



Disentangling the Contradictions and Misconceptions of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Public Administration Practices

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Abstract

The aim of the paper explored the disentangling contradictions and misconceptions about African Indigenous knowledge of public administration practices. This paper instils and raises awareness of indigenous knowledge systems in the field of Public Administration. African indigenous public administration practices vary greatly from region to region and from community to community, reflecting the rich diversity of African cultures and traditions. However, they share a common emphasis on community participation, consensus building, and respect for authority, which have been key to their effectiveness in managing community affairs, which is the locus and the focus of public administration in that context. One of the misconceptions about African indigenous public administration practices is that they lack formal structures. While it is true that African indigenous public administration practices do not have the same formal structures as Western-style public administration, they do have structures that are based on the principles of consensus building and community participation. In response to these misconceptions, this conceptual paper attempts to disentangle the contradictions and misconceptions about African indigenous public administration practices in Public Administration. This article advocates for a better understanding of indigenous governance and administration systems which, if well documented, should help to inform a theory of African public administration. The article investigates two opposing viewpoints in the literature.

Keywords: *Knowledge Systems; Public Administration; Governance; Indigenous; Culture*

Introduction

The paper explored the disentangling contradictions and misconceptions of African indigenous knowledge (AIKS) in public administration practices. The paper aims to instil and raise awareness of indigenous knowledge systems in the field of Public Administration. The success of any indigenous society depended on the quality of its cultural administrative systems in place and the quality of leadership. This fact explains the continuing interest of scholars in Public Administration to advance consideration of indigenous public administrations as a cornerstone for the discipline (Domingo 2004; Basheka 2014; Ndanguba & Ijeoma 2019; Mahlala & Shai 2022; Mahlala, Maramura & Netswera 2022). Some people believe that African indigenous public administration practices are primitive or outdated, lacking in the sophistication of modern Western-style administration.

However, these practices have evolved over centuries to effectively manage community affairs and maintain social order. To that end, much of the literature on the theory and practice of public administration has undervalued the role of Africans, their processes and institutions in the evolution of the discipline (Ndanguba & Okonkwo 2017). Moreover, to reinvent government, particularly in African countries, contemporary scholars must take into account Africa's contribution to the body of knowledge in this discipline on the continent and elsewhere. It is also necessary to devote critical thought and attention to reinventing forms of government on African terms, and adopting foreign policies, structures, frameworks and models that are not subservient to Western ideologies (Ndanguba & Ijeoma 2019).

It is commonly suggested that the more African countries continue to rely or lean on Western solutions to African problems (Rodney 2018), the more unfit for purpose and insignificant African thinkers on these topics will be, to the extent that Africa's solutions to African problems (Ndanguba & Okonkwo 2017). According to Basheka (2015), Africa's indigenous administrative systems have been depicted in the literature as troubled, chaotic and biased, particularly where Western ideas have been assumed to be superior to indigenous systems. Basheka goes on to say that African scholars have a primary responsibility to present a more accurate picture of indigenous administrative structures.

This is a literature review study with the original contribution that primarily collected data through desktop, using advanced search, and thematic content data analysis was adopted. Several published materials were accessed from different databases for data collection. The data collected was streamlined according to relevance to the topic under study. The next section presents the conceptualization of African indigenous knowledge and cultural governance system.

The Concept of Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Governance Systems

The conceptualization of indigenous knowledge, also known as traditional knowledge or traditional ecological knowledge, is a collection of observations, innovations, practices, and beliefs that support sustainability and the prudent management of natural and cultural resources through interactions between people and their surroundings (Enaifoghe, 2019). Indigenous knowledge and the people who are intrinsically linked to it cannot be separated. In phenomena spanning biological, physical, social, cultural, and spiritual systems, it is applicable. According to Keane, Khupe and Muza (2016), *Indigenous Peoples* have been building their knowledge systems for millennia, and they still do so now based on information gleaned from close encounters with the environment, lifelong learning, and a wealth of observations, lessons, and abilities.

The close relationship with nature allows people to notice often-subtle micro-changes and make decisions based on a thorough comprehension of patterns and processes of change in the natural world of which people are a part (Muza, 2014). Indigenous languages, practices, values, place names, songs, and stories include data and knowledge that are still relevant now, as well as cumulative historical and cultural

ecology. For instance, it is believed that "Indigenous Peoples and long-standing, place-based communities currently manage over 24% of the world's land (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014). Which is home to 80% of the world's biodiversity and 40% of the last ecologically intact landscapes and protected areas" (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014). In short, the data implies that individuals who have remained in harmony with nature are responsible for maintaining the planet's most intact ecosystems. Additionally, indigenous knowledge is applicable to all human systems, not only the usage of land and water.

Indigenous knowledge is understood to be communal, holistic, and adaptable knowledge that is distinctive to a particular geographic or cultural environment. Indigenous knowledge is currently experiencing a renaissance, and it is viewed as crucial to include it into development efforts, even though it was previously completely overlooked in the domains of development and conservation (Cram, Chilisa & Mertens, 2013). The recording of indigenous knowledge and its dissemination to different locations and settings, however, are fraught with difficulties. There are disagreements over the extent to which and for whom indigenous knowledge is beneficial outside of the context in which it was created (Burnette & Sander, 2014). Despite the fact that it is commonly acknowledged that there are numerous lessons to be learned from indigenous knowledge systems, there is no protection for indigenous knowledge under international law, making it open to mistreatment and disavowal.

The Cultural Governance Systems

The views of the architects of the colonial dispensation, who believed that Africa had no civil administration structures worthy of the name, must be rejected, while compelling facts and examples to support the robustness of the pre-colonial governance apparatuses are advanced. Some schools of thought still believe that African indigenous public administration practices are incompatible with democracy (Enaifoghe, 2022a). However, many African countries are finding ways to incorporate traditional leadership structures into modern democratic systems. Yet two opposing viewpoints emerge when one breaks rank to consider whether African societies had administrative systems worthy of the name before the colonial era.

The first is a negative perception of Africa as a desolate continent devoid of any sense of organization. The second confirms that, at the time, African societies had systems in place to manage public concerns which constituted a viable administrative system. This article adheres to the second school of thought. Most attempts to comprehend Africa's indigenous administrative systems have failed (Nzewi and Maramura, 2021), hence this study is accordingly an attempt to disentangle the contradictions and misconceptions about African indigenous public administration practices in Public Administration. This article advocates for a better understanding of indigenous governance and administration systems, which, if well documented, should help to inform a theory of African public administration. The following section of the paper will focus on indigenous cultural governance systems.

Indigenous cultural governance systems are traditional methods of governance and administration that have been adopted by indigenous peoples around the world (Zezeza, 2006; Asante and Mazama, 2009). These systems are based on cultural values, customs and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. They are often characterized by a deep connection to the land, respect for elders and community members, and a strong emphasis on consensus building and collective decision making (Asante and Mazama, 2009). In many Indigenous cultures, the governance system is closely intertwined with spiritual and ceremonial practices. Elders and spiritual leaders play a critical role in decision making and are often considered the guardians of cultural knowledge and traditions.

Basheka (2015) argues that trying to define the notion of 'culture' can be a mind-numbing exercise, because cultures vary so widely in practice and their governance structures; this is especially the case when you examine culture from an indigenous perspective to debunk the myth that the pre-colonial

peoples of Africa had no governance structures in place. Nzewi and Maramura (2021) also state that culture is an umbrella term that encompasses human societies' social behaviour, institutions and norms, as well as individuals' knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities and habits. 'culture' is also frequently attributed to a specific region or location. Oatey's (2012) view is that culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols.

Furthermore, constitutes the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may be considered, on the one hand, as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements.

The Significance of Indigenous Cultural Governance Systems

When culture is linked to laws, values and beliefs, the authors of this paper contend that indigenous governance systems must have been in place because each culture had its cultural systems that were essential for its survival. What this means is that indigenous cultural governance systems are significant, because they reflect the cultural values and traditions of Indigenous people and provide a framework for community decision-making that is grounded in local knowledge and wisdom (Asante and Mazama, 2009; Gluckman, 1965; Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Adeboyejo 2013; Jibowo (2005). This is because these systems have been effective in managing community affairs for centuries and continue to be relevant today.

It implies that indigenous governance is community-based, with all benefits being distributed to all members of the community. The concept of community building is central to understanding indigenous governance. Governance is a communal of expertise. According to Wane et al. (2017), African Indigenous governance through spirituality is the foundation of the kind of governance in Africa that shapes society. African governance served as a conduit between the living, the non-living and the natural world. Contemporary scholars such as Basheka (2015), on the other hand, argue that African governance entails strengthened decision-making and control over social organizations.

African governance entails leveraging people's skills, personal and collective contributions, and shared commitment to addressing an organization's chosen governance processes, goals and identity (Basheka, 2015). Indigenous African governance refers to the application of people's skills, teachings, wisdom, ideas, perceptions, experiences, capabilities and insights to the maintenance or improvement of societal governance (Enaifoghe, 2018). Hence, indigenous governance is based on enhancing and building community members' capacities through decision-making processes. Individuals now own the outcome of the deliberations. This outcome does not only serve a few, but it meets all the people's needs. It is a government run by and for the people.

There are numerous examples of Indigenous cultural governance systems in Africa. These systems are diverse and vary from one community to another, reflecting the unique cultures, traditions and histories of the various indigenous peoples of Africa. Asante and Mazama (2009) confirm that the Kpelle people of Liberia have a traditional governance system that is based on the practice of collective decision-making. The system is led by the Chief, who is responsible for making important decisions on behalf of the community; however, the Chief is expected to consult with the community and seek consensus before making any major decisions (Enaifoghe, 2019; Geschiere, 1997).

Another context of an indigenous cultural governance system is the San governance system in Botswana that is based on the principle of egalitarianism. The community is led by a group of elders who make decisions through consensus building and who are responsible for ensuring that everyone in the community has a say in important matters (Gluckman, 1965). The Tiv governance system in Nigeria is

also an indigenous cultural governance system that is based on the concept of gerontocracy, or rule by elders. Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Adeboyejo (2013) and Jibowo (2005) highlight that, the Tiv governance system is led by a council of elders, known as the Tiv Area Traditional Council, who make decisions based on the consensus of the community.

The outline above has provided some insight into the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of Indigenous cultural governance systems in various Indigenous communities across Africa. This is done by discussing the unique characteristics of Indigenous governance systems in Africa, including the importance of consensus building, communal decision making, and respect for elders and cultural traditions.

The Conceptual Framework of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems

This section will discuss the nature of indigenous knowledge systems and dispel myths about African indigenous public administration practices. Africa has a rich history of knowledge systems based on the principles of caring for one another and the spirit of mutual support, which are rooted in the African philosophy of ubuntu. The term ‘indigenous knowledge’ can also refer to ‘local knowledge,’ ‘traditional knowledge or practices,’ ‘peasant knowledge,’ and ‘traditional environmental knowledge’ (Enaifoghe, 2019). It is used interchangeably with ‘traditional knowledge’ and ‘local knowledge’ to differentiate the skills acquired and developed by a specific community from international knowledge systems.

Nzewi and Maramura (2021: 204) also confirm that the African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK) systems essentially encourage institutions of higher learning to apply a decolonizing approach that appreciates the pedagogical value of indigenous. This implies that attempts at decolonization should seek to undo the imbalances of the past relating to African indigenous public administration practices (Enaifoghe, 2019). This paper shares the view that the extreme reluctance of public administration regimes to infuse a consideration of African indigenous administrative practices into the discipline has left the fabric of African states reliant on European systems of administration. Which do not assist in solving African problems.

One of the key researchers and analysts of AIK, Odora Hoppers, outlined the collective and integrated nature, along with the collective characteristics and bases that are the foundation of an integral part of knowledge, unity and universal as well as continental heritage and resource (Odora Hoppers, no date: 2). These realities lead to the conclusion that an IKS is both a ‘national resource and a national heritage’ that is the foundation of peoples’ success, but it needs to become a tangible reality, which in turn needs planning, promotion, protection and development throughout Africa (Odora Hoppers, no date:3).

According to Mahlala and Shai (2022), indigenous knowledge is local knowledge, knowledge that is unique to a particular culture or society. Furthermore, Basheka (2015) defines Indigenous Knowledge (IK) as local knowledge that is unique to a given society and denotes a deep understanding of that society as well as its beliefs and customs. It stands in contrast to the international knowledge system. This awareness is critical because it will result in indigenous self-understanding and self-determination, thereby alienating the falsification that has led to the misconception that indigenous public administration practices in Africa have been non-existent.

Hunn (2001) defines African indigenous knowledge systems as bodies of long-standing traditions and practices of African local communities that include the skills, innovations, beliefs, values, experiences and insights of the people in their respective environments and communities that have been accumulated over time and applied to maintain or improve their livelihood. Muya (2008) elaborates that learning occurs in a variety of ways in most African traditional societies, including free play, immersion

in nature, and directly assisting adults with work and communal activities. As indicated by Enaifoghe (2022b), they learn through trial and error, independent observation of nature and human behaviour, voluntary community sharing of information, stories, proverbs and songs, and participation in rituals. This paper posits that understanding the concept of 'knowledge' must be based on Africa's rich history of ideas and intellectual development.

African Indigenous Governance Structures

This section of the paper focuses on the indigenous governance structures in Africa, in the light of the findings of scholars such as Basheka and Auriacombe in papers including "Contextualising the Regeneration of Africa's Indigenous Governance and Management Systems and Practices" (2020), "Indigenous Africa's governance architecture: a need for African public administration theory?" (Basheka, 2015), "Rethinking the role of indigenous governance practices in contemporary governance in Africa: The case of Ghana" (Dampney, 2017) and many other scholars who have studied indigenous governance. Ever since the colonisation of Africa, all systems of knowledge creation, dissemination and consumption have tended to reflect a Western hegemony (Zezeza 2006:196).

This ideological imposition has worked to diminish what Africans knew about and could do to control their society. The utilisation of indigenous institutions and knowledge systems should be promoted and recognised in both developed and developing countries (Appiah-Opoku 2005; Basheka 2015). Communities had decentralised systems, such as the Amarharhabe and Zulus, which were well structured at the local level, with the Council of Elders, Chief Priests, Moral Elders and Chiefs, with Moral Elders and Chiefs performing numerous tasks such as consultation, and conveying communal wisdom that guaranteed the society remained stable and successful. The kings held jurisdiction over the centralised communities.

The community representation, participation in governance, and checks and balances that supported healthy social evolution were crucial components that preserved stability within the centralised systems, as illustrated by the Xhosa, Zulu and Swati kingdoms. Even though the governance systems were vastly different, the governing mechanisms shared common foundations, features and principles grounded in humanism, communism, and the spiritual aspects of governance among African peoples. We believe that the way forward supported by governments, continental and international organisations, intellectuals, educational institutions, religious groups and the people of Africa at large aims to create a new environment of hope and belief leading to an 'African developmental agenda'.

Such an agenda can be successful only through an innovative provision of a system rooted in deep research, and by re-examination and strengthening of current and active local knowledge capacity. This entails informing and promoting development that is people-centred, accessible, honest, accountable and reliable to the core. In such a process and within this context the role of African universities is fundamental in the planning and implementation of a fresh formulation, planning and adaptation of a revamped curriculum of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) at all levels of teaching and learning, with special emphasis on African continental indigenous administrative systems (Porr, 2011).

The legendary African professor and researcher, Katherine Odora-Hoppers, described IKS as not only a productive process leading not only to the creation of handicrafts for tourists and woven baskets but also one that is a theoretical and empirical tool utilised in the exploration, research and analysis of indigenous knowledge of technological realities and achievements in key production areas. These include, amongst others, agriculture, productive utilisation and exploitation of the agricultural terrains, utilisation and exploitation of forest resources, and management techniques for improving the quality of the atmosphere.

As well as the transition systems for new knowledge, health, and planning and improving the potential and activation of democratic community participation at all levels of governance, both in South Africa and the rest of the continent's present and future development (Odora-Hoppers in Seepe, 2001). These realities of a community's or a continent's IKS can only be successful in the case of a close unity of communities and their political leadership in facing and relating their realities, challenges and actions to achieve a united continental identity associated with IKS to achieve successfully planned developmental functions and outcomes. Yet IKS is a theoretical and empirical praxis and that remains a challenge at the country and continental level.

The debate on IKS has been the topic of many theories and much empirical research, leading to the creation not only of a new theoretical understanding of social and country governance dynamics but above all also a clear understanding of the historical and present roots of its planning, implementation and dynamic (Habib Ur Rehman Mayar, 2019). African indigenous governance structures as one of the existing realities of IKS are a key foundation for addressing the developmental process of the continent's population at the economic, financial, political, cultural and community-based levels. The attempts towards achieving the complete elimination of massive homelessness, poverty, starvation and diseases. The perpetuation of the historical and humanist African culture can only be successful through the alliance of existing continental governments and their people.

It is the vital responsibility of government, communities, churches and religious organisations, civil society, researchers and academics to strengthen the foundations, understanding and development of IKS at all levels of society (Republic of Rwanda 2015). The process upon which the African indigenous governance structures, processes and functions will be based on African thinkers who have researched and expanded the knowledge base of the Continent and its people's history, culture and economics. The serious plan and implementation of the IKS as the foundation of the African indigenous governance structures do not mean that the existing technological and knowledge innovations of the 'Western world' be side-lined or ignored.

The IKS process at all levels will be the foundation of fresh empirical research at all technological terrains in an effort to improve and advance existing knowledge. The exploration of new realities inevitably leads to a knowledge system that and enhances the unity of the forms of knowledge, relationships, challenges, diversity, democracy and development Collins, Neal, and Neal, 2014:330-331).

The African Indigenous Governance Structures: Processes and Structures for Success

There is no doubt that African indigenous governance structures and processes should be founded on unity, collaboration, knowledge, common beliefs, planning and action. These are characteristics that can lead to the social and economic elevation of the poor and the marginalised masses. These fundamentals are directly linked to communities' political, social, knowledge-built cultural empowerment and development (Odora Hoppers no date:3-7). Odora Hopper's deep understanding that the past paves the way to the future of the African indigenous governance structures led her to call for a 'Strategic Project Purpose process'. That would be instrumental in the way that communities and government contribute to the planning and implementation of a united, committed, emancipated and developmental alliance (Odora Hoppers no date: 9-11).

In this process, there needs to be serious, committed, united and well-prepared cooperation and integration in the common process by the government institutions and bodies, community leaders, politicians and administrators at all levels, civil society organisations and institutions, religious bodies, and private sector representatives. Such a diversified connection and cooperation could lead to a 'Network Frame' with key objectives associated with programme integration, national and international initiatives for the creation of agreed initiatives. The initiatives will be through a thorough analysis and

common agreement on policy provisions of different social, community and government sectors, and processes, planning and implementation of policy future development processes (Odora Hoppers no date: 11-13).

Odora Hoppers's research and analysis are based on the unity of purpose of the empirical and the conceptual/theoretical aspects of both the IKS and the African indigenous governance structures and processes. Such relationships between the societal and governmental groups in the process of uniting in common agreements moving forward are based on a continuous process of integrity-based and honest information exchanges leading to the foundation of a developmental path forward based on the building of partnerships that are key to success. The success of African indigenous governance structures is based on key foundations that connect the past with the future. These include fundamentals such as a clear understanding of society's historical and social realities in the process of shaping the future; accepting indigenous knowledge as a basic and integral factor uniting the past with the future through collective knowledge (Mantzaris 2004).

As well as understanding and agreement; emphasising the need to prioritise the poor, the rural populations, the homeless, the elderly, the youth and all historically disadvantaged social groups and uniting in common commitment (Mantzaris 2004; Galston, 2007:625-626). A deep knowledge and understanding of the past and present realities in every country in Africa are keys to a continuous engagement with the present challenges and problems, from the side of government, the public sector and the citizens. Such a careful and unified process is fundamental in transcending existing artificial political divisions. The success of African indigenous governance is not achievable without honest, transparent and collective sharing of information, decision-making, planning, action and implementation (Maton 2008: 5-6; United Nations ECA/RFSD/2021).

An official IKS policy for South Africa was signed in 2004. The policy was seen as the main foundation of the government's and all stakeholders' commitment to planning and implementing the immediate promotion, protection and development of IKS (RSA Department of Science and Technology 2004:6). The legislation pinpoints the IKS dynamics and realities both in South Africa and the whole of Africa by outlining the key characteristics of the process with the establishment of an IKS Fund, whose main responsibility is to support indigenous community and a "formal system to record IK" (RSA Department of Science and Technology 2004:10-11). There was also a promise for the future of IKS. The promise was based on the belief that the government's and the people's commitment to future successful structures and processes would transform IKS to make it a key transformational instrument in enhancing development and the country's economy.

In other words, there was a belief that IK was a key initiative and tool that could be the foundation of a South African and African Renaissance, and it has been described as a key "continental imperative" (RSA Department of Science and Technology 2004:13). The Departments of Science of Technology, of Trade and Industry and Health have been identified in the document as the key government actors in the processes of exploration, research, planning and implementation of the African Indigenous Knowledge System (AIKS). This process was instrumental in positioning AIKS concerning local and continental markets and their various information systems, the existing agreements and the "formal recorder systems" (RSA Department of Science and Technology 2004:16).

One of the most important parts of the policy was the need to integrate IKS into the education system and especially the National Qualifications Framework. This would confirm the legal and social importance of IKS as a fundamental element of educational imperatives and its contribution and connection to education curricula (RSA Department of Science and Technology 2004:16). One of the most important parts of the policy is related to the integration of IKS to AIKS and the national system of innovation in South Africa can only be successful if it is based on detailed consideration of both

international and continental life and the historical experiences of countries such as South Korea, Singapore, Japan and India that can be considered as developed and developing countries (RSA Department of Science and Technology 2004:18).

Evidently, based on historical realities at the time of the publication of the policy, pinpoint achievements of diversified societies that combined a serious diversification at all social, economic, ideological political and financial realities, experiences, poverty, wealth, inequality and growth. The DST felt that the success of IKS in such countries was based on continuous research, planning and implementation of strategies leading to development with the active participation of the people, government, private sector and several other stakeholders (RSA Department of Science and Technology 2004:19-20).

The IKS administrative future and governance would be based on the planning, restructuring, advancing, promulgation and implementation of forthcoming legislation, identifying the holders of IKS and their accreditation, the creation of new advisory committees, and the creation of a National Office. Such future initiatives would be instrumental in the building and continuous development of the relationships of the IKS with all existing societal structures. These initiatives would be undertaken by research institutions and the IKS of South Africa Trust, which would be key elements leading to success (RSA Department of Science and Technology 2004:22-24).

The Way Forward: A Key Example

African indigenous governance structures and their processes have been the topic of multi-disciplinary research efforts and initiatives, spearheaded by the academic discipline of public administration that throughout the years has been dominated by the ‘administrative value systems’ of the Western World as Mahlala and Shai (2022) have shown. Their stance towards Africa has been identified as a perpetuation of an ‘epistemic injustice’ on the part of Western researchers and academics. They have been accused of the perpetuation of a complete lack of regard for African societies’ value systems –even though the continent’s multiple societies have developed unique administrative systems within their specific social settings. Against this background, this conceptual paper seeks to explore the prospects and challenges of African indigenous practices’ contribution to Public Administration.

The analysis of Afrocentricity as a foundation of African indigenous governance structures is the heart of its importance as an alternative theoretical and research-based discourse (Economic Commission for Africa, 2019). IKS at all levels, individual, group, political, administrative and community, cannot be successful without the existence and continuation of a wide range of united, steady, resourceful, well-planned, honest and politically based productive social relationships. While there is a world-based acceptance of the success and continuation of the agricultural cooperative ‘home-grown solutions’ that are one of the major achievements of the political and social leadership (Mantzaris, 2020).

There is a lack of knowledge of the historical significance of the planning and implementation of both community and administratively-based IKS in the world-renowned success of the cooperative agricultural movement. An IKS movement that began in the agricultural areas, expanded into the creation of housing and transport cooperative societies. Spearheaded by such successes, occasionally supported by the state, agricultural development continued throughout the country, supported by the creation of new smaller cooperatives that became instrumental in increasing their production throughout the country (Onyango 2022; Jones, Feigenbaum, and Jones, 2021).

By 2020, Kenya had a very significant increase in the number of agricultural cooperatives and societies, which were multi-producers as this type was considered more successful and profitable. Amongst these, the successes of 659 coffee cooperatives and 641 cooperatives in the dairy sector were

well-known throughout the country. Scientific research has shown empirically that the Kenyan state authorities are instrumental in the success of such important and developmental cooperatives. The cooperation of the Bomet County Government for example in alliance with KALRO (the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization) and the Alliance of Bioversity through the Pan Africa Bean Research Alliance (PABRA). It led to a powerful and multi-dimensional alliance instrumental in training farmers from a country-wide group of cooperatives and independent farmers' bean production and marketing. This means that the alliance of the government administration based on IKS with the community-based cooperatives in the Bomet county, amongst others, has been crucial in developing a success journey in the bean-growing processes. The success of such an IKS alliance has been important for the rest of the country because of the development of especially the bio-fortified varieties such as Nyota, Angaza, and Faida, which are high in iron and zinc (European Research Institute on Cooperatives and Social Enterprises 2017).

The participants of such training and process include community leaders and groups, civil society and representatives of non-governmental organisations, and elected municipal and possibly provincial officials and administrators (Global Citizen 2019). The key expected outcome is to identify existing community needs and agree on the final version of budget proposals and decisions, and finally to vote on the key priorities for the spending of public funds. The creation and possible success of such structure and condition is a crucial way forward in affecting the realisation and operations of IKS (Adler and Goggin, 2005: 237). Inevitably such initiatives regarding the alliance of politicians, public administrators and civil society organisations for an important issue such as participating in budgeting, 'has been declared a foundation of local unity, accountability and transparency.

Such an alliance can be the beginning of a serious developmental step forward. As the engagement between a state institution (the municipality) and local communities produces a fruitful outcome, domestic policy and budget processes can be launched for the benefit of all parties involved (Apaliyah, Martin, and Gasteyer: 33-34). There is no doubt that the South African government and public administration had over the years utilised the country's legislation, policies, rules, and regulations to mobilise the citizens towards a well-planned effort to establish and expand a community-based participatory approach in all matters of governance at all levels. There has been a significant effort to motivate well-planned community participation and mobilisation that unifies the people with politicians and public administrators in successful meetings, mainly in the municipalities.

Participating in budgeting is a key to unity and mobilisation as Baloyi and Mulinga (2017) have indicated. Their empirical effort pinpoints the South African governments and the municipalities' efforts to mobilise its citizens through community meetings (*Izimbizo*). Masiya, Mazenda and Gwabeni (2021) conducted empirical research of a local Eastern Cape municipality that utilised a qualitative framework based on interviews with municipal councillors, administrators and community leaders to identify the problems, challenges, realities, and steps forward undertaken following the parties' agreements about the participating budgeting.

The conclusions indicated that even though the municipal leadership is conscious of the importance and need for public participation in budgeting, the weak participation of the communities in the process is an impediment involvement of the public in the process has been weak and need to improve the forward step to become a reality. One of the key barriers was the lack of capacity on both sides, especially the municipal side. This means that capacity building is needed to increase the participation of city officials, elected officials, and citizens for good governance of African indigenous knowledge systems.

Conclusions and the Way Forward

The article pinpointed the significance and realities of disentangling contradictions and misconceptions about African indigenous public administration practices and their roots. The examples of existing realities have shown the significance of many considerations on the part of all participants who are obligated by realities, laws, and policies to play their roles in the processes of engagement and participation. The realities of the present and the history of Africa have pinpointed the truth that living conditions at all societal levels created systems of relationships between politicians, administrators and communities. The freedom and democracy gained in South Africa since 1994 have also led to communities who, instead of rebuilding their new lives, suffer the multi-dimensional repercussions of corruption, political fragmentation and lack of trust.

It essentially demonstrates the diversity of indigenous cultural governance systems in Africa and the importance of these systems in managing community affairs and maintaining social order within the locus and the focus of public administration. Furthermore, these systems also highlight the importance of respecting and preserving indigenous cultures and traditions, because they have been developed over centuries and their role in deep connections between Indigenous peoples and their lands. The fundamental unity realities that can lead to collective and agreed upon plans, further debates and implementation on the ground demand the treatment of all participating members with common appreciation, understanding and respect for the collective hard work and efforts.

The provision of detailed, descriptive and honest feedback is instrumental in help them sustain or/and improve their performance and encourage feedback from them. The complete lack of promises from all sides something that is extremely difficult or impossible to deliver and following rules, laws and policies and agreeing that failure to follow them will have serious negative repercussions for the leader/s of the group.

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