

Editorial

The relevance of Indigenous Knowledge on sustainable economic development with reference to the context of teaching and learning was the theme of this special volume. This volume consists of case studies that investigate the theory, practices and challenges faced in the process of advancing Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in sustainable teaching and learning practices to promoting economic development. Although the manifestation of what is taken to be indigenous knowledge could presumably be traced back roughly to the origins of humankind, the idea of indigenous knowledge is a relatively recent phenomenon. Indigenous knowledge provides the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities, especially the poor. It represents an important component of global knowledge on development issues (Nkomo 2000). IK is an underutilized resource in the development process. Learning from IK, by investigating first what local communities know and have, can improve understanding of local conditions and provide a productive context for activities designed to help the communities. Understanding IK can increase responsiveness to clients. Afrocentrists aim to expand the curriculum to include the valid achievements and knowledges of all societies and to use the voice of the community/culture itself to present a people's histories and struggles for affirmation (Sefa Dei 1998; Higgs 2008). Adapting international practices to the local setting can help improve the impact and sustainability of development assistance. Sharing IK within and across communities can help enhance cross-cultural understanding and promote the cultural dimension of development (Seepe 2001; Hoppers 2001; van Wyk 2013). Most importantly, investing in the exchange of IK and its integration into the assistance programs of the World Bank and its development partners can help to reduce poverty. The realization that IK has not become redundant in today's world is increasingly widespread. The Rio Declaration, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the documents coming out of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (United Nations 2012), and a whole host of other international instruments and forums have emphasized the current (and future) relevance of IK.

In this issue, Kwaira and Gumbo reported on a long-term design project in the Makonde Rural District in the northwest part of Zimbabwe. This community-based project involved the application of Design and Technology Education, and aimed to help farmers in the Makonde Rural

District to develop a sustainable localised model of technology for the processing of maize meal, peanut butter and cooking oil. Following the design principles encapsulated in the design stages adopted from the literature, the three machines for processing maize meal, peanut butter and cooking oil were designed and developed. The results reported here include those relating to the development of these machines, and findings and observations from interviews conducted with participants/end users.

Lilemba and Matembareported on the relevance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and its sustainable economic development among the Mafweethinic group of the Caprivi Region in Namibia. It argues that IKS among this group of people has been lost and relegated to the social and political doldrums of history due to Western education system. The main argument is that Western education system has not provided long – lasting solutions in the manner in which the Mafwe should preserve their IKS, but instead assisted in eroding it to such an extent that it is almost extinct. It is suggested that there is an urgent need for Namibia to adopt a diverse culturally sensitive form of education which firmly embeds indigenous knowledge in the way the curriculum is conceptualised, designed and delivered. Findings suggested the need for a comprehensive theory regarding how indigenous knowledge can become the bedrock and not merely an ancillary to a modern education in Namibia.

Romm explores the contribution of Indigenous ways of knowing and living to considerations around sustainable development. She suggests that Indigenous cultural orientations across the globe offer a ground work for us to recognize the essential connectivity of all planetary life, including human and non-human forces. Furthermore, Indigenous Wisdom as it manifests across the world (for example, in the cultural symbols of Indigenous people in Africa, of Native/Indian Americans in America, and of Aborigines in Australia) can be seen as offering an approach to knowing and being that is non-impositional. Instead of being geared to impose outlooks and social practices on others (in colonizing and imperialist fashion), it is potentially geared to more relational ways of knowing and problem-solving toward economic development. The author proposes some of the ways in which people in various Indigenous communities have tried to oppose forces of social and natural exploitation while exemplifying

alternative approaches to being in the world. The author proposes certain examples to be used in human ecological studies, specially focus in addressing Indigenous approaches as a need not be so much on the content of the “knowledge” that different people may forward, but rather on the practical implementation of tying knowledge-making to valued ways of living.

Baloyi explores the phenomenon of lobolo as indigenous way of living. The debate about paying lobola when my wife dies is explored from an African perspective. The author explains this phenomenon whereby African people view lobolo as a way of ensuring that families come together to agree, witness and accept that their family member is married, on the other hand some use the same tradition to generate income. Just as lobola cements marriage traditionally, those who avoid lobolo are made to pay when the situation forces them to. The author indicated several cases where the death of the woman or girl who lived with a man without being married according to the lobolo custom brought an issue of the forceful payment of lobolo, as a condition to allow the deceased female burial to take place by the parents of the female. Besides scaring the young males and females who seem to ignore the importance of lobolo agreement when marrying, the practice also had its own unintended effects on the male and his family. The author argues that the intention as well as the gist of the article is not only to argue that African people should respect the tradition by agreeing on the lobolo issue to avoid an unexpected forced payment, but also to try to check how pastoral caregivers and the Christian church come in to assist those who will negatively be affected by the practice.

The current education debate about truancy or “skipping school” is not problematic for the school only, but also for families and the communities. Children are often not in school where their parents assume them to be and they are not receiving the education which is paid for in the form of school fees and state taxes. Van Breda explores truants’ views of their parents’ attitudes towards their education and how this impact on their school attendance and attainment. A thorough exploration of extant research and literature revealed that parental disengagement is becoming one of the major causes of all types of challenging behavioural problems among adolescents, including truant behaviour. The research findings indicate that the participants,

particularly those who featured as classical truants, are of the opinion that their parents/caregivers generally seem to display an unfavourable attitude towards their education. The author recommends local education and social welfare services provide support for greater parental involvement if they are serious about improving learners’ school attendance and performance.

Multi-grade teaching is seen as an important policy option for providing access to education for learners in remote areas. However, achieving excellence in teaching and learning in a rural context remains a challenge for teachers and other sectors in a changing education system. Taole describes the lived experiences of multi-grade teachers in rural schools and how they survive in their different multi-grade contexts. The author found that teachers have varying perceptions of multi-grade teaching and do not have a clear understanding of the rationale behind multi-grade teaching. In addition, the findings from the data reflect that despite the challenges multi-grade teachers face they are able to find ways of using the little they have to enable teaching and learning to take place in their context. Furthermore, multi-grade teachers practise useful strategies such as choosing similar topics and assessing learners in the same classroom according to their different grade levels. The author recommends that the teacher training curriculum integrates multi-grade teaching strategies as part of the initial teacher training, to enable teachers to deal with the realities that they face in multi-grade schools.

Segoe explores tutor support in open distance learning (ODL), which is beyond the scope of course material, is very important as it fosters collaborative learning and support in students. This support could be extended to that of an educational counsellor or tutor counsellor, career guidance, manager, assessor, facilitator, demonstrator, role model or pastor and the tutor could also act as a friend and advocate for the student within the ODL system. The findings provide evidence that tutor support plays an important role in the studies of ODL students and that such students need constant tutor support in order to be motivated and successful. The author indicates that tutor support services must address the question of whom they are designed for, and what is therefore needed by the students. In turn, this should lead to the determination of how those needs can be met, within the constraints of costs, technologies and geogra-

phy. The author concluded that the implementation and evaluation of tutor support, largely influenced by notions of innovations, mean that tutor support has to be continuously examined, documented and reflected upon.

A dysfunctional early childhood development (ECD) school will have a direct negative effect on the teaching and learning activities of the children attending it on their development. Marias and van Schalkwyk explore the needs and challenges of a community school in order to determine what role lecturers at Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions could play as part of their community engagement in transforming a dysfunctional school into a functional school. Findings revealed that the school was indeed dysfunctional due to unqualified and under-qualified teachers. An urgent recommendation is that unqualified and under-qualified teachers in ECD community schools must be identified in order to train them through ODL while teaching in these schools. However, it is important that these students should have a passion for young children and want to be part of the children's development years. The authors recommended that financial support, training through ODL, regular school visits by ODL lecturers. They concluded that ODL lecturers need to support untrained teachers through ODL teaching and learning strategies in order to become qualified teachers.

The Afrocentric method is derived from the Afrocentric paradigm which deals with the question of African identity from the perspective of African people as centred, located, oriented, and grounded. The Afrocentric philosophy is based on the principles of inclusivity, cultural specificity, critical awareness, committedness and political awareness. Van Wyk explores the NamaStap as the Namas' entertainment form used as a social, cultural and educational tool by the Nama-Khoisan people. The author explores the [re]claiming of the NamaStap as a dance of identity, culture and indigenous knowledge. A case is argued for using the NamaStap as Khoisan cultural heritage tool to promote economic development and nation building.

Many human activities have some mathematical ideas embedded in them. The use of indigenous games is one way of giving context that

can help students enjoy and understand mathematics in order to apply it in their everyday lives. Dewah and van Wyk reported on mathematical ideas that are embedded in the game of pada that is played by many indigenous children in Zimbabwe. They found that ideas of counting, inverse variation, geometrical constructions, projectiles, statistics, permutations, combinations and angles of elevation and depression are embedded in the game of pada. The authors concluded that the training of teachers to utilize indigenous knowledge systems and local cultural games when teaching Mathematics in order to fight mathophobia among African students.

The papers in this special issue focus on various issues regarding IK as a phenomenon providing and creating sustainable teaching and learning practices to promoting economic development in an African context. Though the special issue focus on the relevance of Indigenous Knowledge, most of the papers explore the issues from an educational context. The reviewers and editors are thanked for the value constructive feedback received and good work done.

REFERENCES

- Higgs P 2008. Towards An Indigenous African Educational Discourse: A Philosophical Reflection. *International Review of Education*, Volume 54, Issue 3-4, pp 445-458. From <<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11159-008-9088-x#>> (Retrieved on 12 September 2014).
- Hoppoers C 2001. Poverty, power and partnerships in educational development: A post-victimology perspective. *Compare*, 31(1): 21-38.
- Nkomo M 2000. Educational research in African development context. In: P Higgs, NCG Vakalisa, TV Mda, NT Assie-Lumumba (Eds.): *African Voices in Education*. Cape Town: Juta, pp. 24-35.
- Seepe S 2001. Indigenous knowledge systems can benefit everyone. *Mail and Guardian*, 21 October 2001.
- Sefa Dei GJ 1998. Why write back?: The role of Afrocentric discourse in social change. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 23(2): 200-208
- United Nations 2012. "Rio+20 - United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development". *Uncsd 2012*. org. World Summit on Sustainable Development. From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Conference_on_Sustainable_Development> (Retrieved on 4 August 2014).
- Van Wyk MM 2013. [Re]vitalize Khoisan art and culture via a community outreach initiative. *Studies on Tribes and Tribals*, 11(2): 145-151

September 2014

Micheal M. Van Wyk
(Guest Editor)
University of South Africa
Pretoria, 0003, South Africa