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Using indigenous games and knowledge to decolonise the school curriculum: Ubuntu perspectives

Abstract

This paper foregrounds the value of the inclusion of Ubuntu philosophy in the school curriculum using indigenous games. There has been increased interest emanating from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in the inclusion of Ubuntu philosophy in the mainstream school curriculum. The DBE has identified indigenous knowledge as an asset that can be integrated into the school curriculum in order to educate African children about Ubuntu philosophy, moral and cultural beliefs. The efficacy of indigenous methods to teach schoolchildren these important concepts has, however, largely remained an untapped area of study. The aim of this paper is to illustrate how Ubuntu philosophy can be taught in the school curriculum using selected indigenous isiZulu games. Using Mbigi's Collective Fingers Theory, we analyse three isiZulu indigenous games and demonstrate that indigenous games can be successfully used to teach Ubuntu philosophy. The paper contributes to the ongoing debates about the value of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS), such as Ubuntu philosophy, in teaching decolonised curriculum content and instilling moral principles and cultural beliefs such as the value of communal identity.

Keywords: *Indigenous knowledge, Ubuntu philosophy, African child, indigenous games.*

1. Introduction

Recent studies in anthropology indicate that indigenous cultures had fully developed cosmologies that explained who they were, explained where they came from and set out their place in relation with the world (Mahoso, 2013; Sigauke, Chivaura, & Mawere 2014; Akinola & Uzodike, 2018). However, these studies indicate that African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) are seen as the "other", and this state of affairs sadly continues to perpetuate race and class divisions in society. Indigenous methodologies and pedagogies have almost vanished, their existence confined to distant memories of some parents and members of the community (Kovacevic & Opic, 2013).

Current statistics shows that some children leave primary school with scant, and incorrect, knowledge about their history, heritage, pan-Africanism, integrity, morality

and ethnic values of Unhu (humanness) or Ubuntu (Mutekwe, 2015; Mahose, 2002). Mutekwe (2015) argues that the state of affairs is because of a lack of provision for AIKS in the school curriculum, particularly African philosophy. AIKS include the oral tradition – proverbs, maxims, poems and songs, indigenous games – and sociocultural structures, such as rites of passage, norms and customs and the tutelage of apprentices by indigenous knowledge holders who are experts in their fields of traditional medicine, agriculture, pottery, art and music and so on. What is of particular interest for this study is the transmission of African philosophy and axiology through indigenous games and knowledge as building a foundation for Ubuntu values in educating African children.

Ubuntu is encapsulated by the maxim “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” meaning “to be a human being is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them” (Naicker, 2015: 3). In most African languages, this expression seeks to underscore the importance of self because of others (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). In this paper, we argue that children can be taught Ubuntu values through participation in well thought-out indigenous pedagogies, including indigenous games.

2. Construct of Ubuntu values

The concept of Ubuntu emphasises the value of collective existence within the community as opposed to individual value. Du Toit, Poovan and Engelbrecht (2006) argue that Ubuntu originated when African communities had to work together in order to survive. Ubuntu values are in contrast with Descartes’ proclamation of “*I think, therefore I am*” (cogito ergo sum) which promote an individual sense of agency and morality, whereas Ubuntu philosophy is about collective agency and morality (Mbeje, 2010). The concept Ubuntu is derived from African Bantu people’s indigenous philosophy and knowledge that depicts human character as based on spirituality, which reveals people’s identity in relation to the world and all forms of God’s creation. Ubuntu philosophy posits that there are common bonds or understandings that exist between all human beings and other forms of creation (Mubangizi & Kaya, 2015). In essence, Ubuntu philosophy encapsulates humaneness, fairness, justice and an African values system as “the underlying fortress of African societies for millennia” (Qobo & Nyathi, 2016).

While collective existence is a basic tenet of Ubuntu, a school of thought avers that before we are part of the collective, we are individuals. In embracing individuation in Ubuntu, individuals allow themselves to discover and become a better human being, thus enriching their own humanity. Hailey (2008) supports this view by stating that Ubuntu philosophy helps individuals value their own identity through the relationships with the community. He terms this “fullness of being” through one’s relatedness and relationships with others. Sanders (1999) places the cognitive dissonance about Ubuntu philosophy partly on the incorrect English translation of the isiZulu maxim “*umuntu umuntu ngabanye abantu*” which is commonly translated as “a person is a person through other persons” (Eze, 2010; Jolley, 2010; Beitler, 2013). Hailey (2008) contends that the correct translation should read, “a human being is a human being through human beings”. Alternatively, “the being human of a human being is noticed through his or her being human through other human beings”.

Nussbaum (2003) presents a variety of perspectives that have shaped Ubuntu values from notable African leaders, African literature, African philosophy and African cosmology. Letseka (2013) believes that Ubuntu is two-dimensional. First, it captures the art of being human, and second, it involves indigenous patterns of thought and the achievement of humanness.

Goduka and Swadener (1999) see Ubuntu as striving for oneness of humanity through interconnectedness and interdependence of all creation. A working notion for this paper then, is that Ubuntu values indicate that African communities are oriented towards inclusion. In this regard, children can learn from early childhood that human beings are one, and have an interconnected spirituality.

Ubuntu is a “deeply moving yet intangible African soul force” that has been demonstrated by notable personalities such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King in the South African and American civil rights movements respectively (Nussbaum, 2003: 1). These leaders used Ubuntu philosophy to serve humanity. Du Toit, Poovan and Engelbrecht (2006) see humanity as a way of life for Africans in their daily interaction with others. For example, Ubuntu was frequently used before, during and has been used after the demise of apartheid to galvanise people to unite and work together for the common good of humanity and the country (Nussbaum, 2003).

3. Formation of an indigenous identity in children

Black (2012) argues that most traditional societies have observed that children learn in many ways, including free play or interaction with other children, immersion in nature and by helping adults with work and communal activities. The primary aim of indigenous games and knowledge is to integrate the young into various social roles (Seroto, 2011). Through indigenous games and knowledge, children are taught that their present and future (and by default that of their community) depends on their understanding and perpetuation of the societal structures, laws, language and values inherited from the past.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is based on the democratic values that are espoused in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) (Constitution, 2005). The preamble of the CAPS document states that the main aim of the curriculum is to establish a society based on democratic values, human rights and social justice. However, the associated instructional methodologies and pedagogies that have long been a societal tool in instilling these moral principles and cultural beliefs at an early stage of child development have largely been disregarded in achieving this goal.

The infusion of indigenous methodologies and pedagogies into the curriculum should not exclude or diminish the value of traditional western methodologies and pedagogies that have been used in schools for decades. In this regard, formal and informal education systems should co-exist, even though they might sometimes appear to be in conflict with one another (Seroto, 2011). Through informal education, children learn the norms and values of society, and ideally, this forms the foundation for later schooling. To this end, indigenous games can be used to craft and foster national identity (DeSensi, 1995; Gardiner, 2003), where self-esteem can be affirmed and enhanced through pride and heritage whilst recognising, acknowledging and celebrating racial diversity (Roux, 2007; Roux, 2008).

4. Global significance of indigenous education in the school curriculum

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and indigenous educational practices are on the global agenda (Mutekwe, 2015). Sustainable Developmental Goal (SDG) 4 calls for equal access to education for indigenous people (Sachs, 2012; Gilbert, 2007). The United Nations Drafting Declaration on the rights of indigenous people states that, “... indigenous individuals

particularly children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the state.....when possible, to an education in their own culture..." (Assembly U.G., 2007: 7).

According to King and Schielmann (2004), quality indigenous education is guided by pedagogical principles and methods developed in participation with indigenous communities and based on their culture and tradition, where:

- Education is seen as connected to all aspects of life, the well-being of learners and the environment/land
- The situation of indigenous communities is the starting point for developing the potential of learners and communities according to their own views, values, priorities and aspirations
- Indigenous community members, parents and elders are consulted and involved regarding what their students should and want to learn, when and how as a basis for identifying pedagogical principles and teaching methods at the start of the programme
- Formal and non-formal, as well as traditional and modern, teaching methods are used based on the study of traditional teaching methods at home and in the community; and
- A cooperative, interactive and reflective learning-teaching process is promoted, based on all aspects of knowledge and the experience of learners.

Teaching Ubuntu values requires new thinking around the kind of pedagogies that are currently used in school. Consequently, indigenous pedagogy involving indigenous games should be adopted to teach Ubuntu philosophy.

5. Promoting indigenous pedagogy and culture in the school curriculum

Indigenous pedagogy entails a generalised indigenous preference for experiential learning, direct learning by seeing and doing, connectedness to local values and learning how to apply knowledge to changing circumstances (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). Akinola and Uzodike (2018) have proposed a curriculum that integrates indigenous pedagogy, culture and language, games and knowledge. Indigenous pedagogy, according to scholars, can enhance problem-solving skills, compassion, empathy, sympathy, respect, tolerance, humanness and harmony with others as well as fair competition amongst learners (Akinola & Uzodike, 2018; Mbigi, 1997a; Letseka, 2011). Research indicates that where learners exhibit qualities of Ubuntu, there is a greater desire to learn, as every school is invariably embedded in its own unique culture (Mbigi, 1997a).

Masote (2016) views indigenous pedagogies as a force of change for not only knowledge and skill transfer, but for conveying meaning, values and identity through language and culture (Biermann & Townsend-Cross, 2008). Savage *et al.* (2011), argue that culturally responsive teachers should contextualise instruction in cultural forms, behaviours and processes of learning that are familiar to learners. Many researchers (Lefa, 2015; Letseka, 2011; Akinola & Uzodike, 2018) agree that the teaching of Ubuntu through indigenous games in schools can promote an inclusive approach to education, which endorses dignity and respect in mutual relationships with others in the classroom and school.

6. The theoretical lens

Mbigi's Collective Fingers (Five Fingers) Theory inspired by the African proverb "a *thumb, although it is strong, cannot kill aphids on its own. It would require the collective co-operation of the other fingers*", is the lens through which observations are made in this paper on the use of indigenous games and knowledge to decolonise the curriculum and promote Ubuntu (Mbigi & Maree, 1995). According to Du Toit, Poovan and Engelbrecht (2006), this African proverb could be construed as having two pronged meanings. First, the fingers can refer to individual persons that need to work together to achieve a certain goal. Second, the fingers can also represent key values, which when developed together and practised can maintain a collective culture.

Mbigi (1997b) identifies five values related to Ubuntu: *survival, solidarity spirit, compassion, respect and dignity*. Broodryk (2002) refers to these five values as the "assegais" – "weapons" or more aptly put the "spears" – which are paramount in the African culture, used by the men to defend brotherhood and manage society and general interactions with one another. *Survival* is the ability to live and exist in spite of difficulties (Du Toit, Poovan & Engelbrecht, 2006). Harsh environmental conditions on the African continent, such as the scarcity of water, drought and high levels of poverty, have forced African communities to rely on each other for survival despite differences that they might have amongst them (Du Toit, Poovan & Engelbrecht, 2006).

The *solidarity spirit*, according to (Mbigi, 1997a), is best epitomised by a metaphor that "one finger cannot crush a grain of wheat on its own, it needs the help of the other four fingers". Humans' ability to understand others' dilemmas and challenges is *compassion*, the third value (Du Toit, Poovan & Engelbrecht, 2006). Compassion promotes feelings of belonging and interconnectedness observed in African communities.

Respect and dignity are the last two values in the theory. Respect is "an objective, unbiased consideration and regard for rights, values, beliefs and property" (Mbigi, 1997a: 32–33), whereas dignity refers to behaviour or a trait that earns or deserves respect. In African communities, if one wants to achieve successful engagement with members of the community, respect and dignity are the requirements.

7. Decolonising the curriculum in perspective

There have been many calls to decolonise the South African curriculum. While the 2015 movements supporting decolonising the curriculum that started as #RhodesMustFall and grew in stature to become #FeesMustFall were largely restricted to higher education institutions (HEIs), basic education has not been excluded from calls to decolonise the curriculum. Decolonisation is necessary to mitigate first and second generation colonialism, neo-colonialism and neoliberalism (Le Grange, 2016). First generation colonialism was characterised by the conquering of physical spaces and bodies of the colonised, whereas second generation constituted the colonisation of the mind through disciplines such as education, science, economics and law (Odora Hoppers & Richards, 2011). The negative results of colonialism were that the African continent lost its sovereignty, self-respect, freedom and power (Odora Hoppers, 2001).

It is useful to describe what we mean by decolonisation more conceptually. Chilisa (2012) identifies five stages that characterise the process of decolonisation: *rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment and action*. *Rediscovery and discovery* is when colonised people rediscover and recover their own history, culture, language and identity.

Mourning entails the process of lamenting the continued assault on the world's colonised and oppressed peoples' identities and social realities. When colonised people reach the third stage, *dreaming*, histories, worldviews and indigenous knowledge systems are invoked to theorise and imagine alternative knowledge systems, such as a different school curriculum. When academics and students find their "voice" and demonstrate the commitment to include the voices of the colonised in the curriculum that is referred to as *commitment*, the fourth stage. South African academics and their African counterparts have largely become consumers, rather than producers of knowledge, resulting in a legacy of an impoverished knowledge base (Amusa, Toriola & Onyewadume, 1999). The last process, *action*, refers to when dreams and commitments translate into strategies for social transformation.

To decolonise the curriculum successfully, Smith (1999) identifies a number of elements that will need to be considered: *deconstruction and reconstruction, self-determination and social justice, ethics, language, internationalisation of indigenous experiences, history and critique*. Of particular importance for this study are *self-determination and social justice and internationalisation of indigenous experiences*. *Self-determination and social justice* allow those that have been marginalised to seek legitimacy for knowledge that is embedded in their own histories, experiences and ways of viewing reality. *Internationalisation of indigenous experiences* relates to international scholars sharing common experiences, issues and struggles of colonised peoples in global and local spaces (Chilisa, 2012). Based on the two aforementioned decolonisation processes in this paper we argue for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge as an asset that can be integrated into the school curriculum in order to educate African children about Ubuntu philosophy, moral and cultural beliefs. The use of indigenous games in the school curriculum is one way in which we can contribute to the current decolonisation discourse.

8. Games as an innovative approach to teaching to decolonise the curriculum

In this study, a game is defined as "a rule-based formal system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable" (Juul, 2003: 34). They can teach children socialisation and the acquired rules of behaviour that are inherent in every game (Kovacevic & Opic, 2013). Aypay (2016: 284) refers to this as learning in an "interesting or novel way". Children should play games, as it is in their childhood that they learn most of the knowledge related to life including (cultural) values. In playing games, children are likely to learn social skills such as sharing, understanding other perspectives and taking turns (Devries, 2006). According to Aypay (2016), the learning of values within games is actualised in children's behaviours through role-playing and the embedded cultural messages within games that turn into permanent feelings, thoughts and behaviours that reflect common cultural interactions. It is against this background that in this paper we make an argument for the inclusion of indigenous games in the school curriculum.

Games influence the psycho-motor, cognitive, emotional and social development of children (Kovacevic & Opic, 2014). In playing games (including indigenous games), the movement skills and the movement vocabulary of children is expanded and improved (Lyoka, 2007). Indigenous games are meant to sharpen children's intellect as well as prepare them to confront and solve real-life problems (Mutema, 2013). According to Kovacevic and

Opic (2014), games stimulate cognitive growth, including critical thinking and creativity as players are constantly required to think and find solutions. The rules of the game enforces self-control which enhances the emotional intelligence of children (Lyoka, 2007).

Nkopodi and Mosimege (2009) contend that many indigenous games introduce the youth to long held customs, traditions and culture as a whole. Simply put, culture is a way of life of a people (Idang, 2015). It is a fluid concept and it changes with times and contexts. Antia (2005) observes that, through a process called assimilation, culture changes and is modified through contacts and absorption of other people's cultures. Through a process of innovation, a new practice can modify the existing cultural goals, values and knowledge. Therefore, indigenous games can be modified to fit contemporary needs. Innovative approaches to early childhood teaching should not only be developmentally adequate and effective, but also aligned with early childhood pedagogies (Pence & Schafer, 2006).

Research reveals that innovative approaches to early childhood education could develop productive pedagogies linked to indigenous games (Pence & Schafer, 2006). Although indigenous games are widely known for their flair and humour, little is known about their effectiveness in passing on critical concepts such as Ubuntu. The kinds of games presented in this paper will be systematically interrogated using the Collective (Five) Fingers theoretical lens. The question that we want to address is: can indigenous games be used to develop Ubuntu values in the school curriculum?

9. Aim of the study

The main purpose of this study is to explore the use of AIKS, in the form of indigenous games, to teach Ubuntu values and thus be a means to decolonise the curriculum. The study ultimately aims to suggest ways for teachers to inculcate Ubuntu values through indigenous games and knowledge, thereby improving the education of African children.

10. South African indigenous games in perspective

Indigenous games have received sporadic *ad hoc* attention in research and came to the fore with the launch of the 2000/2001 Indigenous Games Project, initiated by the then Rand Afrikaans University (now University of Johannesburg), in which indigenous games of isiZulu, English and Afrikaans speaking individuals, as well as those of Indian descent, were documented (Burnett & Hollander, 2004). As a result, in 2000, the National Research Foundation (NRF) initiated a programme to support and promote indigenous games, and in 2004, the South African government promoted Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as an official policy (Nxumalo, Semple & Longhurst, 2015).

Subsequent to the Indigenous Games Project, Roux (2008) documented 13 isiZulu indigenous games. For this study, from the two projects, we have selected only *ukungcweka* (isiZulu stick fighting – sparring). The other two games, *ushumpu* and *umngcwabo*, were not part of the games reported in the Indigenous Games Project of 2000/20001, but they are games that we grew up playing. A careful consideration of the elements of the game, in particular how Ubuntu values are promoted by playing the game, led to its inclusion in this study. Subsequent to the 2000/2001 Indigenous Games Project, the national Department of Sport and Recreation in South Africa launched provincial and national Indigenous Games festivals in which school learners and community members could participate (see for example

<https://www.srsa.gov.za/sites/default/files/2017%20-%20IG%20GENERAL%20AND%20CODE%20SPECIFIC%20RULES.pdf>).

11. Methodology

In this paper, we focus on only 3 isiZulu indigenous games to critically reflect on their usefulness in decolonising the curriculum and educating children about Ubuntu values. These 3 games are *ushumpu*, *umngcwabo*, and *ukungcweka*. First, we describe the game's aim and purpose and second, we provide a description of the game. Then, we describe rules and scoring for the game and end off with an analysis of each game using the Collective Fingers Theory to reflect on how each game could be used to decolonise the curriculum and teach Ubuntu values.

Ball game: *Ushumpu* (“strike the ball”, also known as *Dibeke* in seSotho)

This game is normally played in rural, semi-urban and urban areas where there is an open space big enough for players to run for cover as they avoid being hit by the ball. The game is popular with children between the ages 8 and 15 (Roux, 2007). The number of participants determines the size of the play area as well as the “home” area. Home in this context refers to the safe area where the players cannot be eliminated from the game. Boys and girls play the game. To play the game, a tennis ball or any homemade ball made with shopping bags, women's stockings, a tightly folded piece of cloth or any other recyclable material is admissible as the ball. The game is composed of two teams (each team has one picker who chooses a striker of the ball from the striking team) with 5–15 members on each side.

Game description

One team does fieldwork while the other team strikes the ball to initiate the match. The player chosen from the striking team is picked because the fieldwork team has noticed that she has weak qualities such as the inability to strike the ball too far. Thus, the striking player takes the ball and hits it as far as possible with the foot (in case of a kickable ball) or the palm of the hand (in case of a smaller ball). The rule of thumb is that the ball must not fall outside of the perimeter area adjacent to the “home” of hitters. Once the ball is hit, the whole team must run to the turning point and back without being hit by the ball. The fielding team will attempt to take out all members of the striking team before they can accumulate points that will result in *igemu* (a game) (see next section).

Rules and scoring

The two teams usually decide upon the rules of the game prior to the start of the game. Amongst other things that the two teams have to agree upon is the number of points that will equal *igemu*. A game could be viewed similarly to a game in tennis whereby a number of cumulative points (0; 15; 40; Deuce, and Advantage) result in a game for a player. The only difference is that the fielding team does not simultaneously accumulate any points. In essence, the fieldwork team scores by running “home” runs – from the starting position to the turning point and back again, which is equivalent to 2 points per person per run. Once the striking team reaches 20 (or 100) points, they win that round. The full round is called *igemu*.

Roux (2008) found that the points that make up *igemu* differ depending on a number of factors. He found that in Nongoma, for example, a home run normally counts for 10 points, with *igemu* reached with a score of 100. Once 20 or 100 points have been reached, every team

member that is inactive after being hit by the fielding team immediately becomes active again. Thus, much coordination and teamwork is required by the fielding team to control the scoring.

Ball game: *Umngcwabo* (the funeral)

Similar to *ushumpu*, girls and boys in rural, semi-urban and urban contexts also play *umngcwabo*. The game is usually played by 5–10 members per team and is popular among children between the ages 8 and 15. The play area constitutes any open space. The game is played using *indishi* – an old steel or plastic dish or container. The playing team attempts to scoop old cool drink and canned food tins into *indishi* by putting the tins between their feet and tossing them up, directing them to the dish or container at the centre of the playing area. In most cases, the tins are crushed so that more can fit into *indishi*. The number of tins that are used for playing depends on the number of old tins that the teams can find. This can average between 20 and 70 tins.

Game description

One team will perform fieldwork while the other, the playing team, initiates the game. The game usually starts with all the tins in *indishi*. A tennis ball or any ball of an equivalent size is used for this game provided that it can bounce off the floor. To start the game, the playing team converges in the centre of the playing area, around *indishi* and then bounces the ball off the floor in such a way that it ricochets and is displaced a few metres allowing the playing team to empty *indishi* and then run for cover, marking the commencement of the match. The playing team will then attempt to come back to the centre of the playing area where the tins and *indishi* are to try to scoop all the tins back into *indishi*. The fielding team will attempt to take out all members of the playing team before they can scoop up all the tins and score *igemu*.

Rules and scoring

The rules for this game are that the playing team should work together (ducking and dodging being hit) and attempt to scoop up all the tins into *indishi*. The fielding team will attempt to eliminate the playing team by passing the ball around and at an opportune moment attempt to hit the playing team with the ball, thus rendering them inactive and unable to participate in the scooping up of the tins. If a team successfully scoops up all the tins into *indishi*, *igemu* is declared and all inactive players become active again. In the case of all the playing team members being eliminated, rendering them inactive before finishing the scooping of the tins, the fielding team immediately becomes the playing team.

***Ukungweka* (isiZulu stick fighting sparring matches)**

Ukungweka is an indigenous martial arts game played by boys herding cattle as a foretaste of things to come later in life (Coetzee, 2000; Coetzee, 2002). While related to *ukudlala induku* or *ukudlalisa induku* or *izinduku*, which roughly translates as “playing the sticks with you” – a competitive isiZulu stick fighting match usually associated with different festivals – there are differences between the two activities (Coetzee, 2000). *Ukungweka* orientates isiZulu males to the social roles, qualities and behavioural patterns expected of them, including Ubuntu. Depending on the occasion, different formats of stick fighting form part of many important isiZulu cultural activities such as “*ukuthomba*” (puberty ceremony), “*ukudla iphaphu*” (the lung festival), “*ukweshela*” (courtship), “*umgangela*” (inter-district fighting) and “*udwendwe*” (traditional wedding) (Coetzee, 2000; Coetzee, 2002; Nxumalo, Semple, & Longhurst, 2015).

Ukuthomba means the coming of age of a male child (Elliot, 1978). To announce this event publicly, he wakes up early in the morning and drives cattle into the field, and the events of the

day culminate with a river bath to cleanse himself and some stick fighting with either boys or girls. *Ukudla iphaphu* involves slightly older boys engaging in stick fighting when a cow has been slaughtered in the kraal or village with the victor claiming as first prize *iphaphu* (lungs). *Ukweshela*, *umgangela* and *udwendwe* usually involve serious fights over courtship of girls, the settling of old grudges and the testing of one's skills against an unknown opponent respectively, with the victor being the one that has drawn first blood (Coetzee, 2000; Coetzee, 2002).

Game description

Zulu children received no formal education and as such traditional education constituted a gradual absorption into society in terms of skills and behaviour patterns expected by the community at large (Tyrell & Jurgens, 1963). While herding cattle in the field, young boys would pick up twigs or small sticks and engage in sparring matches called *ukungcweka* (Coetzee, 2000, 2002). The twigs and small sticks were intentionally used to hone the skills without inflicting any injuries. As the boys got older, proper fighting equipment namely *umshiza*, *umzaca*, *isikhwili*, *imviko*, *umqambathi*, *induku* (an offensive stick), *ihhawu* (a shield) and *ubhoko* (a long blocking stick) could be used in the sparring matches as the outcome of the matches became more significant such as deciding who climbed the ranks and assumed a position of a *ingqwele* (leader).

Typically, a challenger or *ingqwele* initiated a match by tapping on the forehead of another boy and then saying "*nqo, nqo mfana udla amasi embongolo, mina ngidla awenkomo yakithi uBhakede*" which roughly translates to "*knock, knock, boy you eat sour milk from a donkey, I eat sour milk from my father's cow Bhakede*". To a boy that is being challenged, this was a double humiliation. First, his manliness was being undermined in public. Second, he was being told that his dad's cows were infertile, unable to bear milk and by insinuation eating donkey's milk (Zulu people do not consume any donkey products). This sparked the fight. In some cases, the fights that started while herding cattle could be settled during *ukudla iphaphu* or *emgangeleni* alluded to earlier.

Rules and scoring

Any format of isiZulu stick fighting follows strict protocol. A fight ends when one fighter is hit on the hand (usually the thumb) which is a foul, falls down or loses his fighting equipment (Coetzee, 2000). Alternatively, an exclamation of "*ngiyavuma*" (I subject myself to you or acknowledge you), "*khumu*" (it is enough) and/or "*maluju*" (hold it) ends the fight. Debates continue to rage on about the appropriateness of *ukungcweka* and *ukudlala izinduku* in the modern era. To this end, Coetzee (2002) bemoans the decontextualisation and exploitation of *izinduku* in political rallies, marches and mass actions, which is characterised by the lack of values of respect (for other human beings, a tenet of Ubuntu), control and accountability. To counteract the negative public perceptions about *izinduku*, safe fighting equipment is used in provincial and national indigenous games festivals alluded to earlier.

12. Findings and discussion

In the next section, we use Mbigi's Collective Five Fingers Theory to identify and describe a number of Ubuntu values that are embodied in these games.

13. Survival

In an earlier discussion, survival was described as the ability to live and exist in spite of difficulties (Du Toit, Poovan & Engelbrecht, 2006). Apartheid had a huge impact on black communities, whose lives were characterised by a lack of resources, poverty and inequality of opportunities. Thus, African communities developed a collective psyche that allows and still allows the ability to pool resources, preserve and create African communities (Du Toit, Poovan, & Engelbrecht, 2006). To survive, individual team members are required to utilise their unique knowledge, skills and abilities (SKAs) for the betterment of the team or community (Du Toit, Poovan & Engelbrecht, 2006).

All three games described earlier force team members to realise that their success will be as a result of team members pooling SKAs to guide the team to success. The need for survival systematically builds the spirit of collectivism and collaboration evident in these games. Team members in *ushumpu* and *umngcwabo* possess different levels of SKAs that must be harmonised for the benefit of the team; those that have high levels of SKAs occupy leadership positions. In *ukungcweka*, a leadership position is reserved for those players who demonstrate such. A reliance on each other, which sets aside personal goals and promotes team goals, is cultivated. Those who can survive must fight for those who are struggling until they can find their feet to fight again, i.e. in *ushumpu* and *umngcwabo*, inactive players depend on the remaining players to remain active and participate in the games. The games build a sense of collective and collaborative spirit by teaching African children to embrace the values of selflessness, commitment to the bigger picture and sharing in order to survive.

14. Solidarity spirit

In *ushumpu* and *umngcwabo*, the teams must work as a unit to emerge victorious. The success of the team depends on the individual strengths and weaknesses of each member. Whichever team can successfully harness the strength of each member whilst counteracting weaknesses is likely to be more successful. The idea of an individualistic approach is discouraged. The fieldwork team has to synergise their collective energy and strategies to eliminate the playing team, whereas the playing team members need to depend on each other to score points, and those team members that are dismissed can rely on the rest of the team to work hard to get them back into the game. In *ukungcweka*, boys were drafted into *amabutho* (war regiments) depending on their chronological age and the notion of individuals belonging in one collective group strengthened the solidarity spirit. Currently, in provincial and national indigenous games festivals that are held annually, players compete as provincial teams formed by provincial, district and local strata of government. Thus, all the games instil the principle that one united force is powerful and important for encouraging a winning mentality.

15. Compassion

The word compassion resonates with Ubuntu values because it addresses issues of empathy, kindness and care for others in the society. The spirit of compassion can be developed in children. For example, in *ushumpu* and *umngcwabo*, the fielding team must learn to promote togetherness as they appreciate that they are interconnected in aiming for one common goal in a game where it is give and take. The members of the team must cultivate a team mentality and learn tolerance for each other as members possess different strengths and weaknesses that the team needs to harness for optimal team performance. In *ushumpu* and *umngcwabo*, learners can be taught to help vulnerable members within and outside of their community for

humanitarian purposes. In *ukungcweka*, if your opponent cannot cope any longer and ends the fight, as the victor you are compelled to oblige. The idea of compassion has created the foundation of a culture of caring and sharing with the vulnerable members of the society.

16. Respect and dignity

Earlier in the paper, we argue that respect refers to an objective, unbiased consideration and regard for rights, values, beliefs and property, whereas dignity refers to behaviour or a trait that earns or deserves respect (Du Toit, Poovan & Engelbrecht, 2006). Dignity amplifies human worth. At the heart of it is the idea that no human being should be stripped of self-worth or exposed to abuse, degradation, torture, harassment or neglect of any kind that might threaten their dignity (Rapatsa & Makgato, 2016; Rapatsa, Makgato, & Mashile, 2016). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Constitution, 2005) states that “South Africa is founded on the values of human dignity”; the fact that respect is at the core of the rule of law makes it imperative that learners are taught the principles of respect and dignity.

Ushumpu, *umngcwabo* and *ukungcweka* are games played according to a set of rules. Thus, respect would mean 1) respect for the rules of the games and 2) respect for teammates and the opposing team. In *ushumpu* and *umngcwabo*, teams agree on the rules at the beginning of the game. In both games there is an agreement on a number of runs to constitute *igemu*, the fate of those players who hit hard, commonly referred to as *ukuqunya*, which might injure fellow players, thus going against the spirit of fair play, *umafihla* which is concealing the ball under garments and what should befall cheaters. The pre-game agreements between the teams are amicably conducted, a give and take scenario for each team thus creating a win-win situation for everyone involved. In cases of conflict, both teams have a negotiated settlement. In *ukungcweka*, warriors have to respect the rules of the game. For example, a challenger cannot fight anyone at random. A challenge is advanced to an opponent, and if it is not taken, the fight does not happen no matter how aggrieved the challenger may feel. Moreover, if the challenge is taken and the opponent indicates that he is no longer coping, the fight must stop.

17. Concluding remarks and implications for practice

In this article, we argue that indigenous games are rich in Ubuntu philosophy and that they should be used in the school curriculum to instil Ubuntu philosophy in children. The use of Ubuntu philosophy in the school curriculum has been shown to stimulate critical thinking, creativity and promote collective values in learners. Learners should be encouraged to bring in teaching and learning activities from their own cultural background such as indigenous games. The use of indigenous games in the school will decolonise the curriculum and promote AIKS pedagogy making the process of knowledge construction and production more closely connected to learners' own life-worlds, histories and stories.

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