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Integration of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems into Higher Education Curriculum in Zimbabwe Universities: Exploring Experiences of Lecturers

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on attempts to integrate African indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into higher education curriculum in Zimbabwe Universities. Despite its potential to bring about sustainable development in local communities, higher education institutions (HEIs) have not taken its integration seriously into its curriculum reform as well as its research agenda. The main objective of the study was to establish constrains associated with the inclusion of African IKS in higher education (HE) curriculum reform. The study was motivated by the call to decolonise higher education and give African knowledge the same weight as that given to Western colonial knowledge. A qualitative study was carried out at one university and all academic staff formed the population of the study. Purposive convenient sampling where variables such as gender, interest in IKS and years of experience, was used to come up with a sample of 20 participants from various faculties. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and a questionnaire. Thematic analysis based in the interpretive paradigms was employed in the analysis of data. The study revealed that African IKS is not valued as a legitimate scientific knowledge, and this tends to constrain its implementation in the curriculum. In this regard, this study recommends that African scholars should make efforts to present IKS as a scientific based knowledge with its own African indigenous theoretical framework that can be used in enhancing its scholarship through research. Initiatives like this will likely promote African IKS relevance and value in HE curriculum integration in universities in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge System, Higher Education, Western Colonial Knowledge Scholarship, Curriculum

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Independent African states have considered education, particularly higher education (HE) as a tool for economic development (Boom, Camming & Chung, 2006; Shava, 2020). Various governments have demonstrated faith in the role that HE can play. However, expected national development as a product of HE has been a far cry. Higher Education has not responded to the exigencies of society's situations considering community's development aspirations (Nepadi Agency, 2001). Higher Education has largely remained western centred and not African centred. So western centred HE, produced development paradigms that did not address African social and economic challenges (Mazrui, 2000; Molla and Cuthbert, 2018; Ndhlovu, 2018). Education curriculum in Africa must be relevant to the needs of the citizens. There is an apparent disconnect between higher education curriculum in Africa and the continent's indigenous knowledge system (Ntuli, 1999; Vilakazi, 1999). This made Africa's HE system fall short of its mandate to produce a highly developed human capital. Africa's indigenous knowledge system (IKS) was deliberately marginalized to an inferior position on

account of being unscientific, barbaric, and backward (Mapara, 2009; Mbembe, 2016). The continent's originality and authentic experiences including cultural values, beliefs and its forms of knowledge have been repudiated. The consequence was that this misconception made African IKS loose its place and role in the University curriculum. That made HE irrelevant and ineffective. Apart from continental poor development of Africa, there has been little recognition from academic and research institution of the need for research on African IKS (Hountondji, 2002; Nkondo, 2012). This calls for a major reform of HE curriculum. One of the suggested initiatives is the integration of African IKS into HE curriculum (Mavhunga, 2006). The call to decolonize education in formerly colonized states is one of the attempts to integrate IKS into African education. Africa's imported education curriculum should consider the inclusion of local forms of knowledge found in communities. In other words, existing realities in terms of cultural values, belief systems and lived experiences. Indigenous knowledge system, as product of the local environment should form the foundation (basis) upon (on) which the formal education system of a society is constructed. Some universities in Zimbabwe have taken initiatives to decolonize HE by integrating African IKS in their curriculum. These have taken the form of introducing traditional medicine in faculties of medicine, incorporating African language teaching in social sciences and indigenous mining practices into artisanal mining in schools of mines.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Eurocentric nature of the HE curriculum has been identified as a big challenge to its relevance in providing solutions to the economic, social, and political development of formerly colonized states including Zimbabwe. So, integration of AIKS has been identified to be one of the effective ways for HE curriculum reform strategy that would bring about the relevance of HE. However, despite this promising decolonization initiative of the HE curriculum, some challenges have constrained its successful implementation. Consequently, the HE curriculum remained Western-oriented and therefore irrelevant. Various studies on AIKS have been carried out in Zimbabwe but they focused mainly on the availability of AIKS and their importance to society (Risiro,2020). Also, scholars such as Matsika (2012), Ogunniyi (2016), and Pedzisai (2013) acknowledged that there is a minimum application of AIKS in classroom teaching in Zimbabwe although it is being encouraged. Many studies on AIKS in Zimbabwe focused on its relevance and application in the school sector and very little on its integration in HE in teaching and learning in Zimbabwe. In this regard, the purpose of this study was to find out the experiences of university lecturers in incorporating AIKS into their classrooms as this would assist in recommending possible suggestions where need be.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

How was the integration of AIKS into the HE curriculum experienced by academics?

Does inclusion of IKS into the HE curriculum enhance students' understanding of what is taught?

Is African indigenous knowledge given the same value by academics as that given to Western-centred knowledge?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Decolonization Theory

Colonialism made the colonized lose not only their land but their culture, psyche, epistemologies, dignity, and sovereignty (Cabral, 2005; Belfi and Sandiford, 2021). Eurocentric cultural

models disadvantaged indigenous models. For example, colonial languages displaced indigenous languages while writing displaced orality. So coloniality continued despite political independence (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

Independence did not dismantle some of the colonial elements that remained a legacy of the colonial period. Epistemologically, knowledge continues to be embedded in Western ideologies and advances settler interests (Coronil, 2020). In some cases, African universities continue to aid Eurocentric cultural models that serve the interests of the former colonizers (Kaya and Seletti, 2013).

A decolonization project based on sound theory needs to be employed to address the challenge. A decolonization theory could include the following dimensions: cultural, psychological, anthropological, and economic for indigenous people to achieve indigenous (Ashcroft et al., 2007). Universities have a clear role in the decolonization process. Tuck and Yang (2012) acknowledge the transformative power of university education. They argued that a decolonial curriculum is a powerful tool for deconstructing colonial influences on knowledge and education (Ibid). In Africa, the works of Chinua Achebe (1994) and Ngugi Thiong'o (1986) have been at the forefront of the decolonization model. African academics must recuperate the history of the African to regain the dignity of the African and decolonize the mind of the African (Ngugi, 1986). However, Gikandi (1992) advocated that the decolonization process must be based on indigenous ideological foundations as a tool that makes the process effective. So, HEIs must decolonize the curriculum through the integration of AIKS as a curriculum reform imperative.

The concept indigenous knowledge system

It is a concept which is as diverse as there are voices that utter them. At the foundation of its several interpretations is an agreement that IK is an alternative to mainstream Western styled or modern understanding of knowledge.

Ellen and Harris (2002: 2-6) view IK as a unique and shared knowledge of a population of people or community which informs their collective world views, Also, Kiggundu (2007) defines the term IK as local knowledge that exists because of interactions with the environment by members of a community within a geographical area. It covers all fields of human endeavour including but not limited to agriculture, environment, pharmacology, health, trade, economics, and political systems.

Emerging from the above perspectives are the following features associated with IK: i) it's a product of human interaction with the environment, ii) judging by the fields it covers, it is holistic iii) it is applied for human survival iv) its environment specific (local) v) it is embedded in a people's culture iv) it is often shunned by institutions of higher learning.

Justification for HE reform

Before considering the question of HE reforms there is need to evaluate the status of HE in Africa or Zimbabwe in respect of its relevance, efficiency and fitness for purpose. The following perspectives feature that in a way characterize HE in general terms.

Firstly, there is agreement among key stakeholders like policy makers, government development partners, business and academics that HE in its correct form has proved to be irrelevant (Kolawok, 2021; Mulla and Cuthbert, 2018; Thondlana and Garwe, 2021). Its transformative power to produce human capital has been limited. One of the major

criticisms is that it is too Eurocentric based and not rooted to the needs and aspirations of the nation it is supposed to serve in Africa (Kaya and Seleti, 2013). Because of that, HE has not been able to address the development needs of nations in a very sustainable way (Mazrui, 2000). VISION 2030 and its target to develop a middle income economy might remain a pipe dream or be under threat if HE continues to produce graduates whose knowledge does not empower them to solve problems or create employment on whose foundation is heritage. Arguably, African HE whose knowledge is Western based has failed to link and unlock the potential of Indigenous Knowledge system that is community based.

HE is manned by African scholars who have been less successful to set a research agenda that can develop and produce its own African theoretical and methodological frameworks that can spur sustainable economic development (Seleti, 2013). In practice, cultural values reflected in HE content is reflective of the Western values inherited from the colonizers (McCarthy, 2004; Ndlovu, 2018). Significantly, these values are disconnected from existing African indigenous society.

McCarthy (2004) and Moodie (2003) recount the above perspective by noting that research activities found in HEIs are designed to support neo-liberal and capitalistic philosophies that promote economic exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of the West. HE curriculum models and theoretical frameworks continue to perpetuate marginalization of AIK on account of it being primitive and less empowering (Kiya and Seleti, 2013). The consequence is that HE continues to serve the interests of the West rather than of the local communities.

Another dimension is that African Universities have less confidence in themselves. According to Hountondji (2002), these universities on the African continent tend to benchmark themselves against Western universities to gain authenticity and legitimacy. The implication is that African scholars need to develop their own research agenda and credible models of knowledge production that can compete and earn the respect of other international scholars. Developments like these, will make collaboration and partnerships between African universities and Western universities be based on equality and collegiality which is opposed to the current set up. Currently African universities collaborate with Western universities as junior partners (Brock-Utne, 2000).

Hountondji (2002) highlights that research and teaching spaces in African HEIs are dominated or conducted not in the mother tongue but in colonial languages. The negative impact of this trend is twofold. First, research into African indigenous paradigms is not prioritized and thus undermined. Second, investment in the development of AIK as a legitimate form of knowledge that can be used in academic spaces in HEIs is also neglected. Attempts in HE reforms have been made but they have been less successful. The reason is that these reforms are still conceived and implemented to fit the framework of a relationship that marginalizes AIK systems particularly indigenous languages into HE system (Smith, 2002; Walter, 2002).

Why is the status of HE like that?

Reasons for Eurocentric inferiorisation of AIK system in HE deserves some space in this paper. There are assumptions that lead to the marginalisation of African indigenous literacy and philosophical traditions. The key one is the Eurocentric view that describes AIK as primitive, unscientific, obsolete and disempowering (Mapara, 2009; Nicholas-Figuera, et. al, 2017; Ntuli, 1999; Vilakazi, 1999). Consequently, these are not considered authentic sources of social science research and theory.

Additionally, the unscientific status of AIK referred to above, is blamed on the lack of capacity by African social scientists to have a deliberate research agenda focused on the development and production of indigenous knowledge (Kaya and Seleti, 2013). Lack of African academic confidence in the field of AIK is evident. However, this is contrary to the power of African indigenous knowledge. It has dynamism that is essential for AIKs based education. Its other academic merit is that its socially constructed and as such can address community challenges for purposes of sustainable development (Kolawok, 2012; Vilakazi, 1999).

Another Eurocentric criticism is that AIK lacks universality because it is a product of its local environment including the community (Nkondo, 2012). The counter argument is that this is a limited view that fails to recognise the basic principles of knowledge production. Arguably, universally all forms of knowledge are locally produced and with time gain universal application (Vilakazi, 1999).

African scholars need to defend the power and role of IK in respect of its knowledge production as a legitimate process that can produce knowledge that can address global challenges like the COVID 19, HIV/AIDS, SOURCES OF ENERGY as well as CLIMATE CHANGE. Vilakazi (1999) puts the point so very well that no culture can develop and prosper without the curriculum of other civilisations. The implication emerging is that AIK' s role in HE curriculum should be promoted and defended.

So, AlK is largely a product of its environment. Consequently, an individual's development is influenced by the environment in which one is born and raised (Muya, 2007; Kimwanga, 2002). Regardless of the learner's aptitude, if one is brought up in an environment in which hunting is the profession, one will become a hunter. Similarly, one could become a craftsman if one is raised in an environment of woodcarving. So, the environment has huge influence on an individual regardless of one's aptitude and abilities. It's a weakness associated with AIK.

Another weakness associated with AIK is that it is considered a non-literate form of knowledge that depends on memory (Battiste, 2002; Hountondji, 2002). It is a major weakness of this form of knowledge. Memory is not dependable since events, quantities and measurements can be inaccurately described or exaggerated.

Dependence on recall without any form of record tends to undermine use of AIK in conducting government business and commerce. Complex operations like these cannot be operationalized based on recall. From a scientific standpoint, AIK lacks precision to facilitate mathematical computations and modelling so necessary in the commercial world (Seleti, 2013).

Another weakness associated with AIK is that group interests are prioritised over individual interests and self-actualisations of the individual are subordinated in favour of group interests.

Despite these Eurocentric criticisms, AIK has great potential as a form of knowledge. First, African researchers have opportunities within their research agenda to exploit African intellectualism that resides in communities particularly among elders (Kimwanga, 2002; McCarthy, 2004). According to Walter (2002), the other dimension is that AIKS has potential for documentation and knowledge sharing with students or communities to enhance sustainability. Pedagogically, according to Kim Waga (2003) and Muya (2007) AIKS provides students with opportunities to learn through experimentation, trials and errors, folklore, and observations. Children will be immersed in community cultures learning through their own indigenous languages.

Africa should strongly reject the Eurocentric view that AIKS is not capable of producing human capital with the requisite craft competence capable of meeting global challenges because it is considered unscientific and incompatible with formal western education. Validation of African beliefs and ideas using western cultural benchmarks should also be resisted if AIKS must claim its place and role in the academic spaces of HEIs.

Also, indigenous institutions exist that provide spaces for African intellectualisation to develop and thrive. These institutions include initiation schools, indigenous games, agriculture systems, storytelling, song and dance (Greiner, 1998; Brush and Stanbinsky, 1996). These provide strong pillars of African sources of knowledge production.

Argument for the integration of AIKS in HE curriculum reform.

Inclusion of AIKS offers HE opportunities for creation of multiple forms of knowledge as opposed to the existence of one superior Eurocentric form of knowledge as a benchmark and standard. The approach gives scholars opportunities to appreciate other forms of knowledge that exist as opposed to one through an agreed research agenda. Hoppers (2021), Vilakazi (1999) and Ntuli (1999) support this view and perspective. They advocate that Africa should resist adopting Eurocentric forms of knowledge that is so ineffective and disastrous to its development agenda but instead ensures that it builds on indigenous capital of the past. The consequence could be production of a knowledge system that is relevant to communities and land itself for sustainable development.

An inclusive education system that brings together Western forms of knowledge and IK system produces an educational curriculum that has parity (Kante, 2004; Thondlana and Garwe, 2021). One that does not marginalize other legitimate forms of knowledge to the detriment of national development. AIKS has less pitfalls for meeting challenges faced in a global village.

Interestingly, integration of AIKS has pedagogical benefits for students since it enhances educational relevance through a content that speaks of their world view (Battiste, 2002; Vilakazi, 1999;). Integration of IKS in HE curriculum is crucial for production of human capital that is relevant to provide solutions for the development challenges of a community or country.

Finally, decolonisation of the curriculum has been an educational project at the forefront of many formerly colonised states in Africa. Integration of AIKS in HE in African universities will be part of the solution of the decolonisation project (Ndlovu, 2018; Thndlana and Garwe, 2021). It will lead to the development of African scientists and scholars who will champion development of relevant HE content that is reflective of the aspirations of the nation it is supposed to serve as opposed to the Eurocentric HE content that produces development models that serve Western interests.

Experiences of the promotion of AIKS at a local university

Government made a deliberate effort to establish a university with the mandate to promote the teaching of African culture and knowledge in that institution. This was resisted. Both local leaders and academics joined hands to voice their objections. Promotion of IK based HE at the expense of standard HE cannons of knowledge (disciplines) was viewed as sabotage of the educational aspirations of students. Instead, traditional disciplines were introduced eg agriculture, social science, science (with laboratories and education and in the process promote Western form of knowledge.

Below are details of a study that was conducted.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative interpretive research was conducted at one university in the Southern Africa region where all academic staff formed the population of the study. A purposive sampling was used to come up with 20 participants who were conveniently sampled across faculties made up of 3 professors from social sciences, one professor from agriculture, 8 lecturers from commerce, 3 lecturers from African languages, and 5 lecturers from education. Variables such as gender, age, experience, and interest in AIKS were considered in selecting the participants. Interviews and open-ended questions were used as data-collecting instruments. Participants' consent was negotiated to satisfy ethical considerations. A voice recorder was used to capture participants' voices. Data was analysed through the coding of transcribed interviews according to themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following five themes emerged from the data: I) conceptualization of IKS ii) possibility of IKS integration into HE curriculum iii) value of IKS as a knowledge form compared to Western forms of education iv) challenges associated with integration of IKS into HE. Below are the findings.

Conceptualization of IKS

It is imperative that academics have a clear conceptualization of IKS if its integration into the HE curriculum must be successful. The majority of the participants (N=11) demonstrated an understanding of what IKS is. They described it as knowledge and practices developed in local communities over generations. Voices of participants P3, P4, P6, and P10 were more revealing. This is what they said:

P3, Knowledge used by local people over centuries to solve problems.

P4, Knowledge developed from lifestyle, customs, and their history.

P6, Useful for the traditional healthcare system.

P10, Undocumented knowledge concerning our culture.

From the interview data above, a variety of perspectives associated with IK are described. A key perspective is one by P10 who described IK as a non-literate form of knowledge that is imbedded in its culture. A similar characterization of IK was made by Kaya and Seleti, (2013) who viewed it as unscientific since it resided in elders in communities rather than in record form. It is perspectives like these that have contributed to the Eurocentric stereotypes of IK that have resulted in it being marginalized in the education system. It has also contributed to the low status given to African scholars championing the research agenda of IK and its knowledge production (Olukoshi, 2007). It also emerged from interview data that IK is socially constructed (Ndlovu, 2018) a point well echoed by P4 who recounted that knowledge is developed from a people's "lifestyle, customs and their history". More significantly, it emerged from P3 and P6 that IK knowledge qualifies to be knowledge since it has a utilitarian value that can be used by people "to solve problems" such as traditional medicine that can be used in the "healthcare system" of a community or nation. This is consistent with discourses raised by Kolawele (2012) who noted that IK utilisation is a powerful engine of providing solutions to the socio-economic challenges of a nation. So, conceptualization of IK by participants shows that it is locally produced and that it is generated from a people's culture and history (Kiggundu, 2007) and that it can be used to solve problems in communities (McNeely, 1999). This makes its integration in HE curriculum more imperative.

Possibility of integrating IK in HE curriculum

From the interview extracts 10 of the participants indicated that IKS could be integrated into HE curriculum. Explanation given ranged from the value of IKS as a form of knowledge with its own African scholarship which has a model of knowledge production. Participant P5 cited opportunities offered by it in instructional pedagogy, particularly that it enriches learners' experiences. Interview extracts below are more revealing.

P1, It's used as a framework upon which scholarship could be claimed and advanced without marginalizing other forms of knowledge.

P4, It can be integrated to foster sustainability in the modern World. It can protect deforestation and manage climate change.

P6, It will complement existing scientific knowledge eg health problems can be addressed through traditional herbal medicines.

P10, So that cultural knowledge is disseminated to the new generation. New generation should acquire the knowledge of the past.

P11, It helps to explain concepts. Teachers can use IK to draw lessons e.g., ngano.

The emerging dominant view from interview data is that integration of IKS is possible because there are academic, development and pedagogic advantages. Participants' voices particularly P5 highlighted that integration of IK in HE curriculum offered opportunities for scholars to redeem HE content from Western domination. P5 put the point so well when he recounted that integration of IK would be "used as a framework upon which scholarship could be claimed and advanced". This suggests that upscaling of IK intellectualism in academic spaces in universities (Ndlovu, 2018) where decolonization of the curriculum would do justice to African epistemologies (Mbembe, 2016) through a repositioning of a research agenda that puts IK and its knowledge production in the forefront. Interestingly, the strength of integrated IK in HE in fostering sustainable development is acknowledged. Inclusion of IK in global scientific knowledge enhances its relevance and transformative power to meet developmental challenges of a community or a nation. For example, both participants P4 and P6 acknowledge the role of IK in addressing global challenges like climate change and other health challenges. P4 refers to the protection of "deforestation and climate change" while P6 argues that inclusion of IK in HE will complement existing "scientific knowledge" to address "health problems" through "traditional herbal medicines." This acknowledges the role and value of IK in addressing global challenges. This is a perspective put so well by NEPAD AGENCY (2001) which noted that the value of mobilizing IK systems of a community was of equal importance for socio economic development purposes like the availability of physical and financial resources. Integration of IK is also viewed as an opportunity and vehicle for the preservation and dissemination of IK from one generation to the next. It is also educationally encouraged because it promotes students' understanding by drawing lessons from experiences in the community environment. Pedagogically, use of indigenous languages and folklore enhance students understanding of concepts since knowledge would be based on what they know.

Disturbingly, Western knowledge is characterised as scientific by P6 while IK is not which is reflective of the unscientific nature associated with IK. This leads to marginalization IKS in HE in attempts to integrate it.

Is IK valued equally like Western form of knowledge?

Voices of participants are mixed on whether IK is valued equally in comparison to Western forms of knowledge. IK has been described as inferior and as such looked down upon by some participants with some commenting that it should be valued equally. Extracts presented below show the mixed position revealed.

P5 Its not documented fully and those wishing to learn more

about it can face challenges.

P7 Modern society tend to favour Western based knowledge.

P9 Western knowledge colonised the minds of the people. No chance is given to it. That knowledge is used in teaching medication and counselling systems.

P15 Not only equal but can surpass in many ways. Western knowledge gained through solving Western problems, but IK was gained through solving local problems.

P18 Should be viewed equally because humanity has its own way of adopting to prevailing environment. No wonder Western knowledge is not effectively functional in another environment.

Results reveal that while there are perspectives that reflect Eurocentric stereotypes about the value of IKS there are some views that strongly advocate that it has the same value if not equal to Western forms of knowledge since it is relevant in providing solutions to local problems. The views presented by P5 and P7 that modern society prefers Western forms of knowledge in comparison to undocumented IK is associated with the exclusion of IK from HE and a constraining effect on attempts to decolonise HE curriculum. Cannons of knowledge that are IK based are marginalized by Western-based cannons of knowledge. Both participants show that western knowledge is preferred in universities at the expense of IK that is regarded as inferior. P7 says "modern society tend to favour Western based knowledge" while P9 confirms that western knowledge colonised the minds of the people." This is reflective of western colonial legacies in education that promoted western epistemologies at the expense of African form of knowledge (Okulosh, 2007). The coloniality of knowledge perpetuates inferiority of IK in a way that undermines decolonization of HE curriculum. According to Kein (2008) this inequality between the two forms of knowledge results in the marginalization of IK in HE curriculum reform. The implication is that African scholars should be supported to promote the teaching of IK. More so because pedagogically it assists students to understand subject matter through the application of experiences and knowledge from their local environment.

However, participants P15 and P18 regard IK and western knowledge as two forms of knowledge with equal value with P15 suggesting that IK is "not only equal but can surpass in many ways". Additionally, both P15 and P18 appreciate that both forms of knowledge are products of local environment that is "gained through solving local problems". This resonates with discourses by Kaya and Seleti (2013) who expressed valuing of local knowledge on the grounds of its utilitarian in providing solutions to problems found in the local environment. So western epistemologies cannot be promoted at the expense of African epistemologies without undermining its transformative power in addressing national development challenges. The implication is that Western epistemologies are irrelevant in effectively providing solutions to local community challenges without including African indigenous knowledge and practices.

Role of IK in assisting students to understand.

Data showed that most of the participants were of the view that

integrating IK in HE curriculum has educational value in terms of promoting students' learning and grasping concepts. IK pedagogical value lies in the fact that it facilitates students' conceptualization of the subject matter at hand. Participants' voices below eloquently demonstrate this.

P2 Students quickly understand concepts when presented in their own context rather than imagination.

P4 IKS use examples that are practical to most people's beliefs and history. Students remember easily since they can relate.

P7 Can assist considering backgrounds. Sometimes language can be a barrier to effective teaching and learning.

P11, It helps to explain social concepts which assist in understanding of knowledge being taught.

P18 Cultural backgrounds cannot be ignored since it has relevance in Education.

P19 Good psychological approach. IKS can assist students in understanding Our culture, beliefs, norms, and values are not out in the new generation.

From interview data, there is evidence of valuing African knowledge through its culture. Pedagogically, there is an appreciation of the value of local knowledge in enhancing the teaching of content. Also, practical examples as opposed to theoretical examples that are Western based are used to make the university student understand, relate to knowledge taught and recall it. Voices of participants P2 and P4 highlighted the pedagogical value of IK in HE is teaching so eloquently. P2 noted that students taught through IK mastered concepts quickly because they were presented in their context rather than imagined western contexts that are foreign. On the other hand, P4 observed that IKS provides universities with opportunities to use practical examples that are reflective "of a people's beliefs and history." Students are likely to recall such content since they are likely to relate to it. The relationship between culture and education in facilitating teaching and learning is echoed by participants' voices. P18 warned that ignoring a learner's "cultural background" is educationally detrimental to the mastery of knowledge by the learner. P18 strengthens the point further by bringing in the psychological dimension to the teaching and learning discourse. P18 noted that a "good psychological approach" to teaching "new generation" of students would not ignore people's" culture, beliefs, norms, and values".

It can be argued that students background assists the learner in assimilating new subject matter at hand to be learnt. The educational principle of learning from the known to the unknown is at play here (Kaya and Seleti, 2013). Practical examples drawn from people's culture and beliefs will enhance students' conceptualizations of concepts. Hence integrating AIK in HE curriculum has benefits to students.

Challenges experienced in integrating IK in HE

Interview extracts are dominant with challenges that affect the integration of IK in higher education. These range from the preference for Western-based education, lack of qualified staff and literature resources. These are key requirements and conditions for successful curriculum HE reform (Gouedard, 2020). Statements made by participants presented below show this.

P2, Integration into HE could be rejected on account of lack of uniformity. Its applicability is situational.

P8, People who went through Western education system tend to despise such knowledge.

P10, HE curriculum is already saturated.

P13, Lack of IK experts. Lack of written texts.

P15, Lack of literature and resources to spearhead the programme. generations are used to Western knowledge.

P20, Students or learners are no longer interested in these IKS. They think its primitive

Integration of IK in HE face challenges that make the decolonization project less successful. One of the key challenges is associated with negative attitude associated with IK. Eurocentricism has a huge influence on it (Kaya and Seleti, 2013). Both western educated graduates and students in universities despise IK because they have a deem view of it and categorise it as primitive. Participants P2 and P8 are lauded with these Eurocentric views. P8 for example recounted that "people who went through Western education tend to despise such knowledge." Kimwanga (2002) and Moodie (2003) acknowledge that HELs have tended to serve Western interests at the expense of African interests. Given these entrenched Western mind sets, decolonization of HE curriculum through reform would not be successful because of lack of African scholars (Thondlana and Garwe, 2021). Participants P13 and P15 highlighted the point so well. Commenting on the possibility of integrating IK in HE curriculum P13 cited lack of IK experts to drive the reform agenda in HE as a major barrier. On the other hand, P15 recounted that "Lack of literature and resources to spearhead the reform programme" was a limiting factor. These barriers were also noted by Mbembe (2016) in his studies on decolonization of the African university. Development of indigenous theories is affected by lack of IK experts whose consequence would be uncritical adoption of Western epistemologies in African universities (Thondlana and Garwe, 2021). So according to Moodie (2003) efforts to do justice to indigenous epistemologies in a post-colonial state are undermined. Another rare challenge cited is lack of content space to accommodate IK to be integrated in HE since it is so saturated to accommodate it. The consequence would be curriculum overload on students leading to the curriculum being resisted by students. These are major HE curriculum constraints that would negatively affect integration of AIK in HE curriculum. Both teaching and development of IK as a specialist form of knowledge require relevant knowledge that is documented to act as basis for teaching and research in universities. Qualified staff are also a crucial resource in the actual teaching of IK. Without such qualified staff IK integration in HE would be under threat.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings revealed that AIK has potential to be integrated in HE on its own merit. The potential of IK in providing solutions to global challenges like health is acknowledged. However, integration of IK in HE would face constraining challenges mostly emanating from Eurocentric stereotypes which regard IK as an unscientific form of knowledge that lacks universality because it is situationally constructed. Absence of documented literature and social scientists in the area of IK affects development of the area with its own system of knowledge production and theoretical frameworks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Academics and researchers should continue to question or interrogate the role and relevance of western-oriented knowledge dominant in HE to the exclusion of IKS in Africa's or Zimbabwe's development agenda. Vigorous and deliberate efforts should be made by both academic and government to mobilise IK systems among communities for the sake of socio-economic development. A knowledge of local cultures (sectors) has

merit for community development and national development. HEIs should encourage scholars and research in AIKS to develop their own methodologies and theoretical frameworks. Measures should be taken to train academics with specialisms in IK with the agenda of developing it as form of knowledge with its own research agenda and legitimate theoretical framework.

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