






Using Oral History to Redress Moral Degeneration Amongst the Youth in Higher Education Institutions of South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Africa has a rich oral history of indigenous peoples that is enshrined in their indigenous stories, folklore, myths, and legends. Indigenous elders in Africa have remained the key aspect who transmit knowledge from generation to generation by word of mouth. Moral degeneration is a problem throughout African communities generally, and South Africa particularly where there is growth in anti-social behaviour amongst the current generation. The study utilized qualitative document analysis (QDA) research methods to elucidate meaning from previously published works. The findings revealed that the youth today lack respect and morals in higher education institutions. Educators in higher education institutions are concerned over many issues that relate to the moral behaviour of the youth. Among those issues, learners are heavily affected by new concerns such as teenage pregnancy crime, suicide, alcohol, and drug abuse. Moral delinquency is at the core of their lives, and this has proven to be a serious concern. Consequently, the current education system which is devoid of indigenous knowledge fails to communicate positive morals to students leading to moral degeneration. This is proof that the facilitators in higher institutions should be equipped with skills to educate young people about morals. It is concluded that higher education institutions should be refined to respond to societal problems and challenges thereby reconstructing the morals of the youth. Without morals, the youth will have nothing and if their morals are not redressed, South Africa is likely to have immoral leaders tomorrow. This paper contributes to the area of oral history and indigenous knowledge as it advocates that oral history serves as an influential instrument for maintaining culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Moral degeneration, also referred to as moral decay is a worldwide issue across communities and it is represented by growing antisocial actions and deterioration in the quality of life. It is incarnation contains, amongst others, perverse sexual relations, gender-related violence, theft, vandalization, drug

and alcohol abuse and being addicted to social networks, teenage pregnancy, and lack of respect.¹ Therefore, oral history plays a significant role in managing moral decline by promoting comprehension, encouraging morals, and facilitating reparation in higher education institutions in South Africa.

In South Africa, higher education consists of both public and private institutions. According to Cloete, these are the institutions that carry out fundamental roles, which shape and design the base for their public pact with the community and the world at large.² The functions of higher education are to present values and social formalization, stipulate the most powerful and best-educated people in the community, increase the skills of the labour force, and present new knowledge. However, moral degeneration has been a universal phenomenon that has a negative effect on many communities and societies, particularly in South Africa.³ South Africa is encountering a dreadful moral collapse in school life and in family life where there is moral degradation in the youth due to loss of track of moral values.

Higher education institutions may be considered as leadership-building initiatives. The upcoming leadership (learners) may importantly impact the morals and values which are implemented throughout their practices in higher education institutions.⁴ The reality is that ethical dominion must be a part of education and that is difficult to overlook. Almost everyone can approve that moral growth must be integrated into teaching and learning development. As far as cultural diversity is concerned, different households have the same goal which is to have morally educated children. Moral education assists these children to have less disorderly behaviour, and be more unselfish, and well-mannered.⁵

One of the important features of indigenous knowledge is tradition-grounded education. Through numerous oral histories and traditions, the knowledge accumulated for years has been transmitted from generation to generation. Individuals preserve an interconnected relation with the natural settings and in most instances, the procedure of watching and learning all the symbols from the sky, sea, sunlight and moon, herbs and animals, desert and the spiritual domain is the foundation for ecological knowledge necessitated by requirement and supervision of the elderly groups.⁶

Oral history further challenges colonial records, disseminating moral lessons, advocating healing, and establishing morality. It is an important element in the continuing process of addressing moral degeneration and restoring indigenous knowledge. Moreover, oral history contributes importantly to the advancement of indigenous knowledge, challenging existing Eurocentric paradigms, and promoting moral development in higher education institutions. It assures that the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) continues to be relevant and vibrant.

Utilizing oral stories like designation terms, songs, mythologies, folklores, ancestral or family relations, sacred formation stories and irreligious stories portraying ancient proceedings, traditions, informative teachings, and individual life skills, they reconstruct the mutual and very precise type of literateness. Such communities are considered as greatly oral. Participants of each society from several localities may perform alteration of principal or more comprehensive oral methods to replicate community social, traditional, or spiritual life and the mystical domain demonstrated in visual signs. The elite problem involving methods to the oral literature is the estimation of an inherent worldview.⁷

Oral traditions such as the characters, stories, and topics are now applicable in today's moderate communities by linking that past to the present. The storyteller continuously and occasionally unchangeably balances behaviour with new plans and methods. It could be learned that one function of orality in society's lifespan forms a combined perception. For example, currently, societies are

¹ J.M. Louw, "The Socio-Educational Implications of the Moral Degeneration of the South African Society: Towards a Solution" (University of South Africa, 2009).

² Nico Cloete, "The South African Higher Education System: Performance and Policy," *Studies in Higher Education* 39, no. 8 (2014): 1355–68.

³ Louw, "The Socio-Educational Implications of the Moral Degeneration of the South African Society: Towards a Solution."

⁴ Divya Singh and Christoph Stückelberger, *Ethics in Higher Education: Values-Driven Leaders for the Future* (Globethics. net, 2017).

⁵ L.P. Nucci, *Education in the Moral Domain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶ Patrycja Koziel, "Oral Literature and Indigenous Knowledge: The Case of the San People from Southern Africa," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, no. 2 (2018).

⁷ Koziel, "Oral Literature and Indigenous Knowledge: The Case of the San People from Southern Africa."

vigorously participating in numerous initiatives and engagements that aim at oral tradition preservation. The registration activity attracts the initiative of instructors, who are collaborating, to record numerically two types of oral tradition: oral antiquity individual's private antiquities, lifespan stories, facts about animal landmarks, massifs, and imaginary stories, legends, songs about divinities and healers. It acts as a resource of information, such as its utilization of oral literature.

In South Africa, a greater number of higher education institutions are not taking part in an exceptional role by advocating moral principles in their numerous learning actors (lecturers, mentees, and other university grounds staff). The approach in which life skills education is now transferred is not culturally suitable. Considering that life skills theories and how they are presented are centred on standards introduced by Americans and Europeans, life skills do not accurately characterize the cultural realm of students.⁸

Moreover, modern life skills education promotes Western norms and standards over African standards, and it considers African standards to be utilized by illiterate people. It is intended that life skills education should be indigenized and represented in the home language for simpler comprehension and delivered in a culturally suitable way, which will have a good impact on the growth, self-confidence, and development of learners.⁹ Non-inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in life skills education will cause the application of such an educational system to lose students communally and educationally.¹⁰

On the other hand, a greater amount of HEIs' core morals is overlooked by operating discriminatory educational initiatives from a moral viewpoint. Meanwhile, to execute such conduct, they set incorrect examples for the upcoming leadership, or in other words, these types of HEIs are leading their forthcoming leadership to ethical decline.¹¹

To redress the moral degeneration, there is an importance and relevance in re-creating and re-designing the content of knowledge delivered by HEIs where oral history can be employed. Biyela asserts that oral history is community-focused and employed as an instrument for cultural evolvement and for evolving community consciousness regarding social matters and affairs that have an impact on the livelihoods of the people in rural communities.¹² It has the potential to transform communities as it reinstates the community to the branch of its knowledge. Oral history and indigenous stories are crucial for the preservation of culture and tradition.

Mainstreaming IK in higher education institutes presents various problems because of cultural, historical, and organizational factors. The only higher education institution known to provide indigenous knowledge systems as a course of study is North-West University (NWU) which is a pioneer of programmes on IKS and the first university to have a 4-year programme on IKS, then followed by the University of Venda (UNIVEN). Oral history is not significantly integrated into the higher education curriculum. There is a gap between the potential of oral history and its actual utilization in education. Moreover, the gap lies in adequately incorporating oral narrative into current courses across disciplines. The purpose of the study is therefore to explore how oral history can be used to redress moral degeneration amongst the youth in higher education institutions in South Africa. This paper is going to report the following themes outlined below as findings:

- Moral degeneration in higher education institutions.
- Indigenous life skills education as an avenue to redress moral degeneration.
- Enshrining knowledge-sharing circles in the centre of teaching and learning.
- Communities of practice (CoPs) in higher institutions of learning.

⁸ Thivhavhudzi Muriel Badugela and Livhuwani Daphney Tshikukuvhe, "Re-Thinking the Role of Indigenous Systems in Life Skills Education Among the Youth of Local Communities," in *Handbook of Research on Protecting and Managing Global Indigenous Knowledge Systems* (IGI Global, 2022), 365–82.

⁹ Jabulani Calvin Makhubele and Lulama Ida Qalinge, "The Relevance of Language in the Process of Indigenising Life Skills Education in South Africa: A Social Work Perspective: IKS Community Development and Resilience," *Indilinga African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* 8, no. 2 (2009): 199–208.

¹⁰ Richard K James and Burl E Gilliland, *Crisis Intervention Strategies* (Brooks/Cole Thomson Learning Belmont, CA, 2001).

¹¹ Singh and Stückelberger, *Ethics in Higher Education: Values-Driven Leaders for the Future*.

¹² Acquinatta N Zimu-Biyela, "Taking Stock of Oral History Archives in a Village in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa: Are Preservation and Publishing Feasible?," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 3 (2022): 7438.

- The praxis of oral history and IKS in curbing moral degeneration in higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGY

This research paper used a qualitative document analysis (QDA) method to examine how IKS and oral history can provide a basis for affording moral regeneration among the youth in higher education institutions in South Africa. Specifically, the paper used the indigenous philosophy of Ubuntu to elicit meaning, and understanding, and develop cases where Ubuntu enshrines norms and values consistent with African worldviews and epistemologies to humanize research.

The data for this research was collected through a comprehensive literature review of academic articles, books, and reports related to oral history, indigenous knowledge systems, and higher education institutions. The literature review included works from diverse disciplines such as anthropology, education, sociology, and philosophy. The literature search was conducted using online databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCOhost. The keywords used for the search included moral decay, indigenous knowledge, communities of practice, higher education, and teaching and learning. The inclusion criteria for the literature review were that the articles were published in peer-reviewed journals, books were written by established authors, and reports were issued by reputable organizations.

The analysis of the literature was conducted through a thematic analysis approach. First, the articles, books, and reports were carefully read to identify common themes related to moral decay, indigenous knowledge, communities of practice and higher education institutions. Second, the themes were organized into categories, and subcategories were created to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data. Finally, the data was synthesized to draw conclusions and provide recommendations for the incorporation of life skills teaching and learning to address the perspectives and attitudes of students concerning social ills.

Recent literature has utilized QDA as a method to study and underpin indigenous knowledge systems.¹³ This methodology has been effective in providing a comprehensive understanding of the themes and concepts related to moral degeneration in higher education institutions. Moreover, the use of thematic analysis has been recognized as a rigorous and systematic approach to analyzing qualitative data.¹⁴

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Moral Degeneration in Higher Education Institutions

According to Louw when debating over issues of moral degeneration in higher institutions of learning, it generally refers to concerns regarding the degradation of good ethical behaviour, principles, and behaviour in general among students in higher institutions of learning.¹⁵ Mwarabu et al., state that some of the factors that can be said to contribute to moral degeneration in South African higher institutions of learning may include the change in social dynamics which means that the norms and values of the society are changing over time as the society moves forward and advances.¹⁶ Therefore, the reflection of the decline in moral values today may be considered a result of the rotation of cultural attitudes. The higher institutions of learning aim at instilling knowledge in an individual and guiding them to mould their future or lives towards a good direction. This is to ensure that society has critical thinkers and problem solvers in the future, which is good for the survival of local communities.

¹³ Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage publications, 2019); Walter D Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology: The Geopolitics of Knowing and Epistemic/Ontological Colonial Differences," *JSP: Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32, no. 3 (2018): 360–87; L. Tuhiwai-Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012).

¹⁴ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis," *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 11, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 589–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>.

¹⁵ Louw, "The Socio-Educational Implications of the Moral Degeneration of the South African Society: Towards a Solution."

¹⁶ Geoffrey Mwarabu, Lazaro Athanas Mwonge, and Polycarp Hongoli, "Social Factors for Moral Decadence in Schools: The Case of Morogoro Municipality Tanzania," Available at SSRN 3915075, 2021.

However, these very same institutions of higher learning lack character education which can stretch the moral compass of the youth.¹⁷ This education is being ignored and side-lined to meet the approval of academic subjects. Another issue that can be associated with higher institutions of learning is that their focus is largely on scientific skills and formal educational knowledge while ignoring the maturity of ethical reasoning and values. These institutions actively promote values like integrity, empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility, forgetting to emphasize and stress the importance of character education, promoting a culture of honesty and integrity, encouraging respectful dialogue, and fostering a supportive environment that addresses the challenges faced by students.

Moral degeneration has begun to be a rival following below-standard education from schools to higher institutions of learning in South Africa. Bayaga and Jaysveree assert that South African society is faced with a moral code decline.¹⁸ Some of the problems that can be said to contribute to moral degeneration in higher institutions of learning can be said to have been inborn from apartheid together with the democratic government of 1994 because insufficient was done to confront and tackle them, as a result, this has revealed itself through the evident downturn in educational standard and moral standards.

The management and leadership of South African institutions of higher learning are also a cause of moral decline in the education establishment resulting from their negligence and the marginalization that exists within these institutions of learning. According to Moloi, there is an incapable leadership and unsatisfactory management operations in schools.¹⁹ This can be seen even in the higher institutions of learning. This is proof that the managers and leaders of schools and higher institutions of learning lack proper training themselves. The students on the other hand lack enthusiasm to study, which is why they misbehave and bring firearms, drugs, and liquor within the premises of the institutions of learning. They evidently become involved in various criminal activities and become violent people in the long run.

Consequently, leader initiation programmes can equip leaders and managers with the essential tools and skills necessary for managing the above-mentioned situations. Leadership obligations and suppositions have changed from commands for supervision and control to commands for leaders that can inspire and influence staff facilitators to become concerned and humane, inspire collaboration with parents, and shift the mindset of the students.²⁰

Both schools and higher institutions of learning are unsuccessful in providing quality education. Students are not sufficiently equipped with life skills that prepare them to cooperate in higher institutions of learning.²¹ The people who are responsible for the upbringing of children are the ones who should be held more responsible for their moral development. Jansen maintains that the moral growth of the youth is negatively and positively influenced by the occurrences they face and come across in their lives. Therefore, the argument provided brings forth that different communities must consider themselves responsible for regenerating the morals of their youth.

Indigenous Life Skills Education as an Avenue to Redress Moral Degeneration

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a fundamental role in socializing and educating learners who sustain dissimilar morals from their parents through the means of indigenous life skills education. Teachers and learners must be provided with indigenous life skills communicated in a mother tongue to enable simpler comprehension of the subject communicated and for it to be related to certain

¹⁷ Aynur Pala, "The Need for Character Education," *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies* 3, no. 2 (2011): 23–32.

¹⁸ Anass Bayaga and Louw Jaysveree, "Moral Degeneration: Crisis in South African Schools?," *Journal of Social Sciences* 28, no. 3 (2011): 199–210.

¹⁹ Kholeka Moloi, "An Overview of Education Management in South Africa," *South African Journal of Education* 27, no. 3 (2007): 463–76.

²⁰ Ephias Gudyanga et al., "Implementation of Guidance and Counselling in Secondary Schools in Chinhoyi Urban," *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2015): 41–49.

²¹ Nicholas Spaull, "South Africa's Education Crisis: The Quality of Education in South Africa 1994-2011," *Johannesburg: Centre for Development and Enterprise* 21, no. 1 (2013): 1–65.

occurrences.²² Furthermore, teachers must be prepared for a variation of behavioural undulant results among students as participants in the education process.²³ The situation in South Africa is such that the life skills education curriculum in rural regions is regulated in an indigenous language of the indigenous traditions, cultures, and standards of the societies they are assisting. In most occurrences, the involvement of parents and societies is inadequate or overlooked.

In support of that, Easton et al., state that parent and society participation in the teaching and learning of learners is of utmost importance in transmitting traditions, culture, and morals.²⁴ Life skills education cannot be in valueless circumstances or sociocultural voids. Learners cannot be educated about their society's morals and practices and be required to govern and be capable of addressing health and social ills effectively. It is anticipated that learners are taught so that they can be good enough in their societies. If behaviours and morals valued by society are ignored and demoralized, the consequence could lead to disaster as the disregarded destroys self-respect and inadequate self-respect outcomes in bad choices. It is similarly observed that learners in rural regions encounter dissimilar problems from their rural counterparts but are exposed to similar life skills education.

Indigenous knowledge is one of the means that can be utilized to lessen health and social ills, assist in upholding moral relations and healthy living, share the fortune, lessen wars, achieve indigenous matters, and therefore contribute to worldwide resolutions. This knowledge is similar to the social capital of any indigenous community. To many communities, IK is a central asset to capitalize on in the tussle for endurance. This knowledge is seen as an optimistic form of communication and has an impact on the methods utilized by communities to assist young individuals attain control of their own lives. Indigenous knowledge has contributed to constructing unity in societies afflicted by globalization and protected them in contradiction to some of its harmful effects.²⁵

HEIs should consider indigenizing life skills teaching and learning. This means that they should incorporate IK in the life skills teaching and learning curriculum. This incorporation has the potential to assist to curb and deal with moral decay within a curriculum level and can address problems and instances that may cause students to experience moral decay. It is argued that most of the community pathologies disturbing young individuals can be reduced to controllable stages. However, policy developers and program designers have ignored the potential of IK to address moral decay. Furthermore, these policy and programme developers have marginalized the traditional institutions that have been known to inculcate morals to various social groupings i.e. initiation schools, circles of elderly women, traditional leadership institutions, etc. This is similarly confirmed by Leautier in demonstrating that rural societies not only know indigenous practices, but they also similarly have knowledge and skills of how to adjust to hostile surroundings, organizations, and guidelines.²⁶

Enshrining Knowledge-sharing Circles in the Center of Teaching and Learning

Educational sharing circles are specifically useful in offering supported spaces for learners to participate in correlative and rational education. Sharing circles, which are occasionally described as talking circles or circles work, are utilized in numerous perspectives among dissimilar indigenous cultures and traditions. However, not all indigenous traditions utilize them. Circles of many kinds have existed and carry on being utilized by other traditional and educational societies.²⁷ Societies utilize

²² Makhubele and Qalinge, "The Relevance of Language in the Process of Indigenising Life Skills Education in South Africa: A Social Work Perspective: IKS Community Development and Resilience."

²³ James and Gilliland, *Crisis Intervention Strategies*.

²⁴ Peter Easton, Chris Capacci, and Lamine Kane, "Indigenous Knowledge Goes to School: Potentials and Perils of Community Education in the Western Sahel," 2000.

²⁵ Easton, Capacci, and Kane, "Indigenous Knowledge Goes to School: Potentials and Perils of Community Education in the Western Sahel."

²⁶ Frank Leautier, "Indigenous Capacity Enhancement: Developing Community Knowledge," *Indigenous Knowledge: Local Pathways to Global Development. The World Bank, Washington, District of Columbia*, 2004, 4–8.

²⁷ David A Cowan and Kathy Adams, "Talking Circles as a Metaphor and Pedagogy for Learning," in *Association of Leadership Educators' Conference, Lexington. Available Online at: < Http://Www. Leadershipeducators. Org/Archives/2002/Cowan_and_adams_talking_Circle. Pdf*, 2002; Marlene Wilken and Martha Nunn, "Talking Circles to Improve Diabetes Self-Care Management," *The Diabetes Educator* 43, no. 4 (2017): 388–95; Laura L Zizka, "From Campfire to Classroom: An Application of Talking Circles and Storytelling in Hospitality Management Education," *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education* 29, no. 1 (2017): 44–50.

sharing circles as part of their ceremonies, healing, education, and lawful systems, relying on purpose and circumstance, and utilizing them as a means of bringing individuals together to impart traditional knowledge, norms, and morals.

Sharing circles create dialogue and form areas of mutual respect for community communication.²⁸ Utilized as a technique of communication, comprehension, and teaching and learning, sharing circles display a different educational practice that inspires individuals to be attentive willingly to other perspectives and standpoints that can be different from their own. Numerous teachers, society leadership, youth directors and healing developments have implemented sharing circle methods because they successfully develop standards of being attentive, compassionate, and empathetic that support healing and health.

Educational sharing circles offer one effective technique of destabilizing and amending the history of Eurocentric teaching and learning systems, where scholars may be supported when communicating about difficult conceptions, subjects, and histories. Such methods develop multicultural recognition for heterogenous and homogenous collections of members, encouraging diversification and multicultural capabilities, along with emerging non-cognitive abilities frequently ignored in Eurocentric teaching and learning settings, similar to the bodily or emotional quotient. As Kovach proposes, this work is made in reality because it is concerned with knowing one another.²⁹ The sharing circles teaching and learning are not traditionally specific, ceremonial, or sacred local knowledge. It is an educational method grounded in indigenous logical methods that depend on definite indigenous methodologies that emerged through teaching and learning practices. Teachers should respect the indigenous epistemological contexts of circle practices, which can vary depending on the setting in which they have remained educated and acquired.

The task of bringing indigenous education methods to the teaching space of colonial institutions is not essentially easy and needs to be taken up with recognition of its source, and where and how the teacher was educated to do the work.³⁰ It is progressively essential to create decolonial methods for teaching space and classrooms.³¹ When utilizing measured protocols, sharing circles build opportunities for teaching and learning areas to become places of transformational education, where IKS may be recognized and appreciated while similarly speaking up to the calls to decolonize the education institutions.

Indigenous and non-indigenous teachers have realized the importance of Changing and decolonizing HEIs and the curriculum thereof. Scholars such as Kimmer recognize the importance of change and decolonization and therefore provide an important opportunity to rebuild and move to a future where traditional morals guide society to novel relations with one another, in excess of human relationships, containing the water, land, and air. Indigenous individuals, societies, and countries with traditionally certain and sacred traditional knowledge need to be safeguarded and not misappropriated or misused.³² Indigenous methods of education, when taken up consciously and respectfully, offer significant, appropriate, and relevant methods to decolonize higher education institutions.

As an encouraging and decolonizing educational setting, an indigenous educational method of sharing circles draws on three key values, respectful hearing, and thoughtful observation.³³ Values and encounters that individuals acquire by constructing stories, imitating, watching, and hearing. The purpose of giving critical support to sharing circles in education is to strengthen how it may be acquired appropriately by both indigenous and non-indigenous teachers and members as an interpersonal

²⁸ J Kaminski, "Talking Circles," *First Nations Pedagogy*. Retrieved May 30 (2011): 2020; S Di Lallo, L Graham, and M Arian, "The Stollery Awasisak Indigenous Health Program: Community Engagement Talking Circles Phase II," *Alberta Health Services*, 2018.

²⁹ M. Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).

³⁰ Jo-ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (UBC press, 2008).

³¹ Marie Battiste, "Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 60, no. 3 (2014): 615–18.

³² R.W. Kimmerer, "A Conversation with Dr Robin Wall Kimmerer" (Forestry and Simon K.Y. Lee Global Lounge and Resource Centre., 2021).

³³ Natalie Clark, "Red Intersectionality and Violence-Informed Witnessing Praxis with Indigenous Girls," *Girlhood Studies* 9, no. 2 (2016): 46–64; Sarah Hunt, "Researching within Relations of Violence: Witnessing as Methodology," *Indigenous Research: Theories, Practices, and Relationships*, 2018, 282–95.

framework: making spaces for scholars to grow greater comprehension through relation building and studying in distinctive surroundings.

Sharing circles comprise three fundamental aspects which are presented herein below as follows:

Reflecting Witnessing

Hunt and Clark clarify that reflective witnessing asks participants to hold places for an individual's viewpoints, even though they cannot be similar, and reflecting on the emotional state and beliefs that they can generate is founded on the interpersonal interchange of hearing somebody speak from their experience.³⁴ Reflecting observation is eventually an exercise of responsibility and accountability.

The facilitator of the educational sharing circles, which is the teacher, monitors and models the procedure for the students by opening and closing the sharing circle to establish how to partake, that is how to be a reflective observer. This makes the container for reflective observing and the organizer's occupation is to hold places for that through the procedure. The facilitator similarly clarifies, and models reverent behaviours founded on the three main practices of reflective observing, situated relatedness, and respectful listening. In the involvements over the historical numerous years, presenting and practising sharing circles stimulate reverent behaviours and there are infrequently any behavioural problems. Much of this achievement has to do with enclosing the gathering.

Respectful Listening

Johnston presents "profound listening" from an Anishnaabe viewpoint as a "discipline", which goes beyond merely inactive reception.³⁵ It emphasizes that the discipline of listening in the setting of a sharing circle is a vigorous preparation necessitating profound concentration on the words and meanings of the individuals talking, while similarly silencing the unruly inner responses and reactions to their words. In this method, the listeners may accurately hold places for the utterer and their viewpoints deprived of judgement or defensiveness.

The principal features of respectful listening include;

- *“Employing practices of communal deliberation, identifying deferential limitations when stimulating other thoughts or presenting sensitive topics.*
- *Requesting participants to concentrate on their experiences and disapprovingly reflect on their insights and thoughts, which may contain multilingual communication.*
- *Experiencing interactive meetings to safeguard frameworks or accountability”.*³⁶

Listening is lively and engaging and attracts other intellects such as emotive, observational, and intellectual.³⁷ Respectful listening similarly nurtures sympathy and empathy through the mere act of respecting the prejudice of an additional individual in a prolonged space and period. Listening remains an underutilized educational method in Eurocentric teachings, mainly because listening shapes association rather than individualized supremacy. Since normative Eurocentric teaching schemes promote individuality, it is important to reinstate interrelation and interrelated methods of knowing and being. The path to methodical community transformation includes appreciating relations as a main concentration, with reverent listening as an important practice, rather than the indications or the sum of the distinct measures.³⁸

³⁴ Hunt, "Researching within Relations of Violence: Witnessing as Methodology"; Clark, "Red Intersectionality and Violence-Informed Witnessing Praxis with Indigenous Girls."

³⁵ D. Johnston, "Disrupting Normative Legal Education through Decolonial Resistance Pedagogy," *Workshop on Legal Pedagogy* (Vancouver: Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia, May 2018).

³⁶ Johnston, "Disrupting Normative Legal Education through Decolonial Resistance Pedagogy."

³⁷ Patricia Barkaskas and Derek Gladwin, "Pedagogical Talking Circles: Decolonizing Education through Relational Indigenous Frameworks," *Journal of Teaching and Learning* 15, no. 1 (May 26, 2021): 20–38, <https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v15i1.6519>.

³⁸ R. Wagamese, *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations* (Vancouver: D & M Publishers, 2016).

Situated Relatedness

Drawing on the practice of situated relatedness from Johnston, which is founded on an epistemology of reasonableness, it reminds participants that observing individual prejudices remains initial to these practices.³⁹ In simple terms, situated relatedness requests people to position themselves in the situation of others. It necessitates everybody in the circle to reflect on and be aware of their precise lived past and how that always enlightens their viewpoint, particularly in relation to other individuals in the circle who might have opposing pasts and experiences. Relationally placing oneself in the circle, and eventually outside of it in one's community setting, can be one of the utmost significant features.

Communities of Practice (CoPs) in Higher Institutions of Learning

Communities of practice (CoPs) are almost like sharing circles; however, these are focused more on a shared domain of knowledge. Lave and Wenger define a community of practice (CoP) as self-regulatory clusters of people who share a mutual concern, a set of difficulties regarding a subject, and who increase their knowledge and skill in this area by interrelating on a continuing basis.⁴⁰ According to Wenger, a community of practice is dissimilar from a community of interest or a geological community in that it indicates a communal practice.⁴¹ A CoP similarly interchanges through numerous phases of growth categorized by dissimilar stages of purposes amongst the associates and dissimilar types of activities. They grow around things that are important to individuals. As a result, they replicate the individual's comprehension of what is significant.

HEIs can have and motivate their students to engage in CoPs where the students can develop their ways of solving and dealing with problems and challenges resulting in moral degeneration, as far as the youth is concerned. According to Wenger, this is a platform where individuals participate in activities involving collaboration and teamwork, engaging in discussions with the intention of sharing information and knowledge, and helping one another.⁴² This could allow the students from different cultures, with different belief systems, and backgrounds, to build relationships that will allow them to learn good moral values from one another and the dangers associated with being morally degenerated.

Communities of practice in HEIs can either be online or face-to-face. Cox mentions academic spaces as an area in which CoPs are found, amongst many other areas of life.⁴³ This can be online forums, in-person forums and informal groups such as interest groups and problem-solving groups consisting of students with kindred spirits. Generally, communities are important social structures that allow individuals to intensify and strengthen their knowledge and connect with people sharing the same interests and opinions in an environment that encourages.

Communities of Practice can form part of approaches relating to educating students. These CoPs can consist of students, university instructors, and other relevant parties within the institutions. They can play a significant role in serving as a centre of student support and services which may involve advising and counselling students to redress their morals. Wilson et al., posit that HEIs consist of several student organizations that may be considered as CoPs, for example, group clubs, societies, and student councils.⁴⁴ However, these organizations do not seek to redress moral degeneration amongst the youth.

Communities of Practice are connected to the social learning theory, and the two align. The conceptualization of CoPs can be said to be derived from social learning principles. According to Koutroubas and Galaninkis, the social learning theory was developed by Albert Bandura to lay down a principal foundation intended to make a clear understanding of how individuals learn and gain

³⁹ Johnston, "Disrupting Normative Legal Education through Decolonial Resistance Pedagogy."

⁴⁰ J. Lave and E. Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁴¹ E. Wenger, "Communities of Learning and Social Learning Systems: The Career of a Concept," in *Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice*, ed. C. Blackmore (London: Springer, 2010).

⁴² Wenger, "Communities of Learning and Social Learning Systems: The Career of a Concept."

⁴³ Andrew Cox, "What Are Communities of Practice? A Comparative Review of Four Seminal Works," *Journal of Information Science* 31, no. 6 (2005): 527–40.

⁴⁴ Alex Wilson, Chris Wilson, and Gabi Witthaus, "Using a Community of Practice in Higher Education: Understanding the Demographics of Participation and Impact on Teaching.," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 32, no. 1 (2020): 39–48.

knowledge and skills by the means of socially interacting and partaking with their equals and a given place or environment.⁴⁵ Therefore, there is a close relationship between the CoPs and the social learning theory because they both highlight the fact that learning can be the reason a group of people come together for social engagement and participation to learn from one another. Wenger asserts that people who participate in CoPs learn from one another based on experiences and conversations they share with each other.⁴⁶

In short, communities of practice apply the social learning theory within numerous contexts, which may include developing the social well-being of the society. They clarify how individuals inevitably learn in a social setting by gathering as a collective to pass knowledge to one another and develop knowledge and practice in specific domains. Therefore, CoPs can be an effective tool to redress moral degeneration in higher institutions of learning.

The praxis of oral history and IKS in curbing moral degeneration in higher education institutions. The practice of oral history and IKS plays a significant role in curbing moral degeneration in universities. Biyela affirms that these practices have unique qualities that make them valuable tools for fostering ethical behaviour, promoting cultural understanding, and reinforcing a sense of community and responsibility.⁴⁷ Oral history and indigenous practices often involve storytelling, rituals, and contemplation. They further encourage mindfulness and reflection, allowing students to explore their values, beliefs, and behaviours. Engaging in such self-examination can lead to personal growth and a profound sense of ethical responsibility.

However, these practices are ignored by the HEIs because they are believed not to have a syllabus that is more organized since every society has its unique practices and ways of knowing and determining morals, which are grounded on the culture of that society. It is also believed that it is central to a particular society, therefore, it does not address the issues of all nations a large. Wane asserts that the objective of IKS in terms of the area of education has always been to care for and protect the mind, the body, and the spirit.⁴⁸ African education behind IKS focuses on the training and life skills development of individuals in various local communities which includes regenerating morals.

Moreover, IKS frequently stresses the significance of including the community in the consolidated assessment of alternative solutions.⁴⁹ By including these fundamental prepositions within the management, regulation, and decision-making procedure of higher institutions of learning, a recognition of ownership can be established and the responsibility to redress moral degeneration can be distributed between students, management, and facilitators. To effectively incorporate indigenous knowledge systems, it is important to bring on board indigenous communities, elders, and knowledge holders to successfully integrate IKS. This joint effort would guarantee that the knowledge is regarded fully and depicted without errors and that the standpoint and opinions of indigenous communities are treasured and embraced.

According to Biyela, bringing IKS on board within HEIs could help preserve and restore indigenous cultures, meanwhile tackling moral degeneration through advancing moral principles and implementations that promote moral conduct and social responsibility.⁵⁰ Including IKS within these institutions could help regenerate morals through the preservation of culture, providing ethical frameworks that advise one's behaviour, community engagement, and a holistic education approach.

The paper finds that oral history and indigenous knowledge are social capital that should be tapped into to redress moral decay. The use and development of communities of practice are vital and

⁴⁵ Virginia Koutroubas and Michael Galanakis, "Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Its Importance in the Organizational Psychology Context," *Psychology* 12, no. 6 (2022): 315–22.

⁴⁶ Wenger, "Communities of Learning and Social Learning Systems: The Career of a Concept."

⁴⁷ Zimu-Biyela, "Taking Stock of Oral History Archives in a Village in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa: Are Preservation and Publishing Feasible?"

⁴⁸ N.N. Wane, *Gender, Democracy and Institutional Development in Africa* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2019).

⁴⁹ Hassan O Kaya and Yonah N Seleti, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Relevance of Higher Education in South Africa," *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* 12, no. 1 (2013).

⁵⁰ Zimu-Biyela, "Taking Stock of Oral History Archives in a Village in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa: Are Preservation and Publishing Feasible?"

should be encouraged in HEIs. This will provide students with a safe space where they can have honest conversations with their peers and people who fall within the same domain of knowledge. IKS should be harnessed and utilized to its full potential and HEIs in South Africa should start mainstreaming IKS into their academic programmes. The stance taken by NWU and UNIVEN is courageous, and many other institutions should learn from the above two. Infusion of IKS into HEIs will enable students to receive an alternative form of knowledge which encompasses a paradigm that is not rooted within the Western lens. Indigenous life skills education should also be infused into the overall life orientation curriculum, this may add to the decolonial stance that many institutions are now focusing on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following:

- There is a need for indigenous life skills and oral history to be incorporated into the teaching and learning missions of HEIs;
- There should be consideration of using indigenous languages to foster meaningful and efficient teaching and learning which will resonate with various indigenous students;
- It is vital to document, record, collect, register and promote IK that is enshrined in oral traditions for future generations;
- Indigenous life skills education be utilized to drive decolonization in HEIs and foster moral regeneration among the youth;
- Foster and promote sharing circles and communities of practice to enshrine moral regeneration within students within HEIs.

CONCLUSION

It has remained confirmed in this paper that the social difficulties and moral decay in HEIs can be addressed and managed through the application and teaching of indigenous life skills education. This education system is enshrined in the moral ethos of various indigenous communities and culture is at the center of establishing moral regeneration. Indigenous life skills education brings forth teaching and learning as students could be taught social values like 'Ubuntu', respect for oneself and other individuals along with community responsibilities. There is therefore an urgent necessity for HEIs to work in partnership with numerous stakeholders like parents, life skills teachers, IK holders and propagators, and community leaders who see the value of imparting indigenous life skills to the youth and future leaders. This can prevent the monolithic pedagogy and epistemology offered by HEIs which are focused mainly on Eurocentric pedagogies, epistemologies, worldviews, techniques, theories, concepts, perspectives, and representations of education which are one-sided. The focus on Eurocentric methods provides inadequate documentation, storing, collecting, grouping, and record-keeping of local IK which is valuable in fostering social cohesion and nation-building. These two above-mentioned elements are vital for the youth who find themselves experiencing moral decay because of a Eurocentric approach that kills the morals and community. This therefore calls for investigation into dissimilar views of local knowledge to create new valuable knowledge that can influence the pedagogies and worldviews in HEIs today.

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