

Chapter 27

Indigenous Knowledge Exclusion in Education Systems of Africans: Impact of Beingness and Becoming an African

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ABSTRACT

This chapter intends to push the frontiers of knowledge production and raise consciousness of indigenous knowledge systems as an essential strategy that can enable transformation and enhance intergenerational approaches to learning for all Africans. The lack of inclusion of indigenous knowledge that is produced through the daily interaction of African children within the home and their environment in African education systems has had a negative impact and is a threat to the beingness of Africans. This does not only have a negative impact on the beingness of the African child but also on the journey of becoming an African. Becoming an African is an evolving concept that requires consistent self-reflection and adjustment according to the context and ongoing changes that occur in that context. African education systems and research can play a transformative constructive role in the revival of beingness and becoming an African person.

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is an essential transformative instrument that could enhance the beingness and becoming of Africans. African homes are spaces for creating African knowledges with older people being the carriers of validated knowledge and younger generations enjoying the space of apprenticeship. In educating the African child, external forces of colonisation ignored the African knowledges that were lying dormant in African homes. This had a negative and devastating impact on the development of the African person. This chapter situates itself within indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), the lens that will be used by the authors of this chapter and will be based on the conceptual understanding that indigenous knowledge (IK) consists of community knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and technologies that pervade, or are endemic to, a particular community (Zonke, 2005; Mishra, Hess & Luce, 2003). According to Higgs (2002:38), 'indigenous' refers to the root of things and hence something natural and innate to a specific context. Kolawole (2005: 1427) defines indigenous knowledge as the technical insight or wisdom gained and developed by people in a particular locality through years of careful observation and experimentation with the natural phenomena around them. Indigenous ways of knowing are based on locally, ecologically, and seasonally contextualized truths of particular natural groups of people. These natural groups of people are characterised by complex kinship systems of relationships among people, animals, earth, and other beings of the cosmology of the universe from which all knowing originates (Hammersmith, 2007). Therefore, due to the fact that these knowledge systems are specific to a particular group of people in a particular location, they cannot be contested anywhere else in the world but, as a speciality, can join and contribute to some of the knowledge and knowing of the world (Chimbala-Kalenga, 2015, Mji, 2012).

Indigenous knowledge *gurus* such as Barnhardt (1986), Cajete (1986), Battista and Barman (1995) and others describe indigenous knowledge as knowing based on the teachings and experiences passed on from generation to generation. Indigenous knowledge is rooted in the spiritual, health, culture and language of a people and cannot therefore be separated from them. It has a traditional authority system that is dynamic, cumulative and stable. A way of life, where wisdom means using traditional knowledge in 'good' ways, and which will serve both nature and the people of that land. It means using the heart and the head together to make decisions that will benefit the whole community and ultimately the rest of the universe. It survives because it comes from the spirit which guides existence in knowing about the continuity of life with no beginning and no end. It is the relationship and code of ethics that governs the appropriate use of the environment. It is recognizing that this code of ethics, which includes rules and conventions promoting desirable ecosystem relations, human-animal interactions and social relationships, tends to be the glue that seals everything else. Hence, human beings have the responsibility of being aware of how they relate to each other and the rest of the beings of the earth, taking into consideration their rightful position and response as humans in relation to the other beings of the earth (Mji, 2012; Some 1994). They thereby lead and forge the direction for either a healthy or a sick earth, because with healthy relationships everything around blossoms while struggling relationships can cause ill-health. If this is not contained and if relationships are not mended, it can lead to community sickness which may ultimately lead to epidemics of global proportion (Mji, 2012).

Mishra et al (2003) emphasise the use of the correct terminology when conducting IKS studies. They opt to use the term 'indigenous', rather than 'native' or 'traditional', as is often found in the literature, because indigenous more accurately represents the process of being and becoming a practitioner and specialist of that land (Mji, 2012). Aside from negative racial connotations, 'native' locates people in

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