

Utilizing Indigenous African Games as a Teaching Aid for Advanced Ubuntu

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how native African games can be used as teaching tools to promote Ubuntu, a South African traditional philosophy that specifically emphasizes community, empathy, mutual respect and shared humanity. Despite the recent increase in interest in culturally responsive learning, traditional African games are still not fully exploited as a useful educational tool. This paper aims to fill the gap identified by examining how African games with their rich social, ethical and cultural dimensions can be used effectively to promote and nurture Ubuntu values among students. The qualitative research approach was used in this study to examine which African games best promote cooperation, social interaction and mutual accountability, which is in line with Ubuntu principles. In this study, participants were observed and teachers and students in selected schools were interviewed. Interaction was directed towards how these African games affect students' social skills, sense of community and moral development. The practical challenges and benefits of incorporating traditional games into educational environments are also assessed. The findings of this study show that African games are potentially powerful tools to effectively promote Ubuntu among learners, offering innovative and culturally grounded methods for teachers to foster social cohesion, empathy and ethical behaviour. By reintroducing these games into classrooms, this research has the potential to provide a framework that both preserves the indigenous knowledge system and improves the practice of the education system to bring it in line with African values.

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INTRODUCTION

Using native African games as learning tools can significantly advance the Ubuntu concept in the educational system. The philosophy of ubuntu, which emphasises shared values, interdependence and mutual respect, is well aligned with the principles of traditional African plays.

Studies show that African indigenous knowledge systems are often seen as second-class citizens, perpetuating social divisions, and indigenous methods and pedagogy are almost extinct, limited to the distant memories of some parents and members of the Community.¹ AIKS is a system of knowledge which includes oral traditions, proverbs, maxims, poems, songs and indigenous cultural structures such as rites

¹ T. Kovačević and S. Opić, “Contribution of Traditional Games to the Quality of Students’ Relations and Frequency of Students’ Socialization in Primary Education,” *Croatian Journal of Education: Hrvatski Časopis Za Odgoj i Obrazovanje* 16, no. 1 (2014): 95–112.

of passage, norms and customs.² The South African government's efforts to include indigenous knowledge as a content area in school curricula have not produced the desired results, especially in indigenous African games.³ This is partly due to the inability of researchers to produce scientific research comparable to that in developed countries, as pointed out by Dziva, Mpfu and Kusure.⁴ This may also be due to the colonialist orientation of the curriculum, which, allegedly, prevented the integration of local knowledge.⁵ This may also be a sign that Ubuntu principles were neglected in the integration of AIKS into the classroom education and learning. Before 1994, South Africa's educational system was designed to serve the interests of the dominant class and perpetuate inequality. Even after the advent of democracy in 1994, curricula still do not address inequality and attempts to transform the education system have not yielded the desired results.⁶ The study, therefore, does not contradict the fact that the South African Department of Basic Education recognises the importance of indigenous knowledge as a means of imparting moral values and cultural beliefs to pupils,⁷ and has cooperated with it in schools, but the results are not as documented. That is why decolonization was called for. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Raju agree that decolonization calls for a paradigm shift in epistemology from the use of European and American knowledge systems to the use of indigenous South African knowledge systems.⁸

This paper, therefore, examines how indigenous African games can be used as teaching tools to promote and promote Ubuntu values in schools. In this paper, the first part is a critical review of the literature and a survey of the research on African games that can support Ubuntu. The study will only examine five games, namely Umlabalaba, Ukugendu, Inqabeshu, Induku and three tin. Secondly, the study will discuss the methodology adopted by the study, which is a method of desk research. Thirdly, the study presented and analysed the importance of these games, which are imported for use in schools, as they can foster Ubuntu values. Finally, the study recommends and agrees with the final observations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of indigenous African games

Indigenous African games include a range of structured and non-structured activities, often played in community settings, which allow children and adults to engage in physical activity while promoting cultural identity and African values. Some of the notable games are:

Umlabalaba

Umlabalaba is an African board game, often translated as African chess.⁹ Umlabalaba is a traditional two-player strategy board game, also known as Morabaraba, which has historical significance beyond mere gameplay, often used to share cattle-herd-fighting strategies.¹⁰ The game offers the potential for learner-centred learning and innovative teaching methods using indigenous technologies.¹¹

² Mzuyanda Percival Mavuso, N N Mkosi, and K B Olawumi, "Using Ubuntu Values in Integrating African Indigenous Knowledge into Teaching and Learning: A Review of Literature," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 22, no. 5 (2023): 140–59.

³ W.J. Jacob, S.Y. Cheng, and M.K. Porter, *Indigenous Education Language, Culture and Identity*, 2015.

⁴ Daimond Dziva, Vongai Mpfu, and Lovemore Kusure, "Teachers' Conception of Indigenous Knowledge in Science Curriculum in the Context of Mberengwa District, Zimbabwe," 2011.

⁵ J. Mapara, "Binarism as a Recipe for Lukewarm Research into Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Zimbabwe.," in *Handbook of Research on Theoretical Perspectives on Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Developing Countries* (IGI Global, 2017), 1–21; P. M. Mahlangu and T.C. Garutsa, "A Transdisciplinary Approach and Indigenous Knowledge as Transformative Tools in Pedagogical Design: The Case of the Centre for Transdisciplinary Studies, University of Fort Hare," *Africa Education Review* 16, no.5(2019): 60–69.

⁶ J Abah, P Mashebe, and D D Denuga, "Prospect of Integrating African Indigenous Knowledge Systems into the Teaching of Sciences in Africa," *American Journal of Educational Research* 3, no. 6 (2015): 668–73.

⁷ Sabelo Abednego Nxumalo and Dumisani Wilfred Mncube, "Using Indigenous Games and Knowledge to Decolonise the School Curriculum: Ubuntu Perspectives," *Perspectives in Education* 36, no. 2 (2018): 103–18.

⁸ Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Decoloniality in Africa: A Continuing Search for a New World Order," *Australasian Review of African Studies*, The 36, no. 2 (2015): 22–50; Chandra Kant Raju, "Black Thoughts Matter: Decolonized Math, Academic Censorship, and the 'Pythagorean' Proposition," *Journal of Black Studies* 48, no. 3 (2017): 256–78.

⁹ C. Burnett, "Traditional Sports and Games in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa," in *Sport in the African World* (Routledge, 2018), 121–45.

¹⁰ C. J. Roux, "Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Physical Education for the Multicultural Classroom: A South African Context," *African Journal for Physical, Health Education Recreation and Dance* 15, no. 4 (2009): 283–593.

¹¹ F. Shu, M. Li, and X. Liu, "Memory Mechanism with Weighting Promotes Cooperation in the Evolutionary Games," *Chaos, Solitons & Fractals* 120 (2019): 17–24.

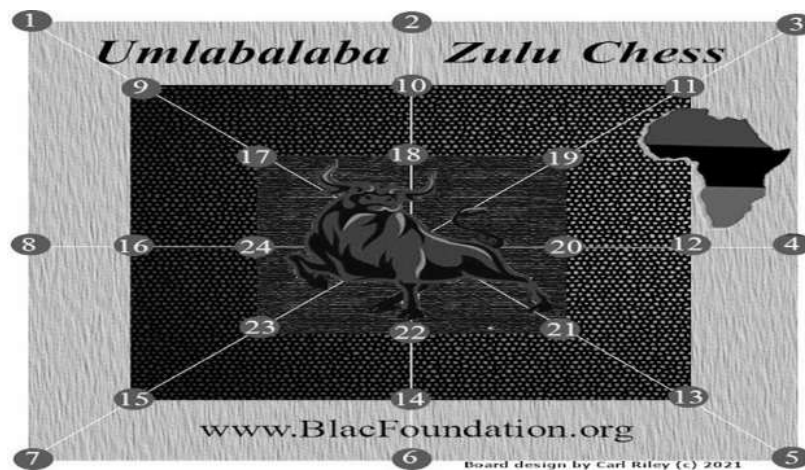


Figure 1: Umlabalaba
Image by Carl Riley, 2021 at Black Foundation

Ukugenda (Stones)

Ukugenda (Stones), also known as Diketo in Sesotho, is a traditional game in the villages of South Africa. Roux argues that the development of eye coordination, fine motor skills, strategies and role models for achieving and maintaining personal performance standards.¹² It does not involve complicated rules. It includes role models and coordination for beginners. The Ukugendu have a deep-rooted place in African culture and serve as a means of cultural expression and identity. It is often played at community meetings and festivals and helps to maintain traditional practices and values among the younger generation.¹³



Figure 2: Ukugenda (Stones)

Inqabeshu (Rope skipping)

Inqabeshu, also known as skipping the rope, is a traditional African game that involves various methods of swinging and skipping.¹⁴ It is not only a popular children's game but also serves as a tool for education and development. Players engage in various swinging and sliding tactics, which can be executed forwards, backwards, and sideways in different steps. This versatility allows for creativity in the way the game is played, often adapting rules and strategies according to the preferences of the players or to the specific competition of the day.¹⁵ According to Radebe, Inqabeshu is more than a game; it is a cultural heritage of the African people, and it is a way of life. It is a means to pass on traditions and values to younger generations, while fostering a sense of belonging to and belonging to society.¹⁶

¹² Roux, "Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Physical Education for the Multicultural Classroom: A South African Context."

¹³ Rachel T Lebese et al., "Experiences of High School Learners Regarding Ubuntu Education and Training in South Africa," *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 15, no. 1 (2023): 1-9.

¹⁴ Roux, "Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Physical Education for the Multicultural Classroom: A South African Context."

¹⁵ Roux, "Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Physical Education for the Multicultural Classroom: A South African Context."

¹⁶ M. Radebe, "Indigenous Games in South Africa: Connecting Cultures, Building Skills, Shaping Childhoods," 2025, <https://threestreamsmedia.com>.



Figure 3: Inqabeshu (Rope skipping)
Image: Disemelo Matena, cited in Radebe¹⁷

Induku (Stick fighting)

Induku is a traditional African game that is played by the men of South Africa. Fighting seems to help maintain the traditional social system by perpetuating socially accepted patterns of male behaviour and ideals. As a cultural tradition, stick fighting plays a traditional didactic role in certain African communities.¹⁸ The origin of the Zulu stick fighting can be traced to Amalandela, son of Gumede, who settled in the Umhlathuze Valley around the year 1670.¹⁹ Moreover, the origin of stick fighting can be traced back to the legacy of Zulu king Shaka, who founded the Zulu empire and became the legendary warlord of southern Africa. But recent research suggests that his weapons, strategy, and tactics were already in place long before he rose to power. However, it is generally agreed that during the time of Shaka, stick fighting was used to train young men for both self-defence and warfare. He was skilled with Shaka at the age of eleven.²⁰



Figure 4: Dumazulu stick fighters in the Hluhluwe area.²¹

Three-tin

Three-tin involves running, avoiding, chasing, catching and throwing the ball on the three tins depicted in the picture above. Gontsana suggests that three cans, an old rope and a few stones are all the ingredients

¹⁷ Radebe, "Indigenous Games in South Africa: Connecting Cultures, Building Skills, Shaping Childhoods."

¹⁸ M.H. Coetzee, "A Socio-Historical Overview," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives*, 2002.

¹⁹ Alice Werner, *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*, Reprint edition (Lagos: African Tree Press, 1995).28.

²⁰ Coetzee, "A Socio-Historical Overview."

²¹ Coetzee, "A Socio-Historical Overview."

needed for a day of outdoor entertainment suitable for all ages.²² Further, Roux argues that it involves learning new rules and developing new strategies, and involves social interaction, teamwork and cohesion, as well as respect and tolerance.²³ These selected native African games can be considered as an important instrument to promote ethnic understanding and to provide an opportunity to use basic motor skills and concepts of movement in a dynamic environment. The playing of these games can thus strengthen positive self-image, cultural heritage, social skills (cooperation between members from different cultures), cognitive skills (game modification), and ethnic origin. Roux confirms that indigenous African games promote ethnic understanding, motor skills and cultural heritage, promoting positive self-image, social skills, cognitive abilities and cooperation between members of different backgrounds.²⁴ Indigenous games are an introduction to the young to long-standing customs, traditions and culture.²⁵ According to Kovačević and Opic, games stimulate cognitive growth, including critical thinking and creativity, because players are constantly challenged to think and to come up with solutions to problems.²⁶



*Figure 5: Three-tin
Image by Mary-Anne Gontsana, 2014.*

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Ubuntu philosophy and Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems

Ubuntu, an African philosophy, emphasizes interconnectedness and community, highlighting the importance of relationships in shaping individual identity and behavior. This perspective encourages viewing social issues holistically, recognizing how communal bonds influence personal and collective wellbeing. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory complements this by illustrating how individuals are embedded within multiple layers of environmental systems from immediate family and peers to broader societal and cultural contexts. Understanding these layers helps explain how external factors impact individual development and social interactions. Together, these frameworks guide the analysis by focusing on the dynamic interplay between individuals and their communities, emphasizing that personal experiences cannot be separated from social environments.

²² Mary-Anne Gontsana, "Lockdown: School Feeding Scheme Reopens in Western Cape to Assist 'Desperate Communities,'" News24, April 9, 2020, <https://www.news24.com/southafrica/news/lockdown-school-feeding-scheme-reopens-in-western-cape-to-assist-desperate-communities-20200409>.

²³ Roux, "Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Physical Education for the Multicultural Classroom: A South African Context."

²⁴ Roux, "Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Physical Education for the Multicultural Classroom: A South African Context."

²⁵ Nkopodi Nkopodi and Mogege Mosimege, "Incorporating the Indigenous Game of Morabaraba in the Learning of Mathematics," *South African Journal of Education* 29, no. 3 (2009).

²⁶ Kovačević and Opic, "Contribution of Traditional Games to the Quality of Students' Relations and Frequency of Students' Socialization in Primary Education."

Ubuntu Philosophy

The researchers use the Ubuntu philosophy as a theoretical framework to discuss how native African games can be used as educational tools to promote Ubuntu. The idea of Ubuntu comes from the indigenous Bantu philosophy and wisdom of the African Bantu people, which shows that human nature is based on spirituality and reveals the identity of humans to the rest of the world and to all of God's creation. Ubuntu ideology posits that all people and all forms of creation share common bonds or understandings.²⁷ Ubuntu, an African philosophy, emphasizes the collective life in communities, contrasting with Descartes' individualistic sense of agency and morality, which says, 'I think, therefore I am.' It embodies humanity, justice, fairness and African values, which have served as the bedrock of African societies for millennia.²⁸ Bhengu suggests that Ubuntu is derived from the Nguni (Nguli) language (isiZulu, iXhosa, iSwati, isiNdebele) word *umuntu*, which means human being.²⁹ According to Mbeje, in Africa, one lives together with others to form families, communities, and societies.³⁰ The hardships of life among the ancient native Africans taught them survival skills in these shared spaces. They quickly realised that hunting for food as a group was better than hunting alone, because there was a greater chance of catching a game as a group than as individuals. This promotes teamwork, solidarity and caring for each other. To survive, they began to share food, tools of the trade, and information. The Zulu aphorism *Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu* (My being relates to yours; I am because you are) is derived from this concept of a collective existence as opposed to an individual.³¹ It may also be translated as *Motho ke Motho ka Batho* in other South African indigenous languages, such as Sesotho. In this study, the incorporation of the Ubuntu philosophy is important to understand the cultural context of the African games. Studies show that these games can be used as tools to instil Ubuntu values and thus contribute to a decolonised education system that respects and incorporates indigenous African knowledge systems.³²

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Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory postulates that an individual's development is influenced by a series of interconnected environmental systems, ranging from the immediate surroundings, for example, family to broader societal structures like culture.³⁷ Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner proposed that a child's environment is a nested arrangement of structures, each containing the next, organized in order of their

²⁷ J.C. Mubangizi and O. K. Hassan, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Human Rights: Implications for Higher Education, Based on the South African Experience," *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies: Multi-, Inter-and Transdisciplinary* 10, no. 2 (2015): 125–42.

²⁸ Nxumalo and Mncube, "Using Indigenous Games and Knowledge to Decolonise the School Curriculum: Ubuntu Perspectives."

²⁹ M.J. Bhengu, *Ubuntu: The Global Philosophy for Humankind* (Mowbray: Lotsha Publications, 2006).

³⁰ Z. K. Mbeje, "Ubuntu," *Leadership and Governance* 7 (2010): 6–7.

³¹ Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (London: Rider, 2000), 48.

³² Nxumalo and Mncube, "Using Indigenous Games and Knowledge to Decolonise the School Curriculum: Ubuntu Perspectives."

³³ Bhengu, *Ubuntu: The Global Philosophy for Humankind*.

³⁴ Mbeje, "Ubuntu." 10.

³⁵ Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 48.

³⁶ Nxumalo and Mncube, "Using Indigenous Games and Knowledge to Decolonise the School Curriculum: Ubuntu Perspectives."

³⁷ Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development.," *American Psychologist* 32, no. 7 (1977): 513.

impact on the child.³⁸ This includes the Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem.

Integrating Ecological Systems Theory

Microsystems include the immediate learning environment, such as family, peers and teachers.³⁹ Inclusion of native African games in the classroom can improve social interaction and foster a sense of community among learners, thus improving their social skills and cultural identity.

Mesosystems are all about interconnections between different microsystems. For example, the home-school relationship can be strengthened by involving families in traditional games and encouraging shared cultural experiences that foster children's learning and development.⁴⁰

The Exosystemic includes factors such as community resources and parental work, which can influence children's participation in indigenous games.⁴¹ The study shows that work-related time can reduce participation in traditional activities and suggests that schools could play a key role in facilitating access to these games in the context of educational programmes.⁴²

The macro-system includes wider cultural values and social norms.⁴³ The inclusion of indigenous African plays in curricula not only preserves cultural heritage but also promotes respect for diversity and inclusion in the educational system.

Chronosystem talks about the influence of time on development, which is important. Historical changes in social attitudes towards indigenous cultures can affect the way these games are perceived and incorporated into education and highlight the need for continuous support and adaptation of pedagogical practices.⁴⁴

Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems offers a comprehensive understanding of human development within a multiplicity of systems, emphasising two-way relations, transactional processes, and cultural influences, which contribute to a holistic understanding.⁴⁵ Using the Bronfenbrenner framework, educators can better understand how to implement these games effectively to promote holistic learning, while addressing problems such as the lack of training of teachers in traditional practices. This approach not only enhances the learning experience but also benefits and preserves the cultural identity of future generations.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design, employing a descriptive and interpretive approach to explore how Indigenous African games can be used as a teaching aid for advanced Ubuntu values. The research draws on both primary sources, such as observations of traditional games in community and school settings, and secondary sources, including academic literature, historical accounts, and ethnographic studies documenting these games and their cultural significance. Data selection was guided by the inclusion criteria of relevance to Ubuntu principles, social cohesion, and moral education, ensuring

³⁸ Bronfenbrenner, "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development."

³⁹ Dede Paquette–John Ryan, "Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory," *Retrieved January 9 (2001): 2012.*

⁴⁰ Victoria M O'keefe et al., "Centering Indigenous Knowledges and Worldviews: Applying the Indigenist Ecological Systems Model to Youth Mental Health and Wellness Research and Programs," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 10 (2022): 6271.

⁴¹ Nicolette Brand, "Efficacy of Zulu Indigenous Games in Enhancing Perceptual-Motor Skills in Pre-Schoolers: A Qualitative Study of Two Informal Settlements in Kwa Zulu Natal," 2024.

⁴² O'keefe et al., "Centering Indigenous Knowledges and Worldviews: Applying the Indigenist Ecological Systems Model to Youth Mental Health and Wellness Research and Programs."

⁴³ Ryan, "Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory."

⁴⁴ O'keefe et al., "Centering Indigenous Knowledges and Worldviews: Applying the Indigenist Ecological Systems Model to Youth Mental Health and Wellness Research and Programs."

⁴⁵ Brand, "Efficacy of Zulu Indigenous Games in Enhancing Perceptual-Motor Skills in Pre-Schoolers: A Qualitative Study of Two Informal Settlements in Kwa Zulu Natal."

that only games promoting collective well-being or ethical lessons were considered. Thematic content analysis was used to examine the data, involving systematic coding of behaviors, interactions, and outcomes associated with the games, which were then grouped into broader themes representing Ubuntu values such as cooperation, empathy, fairness, and communal responsibility. Themes were identified based on their frequency, significance, and practical applicability in educational settings, allowing the study to highlight patterns that demonstrate how Indigenous African games can effectively foster Ubuntu principles in learners.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the secondary data revealed several themes demonstrating how Indigenous African games can serve as effective pedagogical tools for fostering advanced Ubuntu values in learners. The primary themes identified were cooperation and teamwork, empathy and moral reasoning, respect for others, and communal responsibility. These themes emerged consistently across multiple sources and were considered central to the Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasizes human interconnectedness and social harmony.⁴⁶ Cooperation and Teamwork were the most prominent themes identified in the study. Many Indigenous African games, such as Morabaraba, Diketo, and various traditional ball and stick games, inherently require players to collaborate to achieve objectives. The rules of these games often ensure that individual success is contingent upon the group's collective performance. For instance, in stick-fighting games practiced among the Zulu, players learn to coordinate, anticipate each other's actions, and support teammates, which reflects the Ubuntu principle that "I am because we are."⁴⁷ This finding aligns with prior studies emphasizing that games in African communities are designed not only for recreation but also for the cultivation of social cohesion and interpersonal skills.⁴⁸ By engaging learners in cooperative play, these games provide a practical framework for teaching teamwork, conflict resolution, and shared decision-making, supporting the argument that experiential learning is a powerful medium for instilling communal values.⁴⁹

The second theme, empathy and moral reasoning, emerged from games where participants navigate situations that require understanding others' perspectives and anticipating the consequences of their actions. Games such as *Ampe*, widely played among children in urban and rural communities, encourage players to recognize and respond to the feelings, intentions, and strategies of their peers. This aligns with the literature on Ubuntu, which stresses empathy, compassion, and the ethical treatment of others.⁵⁰ Observations from secondary sources indicate that learners who regularly participate in such games develop heightened sensitivity to social cues and ethical reasoning, corroborating theoretical perspectives in humanistic pedagogy that emphasize moral development through socially interactive experiences. These findings support the assertion by Mubangizi and Hassan that Indigenous knowledge systems, when harnessed in educational settings, can foster ethical awareness and emotional intelligence, complementing formal curriculum objectives.⁵¹

A third theme, respect for others, was evident across all examined games. Traditional games in African societies frequently include rules and rituals that reinforce respect for peers, elders, and the community. For example, before commencing a game, players often engage in greetings or verbal acknowledgments, signaling mutual recognition and respect. Such practices are consistent with Ubuntu teachings, where respect is a cornerstone of social relationships.⁵² Secondary data indicate that these interactions teach learners to value the dignity and contributions of others, which not only facilitates harmonious group dynamics but also enhances learners' social competence. The findings largely agree

⁴⁶ Mubangizi and Hassan, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Human Rights: Implications for Higher Education, Based on the South African Experience"; Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*.

⁴⁷ Werner, *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*.

⁴⁸ M. Gontsana, "Games That Township Kids Play," GroundUp News, November 14, 2014, https://groundup.org.za/article/games-township-kids-play_2450/.

⁴⁹ Mubangizi and Hassan, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Human Rights: Implications for Higher Education, Based on the South African Experience."

⁵⁰ Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*; Werner, *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*.

⁵¹ Mubangizi and Hassan, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Human Rights: Implications for Higher Education, Based on the South African Experience."

⁵² Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*.

with existing literature that positions Indigenous games as a vehicle for internalizing cultural norms, especially respect and reciprocity.⁵³ However, some studies suggest that in highly competitive school environments, these values may be overshadowed by individualistic goals, highlighting the need for educators to intentionally integrate game-based learning with reflective discussions on Ubuntu principles.

Finally, the theme of communal responsibility emerged from games that simulate real-life social scenarios, requiring players to make decisions that impact the collective well-being of the group. For instance, in games where resources or points are distributed among players, strategic choices often involve balancing personal gain with group benefit. This mirrors the Ubuntu worldview, which prioritizes collective welfare over individual achievement.⁵⁴ By engaging with such games, learners practice accountability, mutual support, and participatory decision-making. The literature supports this finding, highlighting that Indigenous African games are not merely recreational but serve as mechanisms for transmitting communal values and preparing youth for active, socially responsible citizenship.⁵⁵ Notably, this study reinforces prior claims but also extends them by demonstrating that these games can be purposefully adapted as structured teaching tools in contemporary educational settings, bridging traditional knowledge and modern pedagogy.

In summary, the results indicate that Indigenous African games provide a rich, culturally grounded approach to teaching advanced Ubuntu values. Each theme, cooperation and teamwork, empathy and moral reasoning, respect for others, and communal responsibility, illustrates how experiential engagement with traditional games can reinforce both social and ethical competencies. These findings generally agree with existing literature, confirming that Ubuntu values are embedded in communal practices and games, while also providing practical insight for educators seeking innovative, culturally responsive teaching strategies. The integration of such games into formal learning environments not only preserves Indigenous knowledge but also cultivates holistic development, supporting learners' social, moral, and cognitive growth in alignment with Ubuntu philosophy.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, several practical, policy, and research recommendations can be made to enhance the use of Indigenous African games as teaching tools for advanced Ubuntu values. Practically, educators should intentionally integrate these games into classroom and extracurricular activities, developing structured lesson plans that align specific games with Ubuntu principles such as cooperation, empathy, respect, and communal responsibility. Regular game-based sessions accompanied by reflective discussions can help learners internalize these values, while teacher training in culturally responsive pedagogy can equip educators with the knowledge and skills to facilitate meaningful learning experiences. At the policy and institutional level, Indigenous games should be formally integrated into curricula, particularly in subjects such as social studies, ethics, and life skills, with dedicated resources, safe play spaces, and instructional guides provided to schools.

Teacher development programs should emphasize the pedagogical value of these games, while partnerships with local communities and cultural custodians can ensure the accurate transmission and preservation of Indigenous knowledge systems. For future research, longitudinal and experimental studies could be conducted to measure the impact of Indigenous games on learners' social, moral, and cognitive development, while comparative studies across diverse African contexts can identify best practices in teaching Ubuntu. Additionally, research into curriculum development strategies and digital adaptations of traditional games could further enhance their educational relevance, ensuring that Ubuntu values are effectively transmitted in contemporary learning environments. Collectively, these recommendations provide actionable steps for educators, policymakers, and researchers to harness the pedagogical potential of Indigenous African games in fostering Ubuntu-centered education.

⁵³ Gontsana, "Games That Township Kids Play."

⁵⁴ Werner, *Myths and Legends of the Bantu*; Mubangizi and Hassan, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Human Rights: Implications for Higher Education, Based on the South African Experience."

⁵⁵ Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Indigenous African games serve as effective pedagogical tools for teaching advanced Ubuntu values, providing learners with experiential opportunities to internalize principles such as cooperation, empathy, respect, and communal responsibility. The analysis of secondary data revealed that these games are inherently structured to promote social cohesion, moral reasoning, and participatory engagement, aligning closely with the Ubuntu philosophy that emphasizes human interconnectedness and collective well-being. In answering the research question, it is evident that integrating Indigenous games into educational settings can enhance learners' social and ethical development, offering practical pathways for embedding culturally grounded values within formal curricula.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both education and cultural preservation. By highlighting the pedagogical potential of traditional games, the study reinforces the value of Indigenous knowledge systems and provides educators and policymakers with actionable strategies to incorporate culturally responsive teaching methods. These findings also connect to the broader field of African pedagogy and moral education, demonstrating how experiential and community-based learning can complement theoretical instruction to produce holistic learner development.

Indigenous African games are not merely recreational activities but are rich cultural resources capable of fostering Ubuntu-centered education. Their integration into classrooms and extracurricular programs can strengthen learners' social skills, ethical awareness, and sense of communal responsibility. By recognizing and applying the educational value of these games, educators and institutions can create learning environments that are both culturally relevant and developmentally meaningful, ensuring that Ubuntu principles continue to inform and shape the moral and social growth of future generations.

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