


Chapter 3

The Importance of Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems in South Africa's Basic Education: Perspectives From Indigenous Scholars

Monicca Thulisile Bhuda

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8506-9562>

University of Mpumalanga, South Africa

Mothusiotsile E. Maditsi

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5796-0174>

North-West University, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Indigenous knowledge Systems (IKS) are practices, and beliefs of indigenous communities which include Indigenous people's abilities, experiences, and insights that are used to sustain their livelihoods. Such knowledge systems are important to be integrated in education because students need a culturally responsive education that relates to their cultural background. However, the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which is taught in basic education, does not give much emphasis on IKS and implementation mechanisms that it needs. Instead, IKS are marginalized and ignored in education, while Western Knowledge Systems are given priority in the classroom. The study applies a scoping literature review to investigate how IKS can be integrated into the CAPS with a focus on specific subjects. The indigenous standpoint theory and constructivist theory are applied in the study to demonstrate that there is no single objective world that all learners aim to know and understand. Instead, the learners make meaning of the world through their own cultural experiences.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-4124-8.ch003

INTRODUCTION

The realization of IKS as a vital tool to decolonize and provide alternative solid solutions to development agendas of South Africa should be realised. Since the existence of humanity, education has been a focal point of human development in various avenues of life. However, through colonialism and apartheid in the case of South Africa, the education system especially the one afforded to indigenous communities has been vastly unequal. This crisis of inequality was a byproduct of a systematic injustice of apartheid (Sonkqayi, 2021) and this resulted in IKS facing its demise within the education system.

The 1994 democratic dispensation saw a shift within the education paradigm which brought about new policies and education legislation being developed. This is evidenced by the DoE (1996) establishment of dual goals (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). The Department of Education (DoE) reflected in their mission statement that their vision as a department is of a South Africa in which all people have equal access to lifelong education and training opportunities which will contribute towards improving the quality of life and build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society. For many scholars, this was the beginning of a crisis within the South African education system. Esteemed scholars in the area of IKS such as Odora-Hoppers, 2005; Green, 2008; Le Grange, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, have brought about the question of not only distributive but epistemic injustice.

This question raised by these IKS scholars has shown that there is a need for a paradigm shift within the mainstream education system of South Africa. There is a much-needed decolonization of the kind of education system that exists in South Africa. Dei (2008) argues that education is about equipping learners with knowledge, skill, and resources that allow them to improve their own conditions and to contribute to building healthy, sustainable communities. It is therefore vital to note that effective education should be able to solve existing problems within various local communities.

Dei (2008) further explained that education is a vehicle that should be used to drive sustainable development within local South African communities. This however cannot be achieved if the knowledge of these communities remains in the margins of the education system within the country. The paradigmatic lens that is applied by the education system in South Africa remains western and this has shown that this western lens fails to address persistent problems in South African communities. Scholars such as Khupe (2014) and Bhuda (2021) have voiced that the South African educational methodologies must be corrected as soon as possible since they are still dominated by the influence of the west.

The reality of providing for inclusion of IKS in South Africa's basic education is very complex (Prinsloo, 2001). This is because there have been massive challenges that have hindered the process of bringing fruitful principles of including and mainstreaming IKS in the formal education system of South Africa. Majority of these challenges are bound to the policy and legislative frameworks which have not been amended to reflect the role and value of IKS in the education system of the country. Therefore, there is a need to transform the South African education system and make sure that IKS is mainstreamed into this education system. If mainstreamed, IKS will be able to bring about a paradigm shift that is in line with the experiences of African people and thus portray a correct and consistent image of the identity of Africans generally and south Africa in particular (Dei, 2008; Sonkqayi, 2021).

The call for a paradigm shifts and epistemic justice in South Africa saw the first legislative step being the development of the 2004 IKS Policy. This legal instrument is viewed as the cornerstone framework that is driving IKS into the core business of education and other vital areas within South Africa. The IKS Policy of 2004 was developed to do away with the marginalization of IKS and the propagators of this knowledge during the apartheid South Africa (Bhuda, 2024). This policy further juxtaposed against the

24 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-importance-of-integrating-indigenous-knowledge-systems-in-south-africas-basic-education/378999

Related Content

Internet Development Empowering Innovation Activities to Achieve Efficient and Balanced Development: Evidence From China

Jiacheng Gao (2025). *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (pp. 1-20).

www.irma-international.org/article/internet-development-empowering-innovation-activities-to-achieve-efficient-and-balanced-development/368003

RETRACTED: The Influence of the Sports Events Industry on Sichuan's Economic Growth

Ren Sun, Yong Zhong and Annika Otto (2024). *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (pp. 1-14).

www.irma-international.org/article/retracted-the-influence-of-the-sports-events-industry-on-sichuans-economic-growth/356390

An Empirical Investigation into the Influence of Knowledge Sharing Barriers on Knowledge Sharing and Individual Innovation Behaviour

Salih Yeiland Bengü Hrlak (2013). *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (pp. 38-61).

www.irma-international.org/article/an-empirical-investigation-into-the-influence-of-knowledge-sharing-barriers-on-knowledge-sharing-and-individual-innovation-behaviour/83611

Measuring Knowledge Management Outcomes at the Individual Level: Towards a Tool for Research on Organizational Culture

Shahnawaz Muhammed, William J. Doll and Xiaodong Deng (2011). *Global Aspects and Cultural Perspectives on Knowledge Management: Emerging Dimensions* (pp. 1-18).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/measuring-knowledge-management-outcomes-individual/54078

Knowledge Hiding on a Management Spectrum and the Role of Moral Disengagement

LaJuan Perronoski Fuller (2025). *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (pp. 1-25).

www.irma-international.org/article/knowledge-hiding-on-a-management-spectrum-and-the-role-of-moral-disengagement/386765