

## Chapter 3

# Indigenous Knowledge Management Practices in Indigenous Organizations in South Africa and Tanzania

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Traditional communities have a highly developed knowledge system. They struggle, however, to lobby for critical issues as this knowledge is not documented. The chapter addresses this problem by seeking a suitable knowledge creation model for South African and Tanzanian indigenous organizations. It draws on fieldwork and reviews the literature and organizational websites. It applies Myer's seven C's model (2014) to determine how knowledge management may assist organizations in addressing challenges effectively. The findings demonstrate that Myers's model (2014) has been successful in part in explaining the knowledge management practices of indigenous organizations in these two countries. It is also difficult for indigenous organizations to motivate people to share knowledge because indigenous knowledge is individualized and used as a source of power, status and income in the communities. It is therefore important to promote integration of indigenous knowledge with other knowledge systems for socio-economic growth, and advocating change in institutional structures.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Local communities have a complex and highly developed knowledge system (Sithole, 2007). Despite their ownership of this knowledge system, it is difficult for indigenous people to advocate and lobby for the issues that affect them. The Pastoralists' Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations' (PINGO) Forum (2013a) argued that indigenous communities have been marginalized regarding their socio-economic, cultural and political rights and use of natural resources due to a lack of recognition in national and regional policies. An aggravating factor is a lack of representation and participation in decision-making bodies at local and national levels (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2013a). Indigenous organizations have been formed over the past decades in response to local people claiming their land, human rights and ethnic identities (Roper, 2003). These organizations aim to empower indigenous people, enabling them to make better-informed decisions affecting their future, play a key role in influencing political and social issues, and in addressing their needs by advocating for transformation in legal and institutional structures (Uquillas & Gabara, 2000). Despite their importance at all levels, and some recent gains, these organizations are generally weak; and very few exist in Africa (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2013c). The merging of indigenous knowledge and other knowledge systems can enhance the management of African indigenous organizations if suitable approaches to managing their knowledge system are implemented.

The objectives of this chapter are to give an overview of indigenous knowledge and how it relates to indigenous organizations; to examine the role of knowledge management practices and approaches in indigenous organizations; to provide an overview of the current situation regarding indigenous organizations in South Africa and Tanzania, and to outline the application of knowledge management approaches in indigenous organizations.<sup>1</sup> It uses Myer's seven C's model (2014) as a conceptual lens to understand how knowledge management can help indigenous organizations to manage their indigenous knowledge to address their documentation and retrieval challenges effectively. It promotes integration with other knowledge systems to contribute to socio-economic growth in communities, and advocate for changes in the legal and institutional structures of their countries.

## **BACKGROUND**

This section presents broad definitions of terms that are central to the topic.

### **Knowledge Systems**

The indigenous knowledge system, and the external knowledge, or scientific knowledge system are two widely acknowledged knowledge systems (Munyua & Stilwell, 2013). Aikenhead and Ogawa (2007) used a cultural base to distinguish three systems:

1. The largely oral, indigenous ways;
2. The neo-indigenous ways of knowing which predominate in Asia, are based on the region's culture and history, and are documented; and
3. The Eurocentric way of knowing. This chapter focuses on the indigenous knowledge system and to some extent on the external knowledge system.

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