


# Chapter 23

## South African Universities and Their Responsibility Towards Introducing the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Accredited Programmes: Where to From Here?

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The call to have Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) accredited programmes by universities is necessary to challenge existing Western Systems which have posed a threat to IKS in education. The aim of the study was to investigate the implementation of the IKS programmes by universities which were part of the 1996 indigenous technologies audit. The study used qualitative content analysis to extract information from a variety of sources, such as government documents, books, theses, and scholarly journals that are available on websites like Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate and university repositories. The findings of the study revealed that with assistance from government, there are universities who have successfully implemented IKS accredited programmes while others are still lacking behind since the 1996 audit. Therefore, the study recommends that universities which are yet to start this process need to benchmark and collaborate with those that are offering the IKS programmes. IKS postgraduates can also be sourced to be part of this process because they are equipped with expertise to implement these programmes.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1994, many scholars in South Africa have placed a high value on the inclusion of the IKS in the curriculum. Subsequent conferences on Africanization and decolonization of education or integration of the IKS into the educational system were prompted by a call for the African Renaissance in the mid-1990s (Dei, 2014). The integration of IKS in universities is part of an educational project that focuses on decolonization of the curriculum in many formerly colonized states in Africa. As Dei (2014) discussed, the inclusion of IKS gives institutions the chance to create a variety of knowledge forms rather than relying just on a superior Eurocentric form of knowledge as a standard and benchmark. This method allows academics to value different types of information rather than just one that is determined by a predetermined study program. Scholars such as Odora Hoppers (2021) and Wane and Wane (2019) highlighted that instead of embracing Eurocentric knowledge, which is so ineffectual and detrimental to Africa's economic drive, they urge for South Africa to build on its historical indigenous capital.

However, as per Kaya and Seleti's (2013) study, there are a number of obstacles to integrating IKS into higher education, including a lack of acceptance and validation in academic institutions, challenges with standardizing and documenting IKS, issues with cultural sensitivity, language barriers, access to indigenous communities, intellectual property rights, and a potential disconnect between traditional knowledge and contemporary academic frameworks. Maditsi and Bhuda (2023) underscored that IKS as a body of knowledge has not yet been granted complementary status to western science, despite its evident benefits. Even after achieving independence, South Africa has maintained its Westernized universities.

The impact of colonization and post-colonial aftereffects are seen by Kaya and Seleti (2013) as significant obstacles to IKS inclusion at South African universities. Colonial powers employed strategies and practices to defeat and subjugate Africans during that time (Bhuda, 2024b). The goal of those programs was to eradicate preexisting knowledge systems and replace them with Western ideas and knowledge systems by continuously oppressing and disparaging indigenous civilizations. Many times, these difficulties call for significant curriculum-structure modification (Chabaya & Chabaya, 2023). It is imperative to prioritize cultural sensitivity, challenge Western-dominated educational structures, embrace interculturalism, and create inclusive learning settings (da Silva et al., 2024). Openness, collaboration, and a readiness to question accepted wisdom are necessary for this journey to maintain the integrity of IKS in education (Yip & Chakma, 2024).

Chinenye-Nwokocha and Legg-Jack (2024) indicated that there are two main objectives of the IKS program at South African universities. One is a pragmatic desire to enable the locals to use their IKS to enhance their own standard of living. The other goal, which is more philosophical but no less significant, is to merge Western scientific knowledge with African Indigenous knowledge (AIK) and authenticate it (Bhuda, 2024a). Such a feat is said to assist South Africans overcome an innate sense of powerlessness or inferiority and embrace a sense of identity in higher education. A sense of identity and purpose in life will be established through the symbolic reappropriation of identity and pride in one's own cultural history, expertise, and abilities.

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