In conclusion

• Africa is a melting pot of restive intermingling of knowledges (Western – English/French/Portuguese/German, Eastern – Arabic, and African), characterised by the dominance of colonially derived knowledges and the resistance of indigenous knowledges – how we balance and capitalize on these different knowledge bases in the academy determines the future projectile of the continent.

• An acid test for African higher education as a social institution will be its ability to breach the barriers that separate the academy and its beneficiary society, including relevance to and access for local indigenous communities, i.e. the academy opening up to Africa itself. It will be in its ability to generate 'experts' that are not blind to and ignorant of their own local context – i.e. educated graduates that are relevant to their communities (see Nsamenang 2005, Odora Hoppers 2001).
The inclusion of indigenous epistemologies in higher education institutions in southern Africa

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Content Overview

- Role of HEIs
- Inclusivity
- Status of IK in HE contexts in SA
- Mechanism of epistemological inclusion and exclusion
- Addressing epistemological representation and access in HEIs
- Conclusion
The Role of Higher Education Institutions

- A well functioning, equitable, diverse and inclusive university sector holds immense promise for improving societal injustice, one that is inclusive of Indigenous knowledges.
- Higher Education holds the promise of contributing to intellectual, cultural, social, economic and political development, and democracy and social justice.
- Higher education must help erode the inherited socially structural inequities and provide opportunities for social advancement through equity of access and opportunity. It must produce, through research, teaching and learning and community service programmes, the knowledge and personpower for national reconstruction and economic and social development to enable South Africa to engage proactively with and participate in a highly competitive global economy (CHE 2000).
Tertiary institutions represent pinnacles of authority in knowledge production, accreditation, legitimation and dissemination... What these institutions choose to include, exclude, or denigrate can make all the difference as to the cognitive and operational capacities of the products of this industry in a post training period. From this perspective, the reconstruction of knowledge, the critical scrutiny of existing paradigms and the epistemological foundations of existing academic practice, and identification of the limitations that they impose on creativity must precede any specific work on curricula, research, or teaching methods because it is there, up-stream at the levels of epistemological foundations, that the orientations that feed the curriculum and details of teaching-learning practices emanate. Students must be taught about the deeper technologies of subjugation that have been applied to keep their societies down so effectively, for so long, if they are to find a sustainable, inclusive formula for a way forward.

Odora Hoppers 2001
Inclusivity

- Inclusivity aims to address **social inequity** and **exclusionary practices** reproduced and sustained through **racialized asymmetrical relations of power** (see Dei & Doyle 2006)
- In South Africa, inclusivity has been a concern since the first democratic election given the structuring of educational opportunities on the basis of race under apartheid
- **Social justice**, **equity** and **inclusivity** are values enshrined in the South African Bill of Rights
- Within the SA context, emphasis is on inclusivity is **social**, **economic** and **political inclusion**, not on **epistemological inclusion** (inclusion of Indigenous epistemologies) in Higher Ed contexts
  - Social inclusion = equitable recognition of difference cultures, belief systems, etc.
  - Economic inclusion = equitable distribution of material resources
  - Political inclusion = the equitable right to a political voice and to have influence in decisions that affect people (i.e. political representation)
  - Epistemological inclusion = equal access to and recognition of (plural) epistemologies
The SA Higher Education landscape is characterised by continued underrepresentation of IKs as evidenced through/by:

- The colonial burden/legacy in Higher Education - Coloniaally imposed and dominating western knowledge systems (ontologies and epistemologies)
- Western educational structures and systems (education institutions, disciplines, discourses and guiding frameworks)

   *I come to discussion of Indigenous knowledges through educational journey replete with experiences of colonial and colonized encounters that left unproblematised what has conventionally been accepted in schools as ‘in/valid knowledge’. My early educational history was one that least emphasized the achievements of African peoples and their knowledges both in their own right, and also for the contributions to academic scholarship on world civilizations.*

   *(Dei, 2002:3)*

   *It is essential that indigenous people realise that colonialism does not end with independence. Its effects are still deeply embedded and normalised within our institutional structures and systems in our societies.*

   *(Shava, 2008:243)*
More like the proverbial blind, deaf and dumb torchbearer trampling on everything in its path, the school’s awkward presence is also felt in terms of the value patterns, norms, and modes of social and economic relations that it chooses to impart. Thus every time a child enters the gates of the school, the spontaneous process of that symbolic fumigation, cosmological cleansing, and mandated acculturation begins… as teachers determinedly pursue the orderly dispensing of the knowledge and information they have acquired during their years of training, and unknown to them, or perhaps unwittingly, they begin to participate in the collective but sub-conscious process of subjugating indigenous values and suppressing the authentic cosmologies of the very context within which the school is located.

(Odora Hoppers, 2001:75)
• Entrenched processes of privileging western science knowledge systems - representation of Indigenous Knowledges as pseudo knowledges (ethno-botany, ethno-zoology, ethno-science, ethno-mathematics, ethnography)

...the development, within Western Science, of a discipline or group of disciplines known as ethnoscience, including ethnobotany, ethnozoology and ethnomathematics and the like, shows only a kind of relationship that could exist in the context of domination, between so-called modern science and so-called traditional knowledge, where the latter is either marginalized or, better still, eaten by the former. We have experienced for almost a hundred years (the word ethnobotany was coined in 1895 and the word ethnoscience not earlier than 1950) a sort of scientific cannibalism.

(Hountondji 2003, p 503)

• A focus on comparison and contrast between IKs and Euro-Amerindian knowledge forms (creating oppositional binaries)
• Decontextualised education processes (lack of epistemological access & relevance for indigenous peoples)
• Academic theorising (if it is ever done in Africa) and theoretical application is dominated by Euro -Americentric theories – Africa is the playing field for testing western theories as well as the source of raw data for (knowledge and) theory generation, let alone the major market for the end products (and by-products) of research (Hountondji 2003)
• Skewed inward flow of knowledge and theoretical frameworks which disrupts Africa’s capacity to own, generate and share knowledge (Nsamenag 2005; Hountondji 1997, 2003) and contributes to underdevelopment
Mechanisms of epistemological inclusion and exclusion

Non-representation (‘forgetting’) & misrepresentation (subjugation, marginalisation, exclusion, silencing, othering, denigration), commodification (patenting), appropriation/assimilation (cannibalisation) of non-western epistemologies in formal education contexts:

• Sustenance of western knowledge hegemony through normalised techniques & strategies (rules, regulations, technologies, instruments) of knowledge re-presentation in scholarly disciplines & scientific paradigms (drawing from other knowledges and making them ‘vanish’) during interactive knowledge generation processes:
  – comparative binaries,
  – contextual (e.g. ethnographic accounts of the ‘other’, racialised),
  – decontextualised (universalised)
  – Re-classified, re-constructed, re-named, categorised/organised
  – selective,
  – numerical/statistical,
  – stereotyped/normalised,
  – utilitarian,
  – deliberative,
  – paradoxical, or
  – hierarchical representations
Addressing Epistemological Representation and Access in HEIs

- Need to embrace a **responsive**, **dynamic** and **transformative** meaning of academic **excellence** that take due cognisance of the role of indigenous knowledges in providing **contextual and epistemological relevance** in the academy
- Recognition of the co-existence of **multiple worldviews** and **plural knowledge systems**, and finding ways to understand and relate to the world in its multiple dimensions of diversity and complexity
- Challenging the status quo of dominant/hegemonic epistemologies and paradigms from the vantage point of indigenous knowledges
- Challenging the under-representation of IK epistemologies in the fields of Business, Law, Engineering and the Sciences (yet most patenting and bio-piracy is occurring in these sectors) - currently a higher concentration in Arts, Education, Religious Studies and Law
- Development of university policy and strategies for recording, maintenance, promotion and protection of Indigenous knowledges
- From Euro-Americentric theory application to local theory generation