


# Chapter 6

## Bringing Cultural Festivals Into Lecture Rooms: Ndau Festival of the Arts and Higher Education in Zimbabwe

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter assesses the possibilities of bringing cultural festivals, particularly the Ndau Festival of the Arts into the lecture room with an intent to reclaim, repossess and reaffirm the local people's indigenous knowledge and make it part of curriculum for higher education in Zimbabwe. The chapter utilised the postcolonial lens and the phenomenological method, where participant observation, key informant interviews and review of related literature were adopted for data collection. The study revealed that it is, indeed, possible to have the lecture rooms graced by indigenous knowledge holders who can share immense indigenous knowledge but have never been in the corridors of higher institutions of teaching and learning. The chapter is a practical clarion response to the wide discourses of indigenizing higher education in Africa where academia and indigenous knowledge holders can share slots and notes in the teaching and learning processes of higher education.*

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Cultural festivals are a part of a people's way of protecting, promoting and preserving their indigenous knowledge (Muyambo, 2022). This knowledge has been pushed to the margins by the Western hegemony such that efforts to recover this knowledge are confronted by myriad challenges. The colonial education system has denigrated this indigenous knowledge as unscientific hence its conspicuous omission in curricula. Even higher education (HE) systems in Africa are faced by this challenge to such an extent that there have been persistent calls by students and academia alike to revamp HE by revising its curricula to include the teaching and learning of indigenous knowledge (Kapoor & Shizha, 2010; Emeagwali & Shizha, 2016; Odora Hoppers, 2002). The recent strike by South African HE students under the banner #Rhodes must fall and #Fees must fall is a clarion call of the need to indigenize HE in South Africa.

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What this entails is that in order for HE to be effective and meaningful to its partakers it has to address the culturedness and situatedness of the students, who are the consumers of that knowledge. The inclusion of indigenous knowledge into teaching and learning in higher institutions of learning in Africa has been on the cards for a long time but there seems to be no movements towards achieving this from most African governments.

One thing that features most in researches is that indigenous knowledge systems are domiciled in rural communities with the elderly members of the communities as the knowledge holders. In order to ensure that this knowledge is captured and also domiciled into higher education, where it becomes part and parcel of the teaching and learning, I would showcase the Nda Festival of the Arts (abbreviated as NdaFA) and suggest, through what happened at its 10<sup>th</sup> annual festival, that bringing such activities to the doorsteps of lecture rooms is one of the many ways of including indigenous knowledge in teaching and learning in universities across Africa.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There has been deafening calls for the indigenisation, Africanisation, decolonisation and/or endogenisation (whichever case might be for the arguments in this terminology is beyond the scope of this chapter) of higher education in Africa, and in Zimbabwe in particular. While scholars are agreed on the project of indigenising higher education in Africa by the adoption of indigenous knowledge, there seems to be no clear-cut way on the how (process) question. While Shizha (2010:116) argues for the inclusion and integration of “indigenous knowledge and voices as constructions and constituents of academic knowledge and the deconstructions of colonial educational discourse in higher education in Zimbabwe”, there seems to be no clear-cut process of how this could be done, a gap this chapter fills in by suggesting bringing cultural festivals into the lecture rooms of higher education.

## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND METHODOLOGY**

The theoretical framework suggested for this chapter is the postcolonial theory, which is rather summarised in Ndlovu- Gatsheni’s decoloniality discourses. According to the well-known postcolonial scholar, Edward Said (1978), postcolonial studies examine the long-standing impact of cultures in contact with each other, that is Western colonial interactions with non-western countries. The theory aims to resuscitate local knowledge that has been marginalised for decades due to the privileging of western traditions. Quayson (2002:2) conceptualises postcolonial theory as a theory that “involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies as well as at the level of more general global developments thought to be the after effects of empire.” In other words, postcolonial theory is a means of defiance by which any exploitative and discriminative practices, regardless of time and space, can be challenged (Rukundwa and van Aarde 2007). It is a theory that offers a critical perspective to the study of social phenomena particularly issues surrounding power relations between various groups in society (Velautham 2015). For Quayson (2002) the effects of colonial power did not end with independence. Instead, as Velautham (2015) argues, current social practices which have been established as a result of the colonial encounter such as inherited

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