledge systems have also influenced the knowledge systems of other continents. For the past few decades, there has been a sudden rush by a number of Western pharmaceutical companies to invest in research and development programmes that seek to test the medicinal value of medicines that are used by indigenous communities.

Le Grange also supports this idea of co-existence of African knowledge systems and Western knowledge systems.²² Africanisation will in turn mean that this is not a process of getting rid of the already entrenched Western knowledge systems already being practiced in Africa. There is a need to instil a sense of security; if this happens, Africa could borrow from the West without fear that changes would destroy the African character.²³ This paper argues that Western knowledge systems need to adapt to the African context for them to prove valuable and functional in African communities. In addition, Western knowledge systems can learn a lot from their African counterparts. Mutwa²⁴ opines that in Western civilisation, people live in a world of separatism, where things, which ought to be seen as part of a greater whole, are separated. On the contrary and as exemplified in the African knowledge systems, education needs to reflect the unity between various factors of life.²⁵

Africanisation would also involve the indigenisation of African knowledge systems. This becomes a process of defining or interpreting African identity and culture. Ramose²⁶ expands this concept by identifying it as an African experience, which is a source for the construction of knowledge. Higgs²⁷ invokes the notion of 'ubuntu' and its attributes of humanity, human allegiances, and humanistic ideals. Ubuntu is widely defined as humanism and communalism.²⁸ This expounds why African

identity is part and parcel of a living knowledge system. This is why Mbingi²⁹ explains that 'ubuntu' literally means 'I am because you are' - one can only be a person through others. Relations among individuals in a community bring about the true humanity. Despite it being the major fabric of strength for the African people this attribute of 'ubuntu' became one of the weak links that was exploited by imperialism through easy acceptance of other people and their teachings.³⁰ According to Prinsloo³¹ the attributes of humanism involve alms-giving, sympathy, care, sensitivity to the needs of others, respect, consideration, patience and kindness. This aspect of humanism is considered more paramount than the desire to derive gain from inventions and discoveries that occur especially in the pharmaceutical industry. An African traditional healer is more inclined to treat the illness or disease of a fellow villager for free and even share the knowledge of the traditional medicine as opposed to a Western doctor whose mandate and confines of running a business will in most cases influence him to seek compensation for the services rendered. Waghid³² sees African influenced IK as having the potential to promote justice, courage and truthfulness in people. In linking this to intellectual property rights (IPRs) as defined through some of its theories, Parker³³ speaks of Africanised scholarship that ought to include the notion of 'critical activism' concerned with justice and human rights. This is also an attribute of 'ubuntu'. This needs to be part of each and every student's learning process that prepares them to function well in the society. An education system that prepares the well-equipped student to give back to the community where he or she comes from is fit for purpose. In addition, the utilitarian theory advocates that when lawmakers legislate in the field of IP, the result must be the maximisation of social welfare.

²¹ K Wirendi, 'Prolegomena to African Philosophy of Education' (2004) *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 25.

²² L Le Grange, 'Western Science and Indigenous Knowledge: Competing Perspectives or Complementary Frameworks?' (2004) *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 85.

²³ GEF Urch (n 5) 17.

²⁴ CV Mutwa, 'Isilwane - The Animal' (1997) Cape Town, 1.

²⁵ V Msila (n 1) 313.

²⁶ Ramose (n 6) 158.

²⁷ P Higgs, 'African Philosophy and the Transformation of Educational Discourse in South Africa' (2003) *African Journal of Education*, 21.

²⁸ P Higgs & Van Wyk B, 'Lifelong Learning Revisited: An African Educational Discourse' (2007) 11 *Education Change*, 114.

²⁹ L Mbingi, 'In Search of the African Business Renaissance: An African Culture Perspective' (2000) Randburg: Knowledge Resources.

³⁰ L Mbingi (n 29)

³¹ ED Prinsloo, 'Ubuntu Culture and Participatory Management' in PH Cotzee & APJ Roux (Eds), *The African Philosophy Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997).

³² Y Waghid, 'African Philosophy of Education: Implications for Teaching and Learning' (2004) 18 *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 53.

³³ B Parker, 'Back on the Chain Gang: Some Difficulties in Developing a (South) African Philosophy of Education' (2003) 30 *Journal of Education*, 40.

There is therefore a need to strike a balance between encouraging invention or innovations and ensuring that social welfare is not relegated to backburner status.³⁴ I thus argue that IK needs protection by lawmakers as well as the Western judicial system that is prevalent in African countries. When this happens, it becomes evident that Africanisation is producing the desired results.

Louw³⁵ views Africanisation as a way of transcending individual identities, seeking commonality, as well as a way of recognising and embracing 'otherness'. IK has the opportunity to bring forth an inclusive approach to education.³⁶ These attributes have been the founding principles of African leaders like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.³⁷ Their identity of the village or community as part of the family, extending it beyond the tribe is pertinent. This village-based ideology of the founding fathers of African emancipation produced remarkable results that led to the realisation of an African continent free from colonialism. This gives rise to communitarianism that is practiced when individuals consider themselves as communal beings and not isolated.³⁸ The aspect of commonality is critical in understanding the attributes of Africanisation of IP and how it should be taught so that students and practitioners alike are convinced of this important issue. Nyerere and Nkrumah embraced the idea of broad inclusivity as a virtue. This was not the genesis of the idea; the fact that this aspect was accepted in many parts of Africa is a clear indication that Africans were living this virtue. When students of IP study the subject in this context, they are in a better place to explain to communal stakeholders what IP protection means for their IK. The communal stakeholders' voices need to be heard and be considered as valuable contributions to the body of science.

In the above discussion we find a desire for the establishment of curricula that is all-inclusive. Many scholars have also argued for the need to give IK the same protection rendered to IP along the line of inclusivity. This is particularly important in catering for the protection of particular individual countries under sui generis models.³⁹ Nkoane⁴⁰ gives an interpretation of an Africanised educational system that maintains African awareness of the social order and rules by which culture evolves. Higgs and van Wyk⁴¹ call it an education within an African context that sheds light on how Africans learn and construct knowledge and focusing on the underlying beliefs and values that constitute education within an African context. In addition fostering the understanding of African consciousness while facilitating an educational system that would result in the production of knowledge, which is relevant, effective and empowering.

If African consciousness in our education system is ignored, collaboration and cooperation between universities and communities may quickly become strained, especially if the academic knowledge produced seems unrelated to, or out of touch with, the realities of peoples' local life. The African IK is based on ecological relationships in nature⁴². When people feel that their culture and beliefs are not respected, their interest in engaging with outside experts may diminish. We may end up with knowledge that is not applicable to the solving of real life challenges. Knowledge devoid of contextual considerations is not useful. Knowledge generated as well as educational purposes formulated, need to respond to the immediate environment of Africans.⁴³ At the North West University IKS Centre in South Africa, the majority of students undertake their research studies in the communities where they come from. In my experience of grading the work that comes because of this exercise, the participation of the

³⁴ L Ndlovu, 'Access to Medicine under the WTO TRIPS Agreement: A Comparative Study of select SADC Countries' (2014) Doctoral Thesis University of South Africa.

³⁵ W Louw, 'Africanisation: A Rich Environment for Active Learning on a Global Platform' (2010) 32 *Progressio* 32, 42.

³⁶ V Msila (n 1) 313.

³⁷ J Benjamin, 'Decolonizing Nationalism: Reading Nkrumah and Nyerere's Pan-African Epistemology' (2011) *Journal of Emerging Knowledge on Emerging Markets* Vol. 3 November 2011, 229-269

³⁸ K Gyekye, 'Person and Community in African Thought' in A.H. Coetzee & APJ Roux (Eds), *The African Philosophy Reader* (London Routledge, 1998).

³⁹ S K Verma, 'Protecting Traditional Knowledge: Is a Sui Generis System an Answer?' (2004) 7 *Journal of World Intellectual Property* 765, 800.

⁴⁰ MN Nkoane, 'The Africanisation of the University in Africa' (2006) 13 *Alternation*, 49.

⁴¹ P Higgs & B Van Wyk (n 25) 16.

⁴² V Msila (n 1) 20.

⁴³ V Msila (n 1) 313.

community in the study adds much value to the study. Africanisation of the curricula is specifically aimed at enabling students to use contextualised theories to enable them to engage in best-practice work. The decolonisation of the curriculum empowers students to develop their own understanding of the African context and to become able to deliver culturally sensitive knowledge. This entails a strong emphasis on challenging the status quo and the relevance of existing knowledge systems (Western theories) in the African context.

5. WHY AFRICANISATION

Africanisation can be applied in different contexts. For the purposes of this paper, it is now clear that Africanisation is being applied in the context of developing curricula that takes into cognisance the African setting where students find themselves in. It comes at the backdrop of a long-held view that some of the education being taught on the African continent is out of touch with the reality of the continent. In addition, part the Eurocentric aspects of the curriculum was purposely put in place to systematically exclude or replace African knowledge systems that were and are still relevant to the needs of the society where they exist. Africanisation of curricula implies that education and training as well as praxis be informed by the reality of the South African context, the viewpoints of the people of South Africa and their descriptions of what is needed to build a just society.⁴⁴ The term 'Africanisation', 'decolonisation' and 'contextualisation' are interrelated in this discussion.

This paper argue that, in order for Africanisation to take place, education and training on the African continent should be based on the realities of the African contexts in which our service beneficiaries are functioning. Therefore, we need to explore how we can ensure that we develop curricula that will empower students, include them in exploring solutions for societal problems, through participation, collaboration and cooperation and guide them to become effective facilitators of community development where beneficiaries participate

in decision-making processes that affect their lives. For decolonisation to be meaningfully effective, it requires that we actively engage with processes based on a desire to reclaim and revalue the African socio-economic heritage or culture. The present focus on decolonisation in academic discourses could be seen as a reflection on a need to, after so many decades of colonial rule, move beyond the colonised eras to an era where indigenous voices determine future praxis. It should be noted that, if we intend to decolonise and to acknowledge IKS (i.e. the African praxis and ways of doing, knowing and being), we must be informed by the African people and utilise this information when developing academic curricula and material with the aim to inform praxis. It requires a bottom-up approach where grassroots information is not only being acknowledged but also used to inform the development of a decolonised curricula. Colonisation has caused multigenerational trauma. The colonisation of the mind brought about a lack of self-worth based on not being heard, that lingers on after the end of colonialism. This challenge can be addressed when we start to not only to hear the perspectives, experiences and needs of the people but when we start to act on these expressions, showing that the viewpoints of those on grassroots level matter.

6. THE NEXUS BETWEEN IK AND AFRICANISATION

Emanating from the above discussion it is clear that there are a number of cross cutting issues that gives compelling connection between IK and Africanisation. These issues are as follows:

- Notion of commonalities
- Affirmation of one's culture, tradition and value systems
- Fostering an understanding of African consciousness and finding ways of blending Western and African methodologies

The use of IK is one way of understanding the term 'Africanisation', as it implies that an understanding of the African context and the socio-economic realities of the

⁴⁴ M van der Westhuizen, TG; J W. Beukes, 'Are we hearing the Voices? Africanisation as Part of Community Development,' (2017) *Herv. teol. stud.vol.73 n.3* Pretoria

African people exists. Considering the diversity of the African context, Africanisation implies that we base our efforts to obtain new insights and to develop new praxis on the contextual realities of the beneficiaries of services within the specific African context. In addition, it requires that we utilise current knowledge bases which are often representing a Western perspective and explore how it relates to the African context. Even though there is a connection between IK and Africanisation a number of challenges that emanate from this exercise need to be discussed.

7. CHALLENGES

It would be a fallacy to state that IK alone will address social needs; however, the introduction of IK teaching in universities is just one factor that can address the challenges of relevance of the curriculum⁴⁵. Other challenges that arises out of the IK and Africanisation debate need consideration. Greenstein⁴⁶ has long argued that Africanisation poses the greatest challenge for the renewal of education in general and curriculum policies in particular. This may be true if one considers that until the processes of knowledge production and dissemination are consistent with the contexts and cultural orientation of the people at universities present, the transformation of higher education institutions remains incomplete. Students at African universities most of the time face a cultural shock when they enter the modern university. Majority of them come from rural areas. The culture shock forces them to abandon their cultural orientation. In most cases, they then consciously or sub-consciously reject their rich history and replace it with a contemporary culture that does not favour IK.

Entering into a formal education system like the contemporary university must not be seen as a way to unseat

or compete with existing IK pedagogies and methods. This process should rather be embraced as the process of integrating new perspectives and epistemologies. It must be shaped by the desire to unify or get a common ground. The way we view and understand the world around us is uniquely shaped by attitudes, values, and beliefs acquired over the course of our lives.⁴⁷ Every situation we encounter, every experience we have, directly contributes to our epistemology: the manner in which we come to know what we know.⁴⁸ Thus, when students enter the university classroom, it should not be a case of them being told to discard the knowledge they already possess. This is possible if one considers that cultures tend to be permeable and are constantly influenced by other cultures.⁴⁹ IK pedagogies present a system that would meaningfully involve learners in the discovery of their own environment and is bound to support lifelong learning.⁵⁰ Matos⁵¹ argues that a major 'disease' of education and research in Africa is the systematic attempt to dismiss the intrinsic value of African culture, language, customs and practices from the curricula. On the contrary, conservation of IK for and by the local peoples could have positive implications for protecting their IP from predations by outsiders.⁵² Intellectual engagement must not lead to marginalisation of IK. Education about how to incorporate indigenous perspectives in the study of science at all academic levels is lagging in some disciplines, and virtually absent in others.⁵³

8. HOW THIS CAN BE DONE

There is no need to argue the use of science to solve local problems in many disciplines including medicine, engineering, food science, and agriculture. According to Seepe⁵⁴, the utilisation of IK technology and African

⁴⁵ V Msila (n 1) 314.

⁴⁶ R Greenstein, 'Education, Identity and Curriculum Policies in the New South Africa' in P. Kallaway, A., Fataar & G. Donn (Eds.) *Education After Apartheid: South African Education in Transition* (Rondebosch: University of Cape Town, 2007).

⁴⁷ K Mehta, TR. Alter, LM. Semali, and A M Academ, 'IK Connections: Bringing Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives into the Classroom' <<http://jces.ua.edu/academik-connections-bringing-indigenous-knowledge-and-perspectives-into-the-classroom/>> accessed 05 June 2018.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ L Le Grange (n 20) 19.

⁵⁰ V Msila (n 1) 313.

⁵¹ Matos N, 'The Nature of Learning, Teaching and Research in Higher Education in Africa' in P. Higgs, N.C.G. Mda, P. Vakalisa, T.V. Mda & N.T. Assie-Lumumba (Eds.), *African Voices in Education* (Cape Town: Juta, 2000), 12-38.

⁵² F Indígena (FSI) and B Kothari, 'Rights to the Benefits of Research: Compensating Indigenous Peoples for their Intellectual Contribution' (1997) *Human Organization: Summer*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 127-137 <<https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.56.2.j63678502x782100>> accessed 01 June 2018

⁵³ Mehta, et al (n 43) 73.

⁵⁴ S Seepe (n 14) 17.

knowledge systems is the key to unlocking the door that has prevented the masses from accessing mathematics, science and engineering. In many African communities, students who have left college and university find themselves unemployed. One needs to ask, how can this be when the communities they come from need assistance? In South Africa, some have often argued that the reason why there are so many unemployed university graduates has to do with them having studied the wrong qualifications.⁵⁵ In this discussion, one needs to ask, 'what is a wrong qualification?' The decision to study a particular discipline needs to be informed by many rationales, one of it being career prospects as well as the needs of a learner's community. When the learner's community and background are taken into consideration, learning is more likely to be effective.⁵⁶ As discussed earlier, the use of IK in teaching can thus link the need to solve these problems and the formulation of prospective solutions. Collaboration and cooperation between universities and communities is the key. However, if this is not done properly and if the academic knowledge produced seems unrelated to, or out of touch with, the realities of peoples' local life, the challenges will remain.

Teaching of IK emphasises contextual considerations and in that way the interpretation and utilisation of data will produce the desired results. With the utilisation of IK, how data are interpreted and utilised will change. IK teaches that in approaching community development and engagement projects, it is imperative that we consider the cultural context of our work, as well as the knowledge that is produced within that context. Indigenous knowledge is uniquely valuable, as it provides insights and information that directly reflect the opinions, values, and attitudes of the local people engaged in a community development initiative.⁵⁷ The discussion now moves to my personal experiences of teaching IK and how it has shaped the way I share knowledge with students and other academics.

My teaching of the subject of IP at the IKS Centre at the North West University in South Africa has been a fulfilling

experience in both the realisation of the need for the reconstruction of the pre-colonial past and as an orientation to the problems of society and social change. All the students at the IKS Centre are required to come up with a project that involves the community in terms of how IK is practiced in the communities. It is interesting to note that most of the students select to do a study of the rural communities where they come from. This is a pertinent observation that speaks of students' capability to apply the knowledge gained in solving real life challenges of their communities while they obtain a qualification at the university through the IKS Centre. The IKS Centre is at the forefront of addressing both academic and societal challenges and extending the university's knowledge and expertise to solve problems affecting communities by utilising the IK that resides within those communities. A number of students have chosen topics that range from examination of nutritional value of indigenous foods, indigenous medicines, IK methods of farming, weather patterns prediction and preservation of natural resources like water in the rivers and the forest trees. Other students also chose topics that address traditional methods of dispute resolution and traditional games that enhance learning skills (communication and numeracy skills). Some of the student's work is of such good quality that they are encouraged to continue with the studies at postgraduate level. At Postgraduate level, students will end up enrolling for the Master's and Doctoral programmes. The IKS Centre has even attracted students from the whole Southern African region. This shows how import IK has become not just for South Africa but for the whole continent of Africa.

This enterprise has been successful due to a number of reasons. I will mention a few here. Firstly, the IKS Centre makes sure that the curriculum is inclusive of indigenous social and cultural history and informed by the full scope of ideas and events that have shaped and continue to shape human growth and development. Students are able to relate to their upbringing and surroundings in this process of learning. Secondly; students, communities and academic

⁵⁵ Z Bongani, 'Graduates and their Unemployment Dilemma' Mail & Guardian <<https://mg.co.za/article/2019-08-07-graduates-and-their-unemployment-dilemma/>> accessed 18 July 2020

⁵⁶ U Bude, 'Primary Schools, Local Community and Development on Africa' (1985) 8 Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagse-sellschaft.

⁵⁷ Mehta, *et al* (n 43) 73.

institutions are able to learn from indigenous knowledge innovations. For this reason, a number of ground-breaking projects have been produced through IK innovations. Thirdly, the classroom has become an open marketplace of diverse ideas and practical discussions aimed at real solutions. The University has gone on to initiate successful community engagement projects with the communities of the study area. As part of the learning process, students are required to present their work to fellow classmates in a formal setting where they critique each other while being guided by their teachers. In some instances, community members form part of these discussion sessions. This experience illustrates why IK matters in community engagement and scholarship. In this experience, there is a growing recognition of the importance of integrating IK into the curricula. The socially and relevant theses of IK is that we are able to effectively educate students for the globalised world.⁵⁸

9. CONCLUSION

A growing number of African intellectuals have acknowledged that the time for the recognition of IK in schools is long overdue.⁵⁹ The founding father of African independence from colonial rule, Nkwame Nkrumah (1956) emphasised the need for real African universities, bearing in mind that once it has been planted in the African soil, it must take root amidst African traditions and cultures.⁶⁰ For the African university to be truly useful to Africa and the world it has to be grounded in African communities and cultures.⁶¹ Future research should investigate further, the role of internationalisation in Africanisation and IK. African higher education institutions are increasingly becoming defined by internationalisation, further putting to the periphery the desire to Africanise. This trend should be resisted and IK should be placed at the forefront of this exercise. There is a need to approach research, teaching, and outreach in a discipline that incorporates knowledge generated in the local context. IK

needs to be embraced as a means of enhancing our discussion concerning the challenges that face local and global communities. African knowledge systems can be tapped as a foundational resource for the social-educational transformation of the African continent, and how IK can be politically and economically liberating.⁶² In the end, introducing IK as a tool of Africanisation assists students to engage in and to facilitate processes where local indigenous knowledge is linked and blended with existing academic knowledge. Additionally, in the multicultural African context, the link between different indigenous praxis and knowledge should be explored. The latter is aimed at discovering what ‘...we have in common with other African indigenous praxis and knowledge, and indeed with all other people of the globe, especially those with deep rooted indigenous foundations’.⁶³ Ultimately, The Africanisation of our knowledge and skills serves as a stimulus to construct transformation towards a decolonised society.

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⁵⁸ M Battiste & J Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage* (Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing Ltd, 2000).

⁵⁹ V Msila (n 1) 310.

⁶⁰ J Benjamin (n 37).

⁶¹ M Makgoba & S Seepe ‘Knowledge and Identity: An African Vision of Higher Education Transformation’ in S. Seepe (Ed.), *Towards an African Identity of Higher Education* (Pretoria: Vista University, 2004) 1-44.

⁶² P Higgs P & B Van Wyk (n 26) 8.

⁶³ J A Hammersmith, *Converging Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems: Implications for Tertiary Education* (Doctor of Education Thesis: University of South Africa, 2007) <<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/43165783.pdf/>> accessed 18 July 2020.

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