Chapter 6

Indigenous African Knowledge System (IAKS) Ethos:
Prospects for a Post-Colonial Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discovers the limitations presented by narrow cultural and moral settings and the possibility of incorporating an indigenous African knowledge systems' (IAKS) ethos to redress past injustices, especially diverse cultural values experienced in countries in the 'global south'. However, the emergence of related protests in communities and student structures in education circles, such as calls to decolonize the curriculum and the #FeesMustFall movement. The effects of colonialism continue to be reflected in social structural settings that uphold those Aristotelian parameters that are notorious for marginalizing the knowledge of the 'other', specifically in the 'global south'.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide the "postcolonial" era has brought possibilities of social change including in the education sphere, where curriculum change is high on the agenda, in particular in an African country like South Africa. However, the effects of colonialism continue to be reflected in social structural settings that tend to uphold the Aristotelian parameters, which are notorious for marginalising the knowledge of the "other" (Mthembu, 2018, p. 28). In other words, modern-day educational interpretations

and analyses of African people, phenomena and milieus continue to reflect a narrow cultural perspective that serves to marginalise indigenous knowledge systems and preserve social inequality among citizens (Do Vale, 2016, p. 600). This scenario tends to concur with the suggestion that colonial moral tenets do not adapt well to African-centred milieus, as they have altered cultural traditions in various parts of the continent in different ways; culminating in social crises on the environmental, political, social and economic fronts and undermining African wisdom and morals (Awajiusuk, 2015, p. 308).

To gain a better understanding of the underlying forces influencing the pace of transformation in the sphere of learning in this country, it is vital to consider how negative power dynamics have contributed to hampering transformation by failing to create an enabling environment where transformation can occur (Duthely, Nunn & Avella, 2018, p. 52). Currently, the absence of such a scenario is observable in the fact that, despite the adoption of various government policies, as well as interventions from stakeholders, to enhance the incorporation of indigenous African cultural, ethical concepts (*ubuntu*) in public administration structures; the transformation of the compensatory education system (including the curriculum) has not occurred. In reality, the incorporation of indigenous African knowledge systems (IAKS) in the education system is only happening on the fringes and many African scholars are still being denied the relevant support and acknowledgement (Mthembu, 2018, p. 194). This suggests that the compulsion to continue using foreign languages, such as English and Afrikaans, is the order of the day. However, for feasibility of this project, this chapter focuses on revealing the African-centred ethics and related guidelines that defines aspects of African research examination approaches. Thus, it is significant to understand the challenges and possibilities when it comes to the realisation of transformation goals in the governance structures in the post-colonial era and the adoption of relevant policies that will cater for a multicultural education system. In doing so, this chapter looks at the indigenous African knowledge systems' (IAKS) ethos, followed by strategies for a transformed curriculum, a transformative discourse and conclusion. The chapter serves to contribute to knowledge creation in this field of study, with a view to assist students, researchers, policy makers, stakeholders and IAKS specialists in articulating and understanding features and ethical standards of various knowledge systems especially African moral standards in a pluralistic education system.

BACKGROUND

For a better understanding of indigenous African knowledge systems, it is vital to define this type of knowledge. There are various definitions, with some focusing on

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