

BEYOND CULTURAL INCLUSION: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AS A FOUNDATION FOR HEALTHCARE SCIENCE EDUCATION.

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Whose Knowledge Counts in Healthcare Science Education?

Healthcare science education cannot claim relevance in indigenous contexts while recognizing only one tradition of knowledge

The central challenge facing healthcare science education is not cultural diversity, but epistemic inequality

Introduction

- Health care science education is predominantly grounded in western biomedical epistemologies
- Indigenous Knowledge System remains marginalized
- A disconnect between professional training and the health realities of African communities eg. (Rural access, Traditional Birth Attendants)



Presentation outline

Reframing Healthcare Education

Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare Education

Theoretical Approach

Curriculum as Educational Leadership

Illustrative case: Ubuntu Community Model

Conceptual Framework

Recommendations

Reframing Healthcare Science Education

- IKS should not be supplementary content (rejecting the additive model)
- IKS represents an alternative epistemology with its own validation processes
- Transformation requires engagement with multiple ways of knowing
- The goal is epistemological pluralism rather than curricular tokenism



Epistemic Injustice in Health Science Education



- Curricula determine whose knowledge is recognized as legitimate.
- Biomedical dominance can render indigenous knowledge invisible.
- Students may develop identities disconnected from community realities.
- Epistemic exclusion constrains professional judgement.

Approach

- The use of decolonial theory interrogating how knowledge is selected, framed, and legitimized within health care academic spaces
- Critical curriculum theory lens
- Educational leadership
- Participatory research studies

Curriculum as Educational Leadership



- Curriculum is not neutral
- Knowledge selection is an act of educational leadership
- Nurse educators function as epistemic gatekeepers
- Leadership requires deciding which knowledge is legitimized and assessed
- Empowering to move beyond traditional boundaries to create responsive context-aware curricula

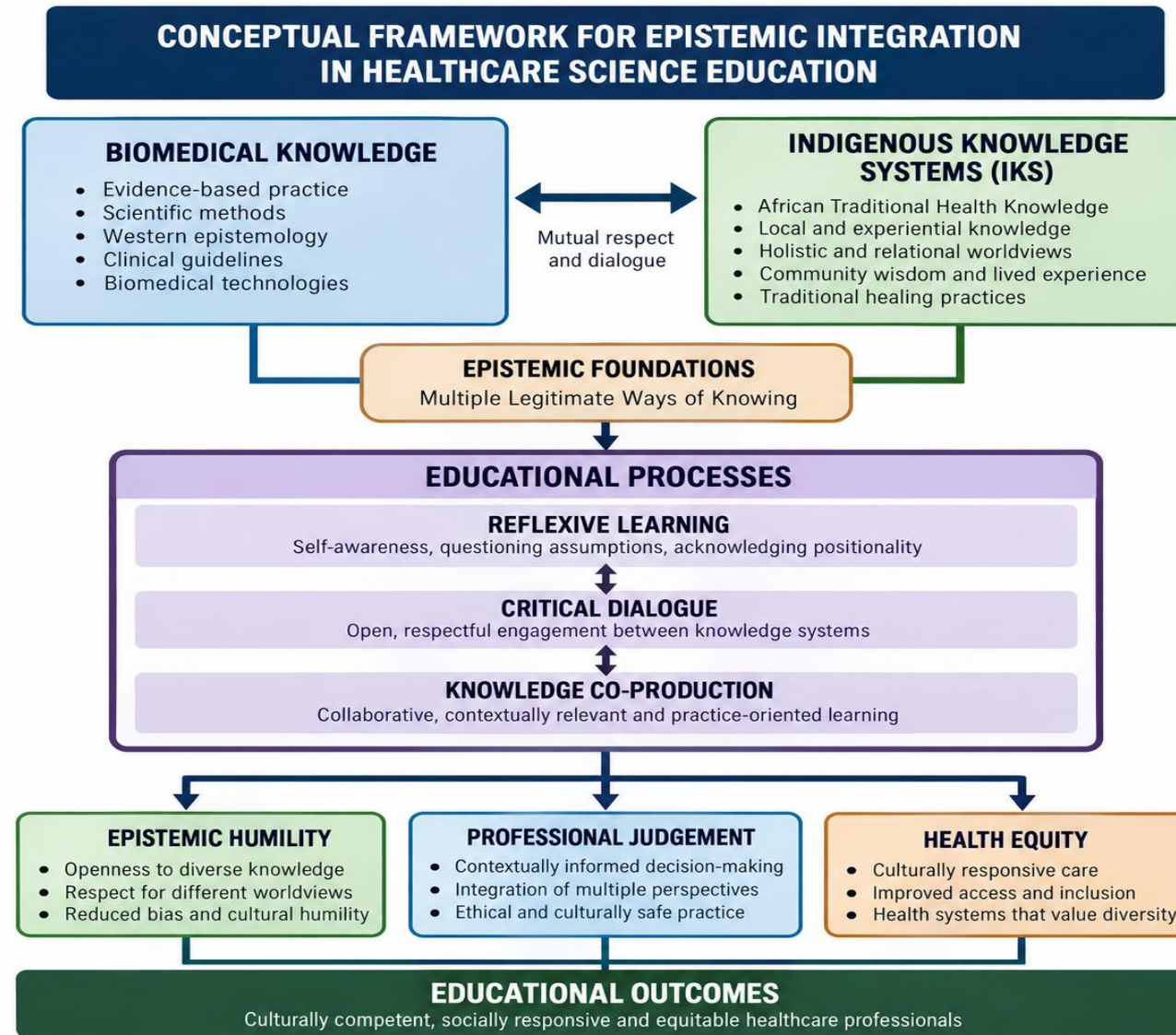
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Illustrative Case: Ubuntu Community Project

- Muthu ndi Muthu nga vhathu: A person is a person through other persons.
- Maternal and child health: Integrating traditional birth attendants
- - Intergenerational dialogues to address issues such as gender-based violence (GBV), teenage pregnancy, and mental health
- Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) function as a living system that can be accessed through dialogue, community partnerships, and shared decision-making.
- Different methods of data collection include lekgotla (community meetings), storytelling, drama, dance, photo voice, and more. However, there is still a need for improved methods of data analysis.



Recommendations: Multi-Level Transformation for Epistemic Integration



Policy

IKS competencies in Curricula
Accreditation standards



institutional

Faculty development
Valuing IKS holders as co
educators



Practice

Community led pedagogy
Clinical placements within
community structures
Integration of theory and practice

Conclusion

- The challenge is epistemic plurality, not merely cultural diversity.
- IKS represents a legitimate way of knowing.
- Transformation requires rethinking knowledge selection and validation.
- The future lies in epistemic integration rather than epistemic domination.

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