

INDILINGA

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Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IAJIKS) is accredited through the South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) System. It seeks to sustain a full analytical discussion of issues related to Indigenous Knowledge Systems. The journal has been motivated by the need for a dependable expression for critical and analytical writing on issues related to the production, dissemination and recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. IAJIKS represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests in ethno-methodology and in both quantitative and qualitative methods. Debates on methodology, epistemology, ethics, gender, science and technology, arts, food systems, education, language and sociocultural issues are invited.

AIMS AND SCOPE

The aim and thrust of IAJIKS is to bring together scholars and thinkers to promote, analyse, critique and preserve Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). The journal is devoted to the promotion of research into and scholarship on IKS. Given the growing enthusiasm for the African Renaissance, it cannot be long before attention turns to IKS to contribute towards the development of Africa and the world.

The journal was founded as an international academic forum to exchange ideas and theories surrounding IKS. It creates a forum for African scholars, analysts and activists in IKS to participate on an equal footing with their contemporaries worldwide in debates, exchange of ideas and the creation and documentation of knowledge. It also seeks to promote scholarly understanding of changes and developments in IKS.

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FOREWORD

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Indigenous Knowledge Systems have shown resilience, despite the dominance of Western cultural and educational systems, even in the postcolonial era. The African philosophy of Ubuntu/Botho is the nexus of these knowledge systems. Research in the field helps to showcase these knowledge systems and their practices in various cultural contexts. This journal issue presents empirical and conceptual studies by Indigenous scholars that make a valuable contribution and advance knowledge in the field.

Interrogating African philosophy within the higher education context is a good start, as everything about Indigenous Knowledge Systems is grounded in the philosophy of Ubuntu. Mlamuli Tabhu and Amasa Ndofirepi critique the conceptualisation of African philosophy in South African universities, calling for its decolonisation in a true sense. The authors employ the Afrikology framework to achieve this.

A commitment to decolonise Africa's knowledge economy calls for declawing the research agenda from the morass of colonial and postcolonial ideologies in the learning institutions. For too long, the approach to research has failed to advance the ideals of African culture and its knowledge economy. One prominent context for this compromise is postgraduate education. In his perspectival article, Paul Iwuanyanwu flags the need to transform postgraduate education. He argues that postgraduate education can be turned around to advance the ideals of the Pan-African Agenda 2063. Adopting this important approach, he argues, will help build "self-sustaining systems of innovation, research, and policy that align with the African Union's Agenda 2063". This would mean recognising the value of Indigenous Knowledge Systems to make the research project relevant to the ethos of African culture, thus developing graduates who can question the knowledge and practices they are exposed to and who, in turn, are agents of decoloniality.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems play a critical role in the practices of Indigenous people and are expressed in various ways. For this reason, Indigenous Knowledge, as part of the ecosystem of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, has proven to sustain the livelihoods of Indigenous people. This does not have to be proven in certain cases, especially considering the knowledge, practices and technologies that Indigenous people have held for centuries intergenerationally – it cannot be that people cling to a particular thing, and it is claimed invalid and untrustworthy. Inesisa Ncube, Josiline Chigwada, Patrick Ngulube, and Jan Maluleka's qualitative study, conducted in selected Indigenous

communities in South Africa and Zimbabwe, supports this idea. The study reveals certain types of knowledge and practices that have and continue to play an important role in sustaining livelihoods, such as various uses of cow dung, traditional medicine for treating various kinds of diseases in people and animals, and the preservative function of totems. The authors raise concern about the slow disappearance of this knowledge and these practices, particularly considering Western influence and the growing distance between the old and young generations. They recommend preserving it through recordings and sharing it with the young generation to rekindle their love for it.

Sustaining livelihoods in African indigenous communities is insulated within the Ubuntu philosophy. This is due to the prioritisation of values like care, unity, and support that bind people together. Although Avela Njwambe does not specifically use the concept of Ubuntu in her study, *Impilo: Rooted in the landscapes of Ekhayeni-embodied lives of rural-urban migrants in South Africa*, the study echoes this philosophy's values, reflecting the life of support in Ekhayeni. African migrant workers find solace and care as they transition to rural life, experiencing a sense of belonging, holistic well-being, and genuine care. The author contrasts this life with economic values that tend to define life in material terms. While working is important for providing for the family and keeping the home going, the true meaning of life resides in the sense of belonging embedded in Ubuntu. The article challenges modern capitalist notions of well-being that prioritise economic success and individual remedies for health.

One way in which Indigenous Knowledge thrives is through partnerships. Given the important philosophy of Ubuntu/Botho outlined above, Indigenous people can collaborate with stakeholders to participate in their activities. This is illustrated in Violet Makokotlela's study, conducted in primary schools in Limpopo. Her study showcases the strengthening of collaboration through partnerships from an Indigenous Knowledge perspective. Her community engagement project is well-suited to the project, providing an ideal perspective for working with a community within an educational institution – it connects a real community with the institution. This helps diffuse the separation of what academic institutions do from the practices of communities. Not only do partnerships help perform certain activities, but they can also be a powerful tool for sharing this valuable knowledge. There is a need for concerted effort, along with relevant teaching methods and resources, to ensure that these kinds of partnerships succeed.

It is wrongly believed that mathematics, science and technology are difficult subjects, especially for rurally based learners, many of whom belong to Indigenous communities and contexts. Teaching these subjects outside of the learners' cultural contexts is attributable to this incorrect belief. Learners should learn within safe spaces or environments that support their cultural beliefs and knowledge. Doing this could prove the difficulty of these subjects wrong. Sinethemba Mdleleni and Kenneth Mlungisi Ngcoza confront this belief in their study using talking circles, accompanied by a sharing stick applied in the teaching of Physical Sciences. This offers an Indigenous teaching method that ensures a safe learning environment and fosters a sense of belonging. Learners become motivated to claim their voices and contribute their ideas in a less intimidating

environment. The study suggests exploring indigenous methods and principles of learning that support collaborative learning and inclusion.

Expressions, such as proverbs and riddles, ensure the preservation of past knowledge and its importance in informing the present and the future. Expressions convey certain ideas that are critical from a cultural perspective. They not only entertain but also transmit Indigenous Knowledge, moral values, and cognitive skills. When they are used in teaching and learning, they promote critical thinking, ethical reflection, memory development, and cultural identity. Phethani Progress Mudau and Itani Peter Mandende's autoethnographic study expresses the educational value of riddles among the Vhavenda. In the context of their study, anchored in Afrocentricity and Sankofa frameworks, riddles serve as both a means of preserving Indigenous Knowledge and a method of teaching it, and as a powerful tool to safeguard this knowledge from being eroded by modern influences and the threat of marginalising Indigenous languages.

One should not be blind to the fact that, like any other knowledge and practices, there are notable challenges that Indigenous people contend with. This suggests that we cannot glorify Indigenous Knowledge, as nothing is perfect in this world. Carrying babies on the back in traditional African contexts is a common phenomenon, which presents such challenges. The primary rationale for this practice is to ensure the baby's closeness to the mother's body and to foster a sense of warmth and love. The blind spot is the effect that carrying a baby has on the mother's body's support structure. It is in this light that Bridget Grobler and Terry Jeremy Ellapen conducted a literature surveillance on the effects of baby carrying on the sagittal plane of rural caregivers. Surfacing from their study are indications of the strain on the sagittal plane posed by the baby's weight, leading caregivers to experience musculoskeletal pain. Their study creates awareness about this issue. While it might not be easy to stop this practice, especially given its connection to care and love, there is an opportunity to begin addressing the issue.