Turning Zimbabwe’s indigenous knowledge social systems for economic growth: A case of Honde Valley in Manicaland Province

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Abstract

Indigenous knowledge systems encompass all the natural resources, knowledge, culture and skills that the community values. The study focused on how the rich indigenous knowledge systems in Honde Valley can be used as a vehicle to foster and to establish methods of promoting sustainable economic growth for the community. The community has valuable indigenous knowledge systems and skills to successfully utilise to effect sustainable change, yet its economic status is wilting each day. This floppy situation can be addressed through turning the indigenous knowledge systems into effective use for the community’s economic change. Marangos (2006) argues that effective approach to indigenous knowledge systems leads to some solutions towards perpetual life-cycle of poverty. According to Atkins and Fray (2014) the richness of the community lies in the minds of that particular community. Hence, collective efforts in the use of indigenous resources by the community itself make it possible to change its own life-style. From a population of 12 000, only 50 participants were purposively selected because qualitative studies deal with small sample sizes that look into insights. The purposive sampling technique was used because the researchers wanted to work with appropriate informants. A qualitative case approach was adopted because it included interviewing participants, analysing responses, observing them and listening to their social interaction (Patton 2002; Punch 2009). Questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions were employed as data generating techniques. Ethical and legal considerations were observed. The study revealed that the community lacked correct approaches to resuscitate the indigenous knowledge systems which were suffocated by the foreigners. The community had deficiency in social change and value added concepts. The study recommended that the community needs education and empowerment towards diversity, creativity and innovative to enable them to be more culturally conscious to the uniqueness of their indigenous knowledge systems.

Key words: sustainable economic growth, indigenous knowledge systems, floppy situation, perpetual life-cycle of poverty, resuscitate, suffocated, wilt
Introduction

Honde Valley is a place which is blessed with a lot of indigenous resources such as sacred caves, mountains and rivers. For example, the Mahwemasimike Mountain which has three structures like tall buildings provide a unique feature in Zimbabwe. The name Mahwemasimike which means stones which were planted have eight stony structures which offer eye-catching scenery. One of the structures (the tallest one), at one time attracted the VaRozvi King and he tried to pull it down to take it to his Royal Palace in Chivhu (then Njanja) but he failed. Besides the tower-like fascinating structures, there is a huge hut-like cave which is below them. At the centre of the cave is a round dam with an all-year round cool and fresh water. This is the rich source of the many streams that run down into Pimai, Mandeya and Muparutsa areas. Around this dam there are varieties of indigenous fruit trees. Before the arrival of the missionaries, the chiefs who surrounded the Mahwemasimike Mountain used to conduct some cultural rituals regularly to please the spirits in the mountain. The ritual processes were organised and managed by the chosen elderly members of the communities. Chief Mandeya who was the spirit medium and head of the area led the process and could give the people the morals to abide by. Knowledge of own’s culture was a valuable source of wealth for the community.

From an African perspective morals enable communities remain united and protect their identities, (Herskovits, 2010). Morals provide wealthy sources of indigenous knowledge for sustenance of the African life, (Mbiti, 1970). The latent functions which were conducted in the Mahwemasimike Mountain enabled the concerned communities to preserve and maintain their culture. For example, the area never experienced shortage of rainfall every summer time and their livestock were never attacked by wild beasts such as hyenas and lions. Drinking running water with bare hands was a taboo and cutting trees in the mountains was not allowed. Fruits that were found in the Mahwemasimike cave were for the people of this area. Violation of any of the morals was an insult to the spirits and the whole community would face problems such being bitten by black ants. Once this was noticed, the spirit medium would know that there was something wrong in the area, and a ritual was performed to apologise to the spirits. It is also believed that the spirit mediums were able to foretell the dangers that their people would encounter. This made the people get prepared with some strategies towards the problem(s). Such problems included wars, pests, starvation and diseases. Therefore, the spirit mediums played significant roles in protecting and guiding the community of the Valley.

Besides the famous Mahwemasimike Mountain, Mutarazi Falls also provide decor in the Valley. In fact, the Falls are the longest in the SADC region. They have an interesting history of mysterious happenings when the whites wanted to get there to take gold. They boarded helicopters and when they were at the top of the Falls they let down one passenger tied by a strong rope while the vehicle hovered on the falls. From the falls rose a golden rod and when the tied passenger attempted to take the valuable mineral, the rope was mysteriously cut and the person dropped into the water and the rod disappeared. The whites made several attempts to reach the sacred area to take the rich mineral but failed. Up to this day the mineral deposits still lie at the Falls. These Falls can provide sustainable energy which can supply Zimbabwe and the electricity load shading problem can be solved. It can as well be a useful source of all-year round agricultural activities in the Valley to reduce poverty.

Honde Valley has many mountains with sacred places such as caves with Bushmen paintings and trees where rituals were conducted. The Gurunguhwe Mountain also
offers a unique feature of a hut-like hole through which one is able to pass to the other side of the mountain into Mozambique. It is close to the famous gold area of Nyamukwarara. In this mountain, headmen Manatse and Newengo used to conduct their rituals twice a year and the spirit would come and tell them what to do. Such indigenous knowledge was eroded by the whites upon their arrival in the Valley. Alien culture was introduced and forcibly implanted in the community. Instead of respecting their original values and belief systems, the community adopted a new culture of disrespecting their spirits as they were regarded as evil and unacceptable by the Christian values. The validity of the spirits ceased and the people lost protection. Thus, the indigenous knowledge systems were suffocated and replaced by the new religion of the white missionaries. Such relative deprivation of people's culture emerged as the cause and the beginning of poverty among the communities in Honde Valley. It was therefore against this background that a research was conducted to establish means of restoring the valuable indigenous resources for economic growth. The research was also an attempt to fulfill the Zimbabwe’s blueprint of ZIMASSET in order to urge the communities to shift their attention towards cultural orientation for attitudinal change. It was also aimed at making the Zimbabweans aware that Honde Valley has the capacity to attract wealth through tourism.

**Purpose of the study**

The study was conducted to educate and motivate the communities to restore their indigenous knowledge systems for sustainable economic growth.

**Research questions**

1. How were the indigenous knowledge systems defined by the spirit mediums in Honde Valley?
2. Of what significance were the indigenous knowledge systems to the community in Honde Valley?
3. Which factors have contributed to the change of culture in Honde Valley?
4. How were the communities in Honde Valley impacted by the alteration of the culture in their area?
5. What strategies can be employed to restore the lost cultural identity in Honde Valley?

**Assumptions**

The research study was guided by the following assumptions:

1. The community in Honde Valley understands the importance of indigenous knowledge systems to their welfare.
2. The community would cooperate with the researchers in executing the study.
3. The community understands that the spirit mediums played significant roles in maintaining moral values in the area.
4. Alien culture is important if only it brings sustainable development in the community.
5. The community is aware that it has a lot of wealth from the natural resources in the Valley.

**Statement of the problem**

The indigenous resources in Honde Valley are dormant as a result of relative deprivation by the whites and his has resulted into poverty among the communities.
Significance of the study

The research findings will:

Encourage the communities to be proud of their cultural identities and this will also motivate the communities to document their historical events for future purposes. Encourage the traditional leaders to work together with their subordinates in the preservation of their cultures. Empower communities with knowledge and skills to preserve their indigenous knowledge systems for economic growth. Educate the traditional leaders to adopt a culture that ensures preservation of indigenous knowledge for growth and development in the communities.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to Honde Valley in Mutasa District - Manicaland Province. The participants were the kraal heads, school heads, headmen, ward councilors and the elderly people in Honde Valley. The study was delimited to restoring our indigenous knowledge social systems for economic growth.

Limitations

Some participants were unwilling to release information because they thought the issue needed approval from the local leadership. In this case, the researchers assured them of anonymity and confidentiality and that the informed consent was sought.

Because the researchers were full time employees, this made it difficult for them to conduct the research during the week. The researchers used the weekends to carry out the research.

For the school heads the researchers used the sporting activities where schools were gathered. Some of the participants did not meet the due date to submit the questionnaire. The researchers gave them more time to complete the work.

Theoretical framework

The following theories were used to guide the research:

Realism: Bryman (1992) which emphasizes that in order to study a particular community, the researcher should see the community in its real life state and observe the real activities that the community is doing.

Functionalism: Dirkheim (1982) and Lowe (1965) argue that this theory sees society as an integral whole, its parts are interdependent; social institutions exist and they do have effects; society is structured and the social structure directs the human behaviour. It also assumes that the function of a society depends on its beliefs, norms values and morals. Therefore, the researcher should immerse him/herself into this whole system in order to understand its philosophy of life. Therefore, the researchers were greatly involved in the community’s real life to get its feelings and attitudes towards their problem.

Society Systems Theory: Giddens (1998) sees society as a constituting system or unit of people with the same concept, beliefs, attitudes and feelings. In this case the society in Honde Valley was seen as a system whose wealth was in the indigenous social systems such as rivers, soil and mountains. If this wealth is utilised then poverty will be alleviated.

Theory of change: According to Funnell and Rogers (2011) Theory of Change (ToC) is a specific type of methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation that is used in the philanthropy, not-for-profit and government sectors to promote social change. Over and above, Theory of Change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions.
Earl, Carden, and Smutylo (2001) also add that Theory of Change explains the process of change by outlining causal linkages in an initiative, i.e., its shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term outcomes. It entails acquisition and implementation of new ideas to transform people's life. In this research the theory was used to encourage restoration of indigenous knowledge systems for economic growth.

**Grounded theory**

Creswell (2011) posits that grounded theory is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the participants. The theory was appropriate for this current study because it represented the real experiences of the people in that area, it is also comprehensible and made sense to the researchers of the same topic and the persons who were studied. Grbich (2011) also made some contributions on the grounded theory by providing its source. The assumption of a grounded theory is that social interaction influences the way a society thinks and behaves. Therefore in qualitative research the truth of the problem rests in the people's minds. In this case, if the researchers wanted to understand more about the people's feelings and views on a problem, it is important to immerse themselves into that particular community and be intensively involved in the whole processes of the research and this enabled the researchers to generate new insights of the problem. The richness of the grounded theory is in its ability to generate data through triangulation of a variety of techniques and the researcher is the main actor in the research. Adding on to the views above the process uses multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information. In this research the theory was used to generate data through intense interaction with the participants and triangulation of techniques.

**Conceptual framework**

The study was premised on the concept of transforming community ideologies through implementing the African indigenous knowledge systems for political, cultural, economic and social development. The study was also aimed at promoting the Zimbabwe's new concept of ZIMASSET which was introduced as a home-grown model to enable the Zimbabwean community to create indigenous opportunities for job creation, promotion of people’s capabilities and poverty alleviation. The blueprint focuses on a People Centered Government that prides itself in promoting equitable development and prosperity for all Zimbabweans, whilst leveraging own resources. The blueprint also encourages the Zimbabwean community to be divergent in their way of thinking, to be self-supportive and feel proud of their valuable indigenous knowledge systems. Thus, this research was conducted to enable the new generation of this country, Honde Valley, in particular, to realise the wealth that are dormant as result of relative deprivation.

**Review of related literature**

The indigenous knowledge systems as defined by the spirit mediums in the African community

In view of Greenblatt (1995) indigenous culture is a heritage that is built over a long period of time and has to be promoted and preserved as it defines a particular group of people within the global community. Arthur, Davies and Hahn (2008) also define indigenous knowledge as cultural values, norms, rituals and religion that have managed
to shape people with their own way of life, religion, beliefs and the way they relate to the entire global environment. In light of the definitions given above, culture refers to the totality of the indigenous knowledge systems that make a community to be what it is. It is passed on from one generation to the other as an important identity. The essence of indigenous knowledge or culture is not only in its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements, but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways.

Significance of the indigenous knowledge systems to the African community

From an African perspective (Ayisi, 1997), culture is marching along with all that is important as possessions, wealth and heritage from our ancestors. This suggests that within the African culture indigenous knowledge never fades up just as the dead and their spirits are also part of the culture. This also means that in the African society there is abundant wealth in preserving our indigenous knowledge. Mbiti (1999) sees relevance in respecting the indigenous knowledge in the African life-style because it is an important wealth for generations. He even goes further to say that the dead also guide and protect their people against any dangers. From this view it is important to realise that there is also compatibility between the African spirits and the indigenous knowledge systems. According to Pedersen (1999), the ancestral spirits are important in the African minds since they form the communication system and linkages with their gods. Therefore, the living is encouraged to communicate with the dead to get instructions on how to preserve the existing knowledge systems for effective and continued sustenance of life. Indigenous knowledge becomes important only when the people concerned use it together with spirits. From the symbolic interactionalist thinking (Harvey, 1982), the Africans feel satisfied with life when their communication with their ancestors is perfect and undisturbed. Therefore, the communion that exists between the living and the dead forms a strong “social capital.” This defines culture in the context of the African society/community, and this our identity as a nation.

In his statement at a conference in Harare Tenebe (2015) rightly said ‘The African community has all the wealth in its hands but cannot realise it because of lack of knowledge; therefore, it perishes in anguish.’ This implies that while God gave us all the natural resources in as the indigenous systems, we seem to be unable to utilise them for our own development. We, therefore, need to redirect our minds towards establishing mechanisms that promote the indigenous knowledge for economic and social development thus poverty alleviation. Hammar, Raftopolous and Jansen (2003) also contend that in the process of changing mindset, the African child should not forget his background. In their real senses they were referring to the cultural heritage of ancestral spirits whose knowledge and power are also critical for wealth building, social harmony and stability. This implies that even if we have all the wealth and utilise it, without peace still we cannot prosper. Therefore, our background as Africans is critical and should not be forgotten. From the functionalist view (Giddens, 2011), these spirits and their people are harmoniously connected in order to sustain working relations and for prosperity. This forms the very fabric of the community which, from the African perspective (Sowell, 1987), is a rich cultural heritage built over a long period of time.
Contributing factors to social change in Africa

Howard and Tony (2001) argue that a lot of factors contributed significantly to the social and political life in the African continent. The factors caused poverty, disintegration and disharmony among the communities of Africa. Bradshaw (2006) contends that the rural communities were the most affected population in Africa, particularly women and children because of gender disparities. Chief among the factors were:

Relative deprivation

Schaefer, (2008) describes it as the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities. In view of this statement, the Africans were deprived of their indigenous wealth by the foreigners. History is clear on how the whites used the Africans to collect their own minerals in exchange for a piece of cloth or pocket of sugar. Railway lines were developed to transport our wealth to Europe. Besides minerals, the whites scrambled for the fertile land in the African continent, thereby driving the indigenous communities to semi-desert areas. The questions that still needed to be addressed were: (a) What then happened to sacred places where rituals/latent functions were conducted? (b) What happened to our forefathers’ graves where we could kneel down and plead for spiritual guidance, peace and harmony? It is therefore, imperative for our generation to get knowledge on how the African community was under-developed by the whites. Indeed, all these became defunct as they were said to be evil by the new white ideology. Sadly, the white minority gained from our indigenous knowledge and wealth while we reaped poverty in our own territory. Now that we are conscious of such serious relative deprivation, mechanisms should be put in place to restore our indigenous knowledge social systems for our own economic, social and political transformation, growth and development.

Religion

According to Griffin (1988) religion played a major role in changing the African ideologies and perceptions towards their indigenous knowledge social systems. Zeleny, (2005) also posits that, while religion brought light to Africa, it was used as a weapon to undermine the indigenous knowledge and wealth for the benefit of other communities in the European countries. The two authorities concur that the saddest of all the systems in the African communities was the deprivation of their indigenous ways of worshipping and praising their spirits in their own realms. Their songs, dressing and weapons were a culture that some of the whites cherished because of the beauty and pride that they designed on the African child. However, in order to gain control over the mind of the African child, the pattern of life was forcibly changed to suit that of the foreigner, thereby disregarding the indigenous way of life.

According to Kwasi (1998) there are more similarities than differences in all traditional African religions. Often, the supreme God is worshiped through consultation or communion with lesser deities and ancestral spirits. The deities and spirits are honored through libation, sacrifice (of animals, vegetables, cooked food, flowers, semi-precious stones, precious metals, etc.). The will of God is sought by the believer also through consultation of oracular deities, or divination. In many traditional African religions, there is a belief in a cyclical nature of reality. The living stand between the ancestors and the unborn. Traditional African religions embrace natural phenomena – ebb and tide, waxing and waning moon, rain and drought – and the rhythmic pattern of agriculture. Gbadagesin (1999) and Mbiti (1969) contend that the environment and nature are infused in every
aspect of traditional African religions and culture. This is largely because cosmology and beliefs are intricately intertwined with the natural phenomena and environment. All aspects of weather, thunder, lightning, rain, day, moon, sun, stars, and so on may become amenable to control through the cosmology of African people. Natural phenomena are responsible for providing people with their daily needs. All this knowledge was deemed evil by the whites and forced the Africans to adopt a new religion in a bid to create relationship that would result in them (the whites) taking the wealth for their own benefit. Through religion therefore, the indigenous knowledge was suffocated, thus the destruction of wealth and economy.

Research Methodology

Research Paradigm and design

The qualitative paradigm was employed in this study because it enabled the researchers to generate in-depth information on what the community felt or do in their natural settings regarding the indigenous knowledge systems as important sources of their wealth (Borgdan and Biklen, 1990). The design involved in-depth study of the phenomena by focusing on the affective, cognitive and behaviour domains of the participants. The question of perceptions and attitudes is an abstract concept and requires direct inquiry so as to unravel perceptions because they lie in the heart of the participants (Barbie, 1998). Punch (2009, p.251) also argues that “qualitative paradigm involves intense contact with life situations which are normal and reflective of the everyday life of the society”. The researchers’ role was to obtain a holistic overview of how the community would restore their wealth through using their own indigenous resources such as the Falls, caves and mountains for economic transformation. Marshall and Roseman (2006, p.238) contend that in qualitative paradigm, “the researchers explicate the way people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action and manage their daily situations”.

For the purpose of this study, the researchers employed the case study design in order to establish the plight of the street kids and to find ways of assisting them. Stake (1994) in Punch (2009, p.262) defines case study as a “bounded system that emphasizes the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at that time”. Therefore, the richness of a case study lies in its ability to provide in-depth understanding of important aspects of a new problematic area.

The target Population and sampling procedures

The targeted population was approximately 92,500 from which the sample size was selected. Since the population was already in its clusters of headmen and wards it was possible for the researchers to adopt the cluster and purposive sampling techniques. Only the individuals with some influential positions in the communities/wards were selected to participate in the research. However, not all of these influential people were considered in the study. For the purpose of this study only 50 participants were selected to represent the population. The sample was as follows: 12 headmen, 6 ward councillors, 10 kraal-heads, 10 school heads and 12 elderly members from each of the headmen.

Data Collection Procedures

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the indigenous knowledge systems in Honde Valley can be restored for poverty alleviation and transform the economy. Therefore, the data were generated through interviews and open-ended questionnaires. There was intensive interaction with the
participants, although the area was big. Codes were also used to maintain confidentiality and to promote relationship with the participants. For cultural reasons some of the places were not accessed and we had to depend on facts from the participants.

**Interviews**

The interview was the most prominent data generation tool that allowed participants to describe the phenomenon under study (Punch, 2009; Stabbing, 1990). Instead of writing their responses, interviewees verbally volunteered their information during face-to-face conversations (Wolcott; 1987; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researchers first arranged convenient time to meet each group from one area and gave them our contact details. In most cases the interviews were conducted in the participants’ natural settings and this made them comfortable because they could not waste their resources. To further motivate the participants, the researchers provided them with food. The participants were free to share their ideas with the researchers who also had the opportunity to respond immediately to what the participants said and to record non-verbal communication. To understand these unspoken words, we used a standard follow-up question shaped from a model provided by Madhlangobe, (2009), “I saw you acting in this way; may I know what meaning you attach to that gesture, facial expression, way of doing things and language used?” The headmen, kraal-heads and the elderly members were involved in the interviews.

**Use of the Questionnaire**

A questionnaire with open-ended questions was used and permitted the researchers to cover a wide range of content and contexts, soliciting for information to specifically answer the research questions (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). While we found questionnaire appropriate for this study, limitations for its use included the participants’ failure to fully understand the cultural background. However, we made sure that the questions were simple and well-structured to avoid ambiguity. The school-heads and the ward councilors were given the questionnaire because of their literacy levels. They were also engaged in the interviews to establish more views and to compare responses.

**Ethical and Legal Considerations**

In order to safeguard the rights of the participants; we sought permission from the District Administrator, Education authorities, Ward Councilors and the headmen. This was done to seek protection, correct guidance on cultural issues and to be morally aware. Therefore preservation of culture was highly considered before, during and after the research was done. Participants signed informed consent before the research. We explained the basis of the study to all participants and gave essential details about the procedures so that all the participants could take the correct positions of the study. For confidentiality purposes in this study pseudonyms and codes were used to refer the participants and places.

**Findings**

**Interpretations of indigenous knowledge systems by the spirit mediums in Honde Valley**

Participants of this research showed varied interpretations according to their geographical settings and also the level sacredness of their places. Their responses were as follows: Community’s pillars for continued unity and harmony; community support systems for
generations; practices that foster unity in the community; valuable wealth for a particular community.

Traditional leaders as the custodians of the communities of the area believed that the indigenous knowledge systems were the wealth of the community. Some of the ward councilors and school-heads had theoretical understanding of the indigenous knowledge systems because of their ages as well as cultural orientations. Therefore, their responses to the questionnaire would require elaborations. However, incorporating them into the interviews with the traditional leaders helped them to get more information. When we held interviews at one of the sacred places with the 5 of the headmen, 5 kraal-heads and 5 elderly members we were lucky that one of the headmen was possessed with a spirit and explained to the researchers what indigenous knowledge systems are in their understanding. A lot of things were explained, for example it was said that the community used to enjoy the four types of rain patterns which in their vernacular language were gukurahundi, madzuura nyenze, bunharutsva and mbembera. These were no more because of violation of moral virtues. The quality of wealth in the Valley was also said to be very excellent for sustenance of the community if this could be resuscitated. Mutarazi Falls were given as a typical example of the indigenous knowledge from which the community in the Valley would get all the riches. In vernacular language he said ‘Murikutambura nenzara muchitadza kushandisa mabirira nezvimwe zvinkosha nuno kutsvaga zvinokunaramicai vanangu. Upfumi munahwo nuno maHonde garai pasi mugadzirise zvakaraswa.’ Interpreted in the second language it says ‘You have poverty yet you have these Falls and many other valuable resources which you can use for survival. You have all the wealth here in Hondo; reason together to restore the lost morality.’ We felt very happy and encouraged that we were in unison with the spirits of the area and our research was worthy for the community. It is uncommon for the spirits to appear anyhow and it was really a surprise even to the traditional leaders. They commented that we had a good thing to research for them and bring the secrets of the land to them. Traditional clapping of hands which we also joined was done. This was a clear indication that Hondo Valley is a rich area in terms of indigenous knowledge. This knowledge would need the powers that be to reason together to restore it for the benefit of the community. Indeed, this signifies how much the community will gain upon reviving their indigenous cultural practices. Joseph (1989) maintains that the connectivity of the spirits and its people work as a social capital upon which all the wealth is anchored. ‘Furthermore,’ states Copi (1973), ‘that blending of people and their spirits is heritage and legacy for generations and it helps to foster the identity of a community.’ Therefore, such is an indication that within the indigenous knowledge there is something very secret for the African child and that is valuable wealth. From the social constructivists angle, (Sowell, 1987), the community gains knowledge, values, belief systems and latent skills from its spirits, and this only happens when the spirits are contended with the behaviour of the people concerned. This calls for the restoration of our own identity- reinventing the wheel to transform and sustain cultural virtues/qualities for economic growth. Therefore, as Odetola, (1978) and Lauer (2006) put it, people and their indigenous knowledge, which is their culture, are inseparable since there is no denial of the fact that what makes any human society is culture; a Latin word which was derived from “color” meaning to practice or cherish. For a society to be societal it must be cultural; therefore, society and culture are intertwined. In the same vein, going by the theory of environmental determinism, the indigenous knowledge/culture of any society is largely dictated by its geography. Put another way, there is conspicuous sociological interplay among the concepts of culture, nurture, and nature. Further, when mirrored with
sociological panorama, both the macro- and micro-sociological tentacles, which subsume the entirety of social institutions, are determined by culture; an all-including sociological and anthropological concept that is ineluctable for the existence and functionality of any social group. The people in Honde Valley can benefit a lot if only their indigenous knowledge is revived and preserved.

Factors that contributed to the change of culture and their effects to the community in Honde Valley

Many of the responses came from the elderly people, the headmen and the kraal-heads who participated in the study. This was because of their strong background and clear history of the area. The school-heads and ward councilors largely depended on literature and informal discussions with the other members of the community. Nevertheless, the responses showed some significant quality of truth.

Adoption of alien cultures; disobedience by the traditional leaders; social conflicts, bureaucracy and the need for money; religion and need for change were the leading responses. The leadership in this area failed to recognize the ethical and moral virtues which had been in existence for decades. According to the traditional leaders and the elderly peoples’ views, it was up to end of 1948 when the area was sacred as evidenced by a number of uncommon manifestations. Their memories revealed that rituals were conducted from one place in Honde Valley and that was Nyamaende. Twice a year, all traditional leaders of the area collected rapoko mealie-meal from their subjects and this was given to some selected women and men to brew beer in the mountain. For two weeks they were there preparing the stuff as a thanks-offering to the spirits for protection, guidance, peace, wealth and harmony. When the latent function was held, evidence of acceptance was that mysterious things happen and these included whirl-wind from the Mount Ruunji to Mutarazi Falls and then to the Mahwemasimike mountain. Lions then roared to signify support for the spirits. This was followed by heavy rainfall.

However, when the traditional leaders adopted some alien cultures, gradually, the indigenous social knowledge withered and this was the beginning of the suffering of their people. The leaders became envious of money and conflicts were the results. In some cases, bureaucracy became the order of rule and no-one cared about the ideal/normative philosophies of the community. This further reduced the relationship of the living and their spirits. Laxity of moral virtues became evident.

Tylor (1971) and Murdock (1950) asserted that any laxity, lassitude, and levity exhibited by its custodians results in rapid erosion and disappearance of the uniqueness of the peoples’ culture. Since the genesis of culture, is as old as man himself, without it, man is reduced to an animal. This is the scenario in Honde Valley where poverty is a result of loss of the indigenous knowledge systems.

Conclusions

The traditional leaders in Honde Valley are still vivid with the history of their indigenous knowledge systems such as the latent functions for sustaining the life of their communities. They are still very clear about their cultural identity as this was curriculum of their people. The role of the spirit mediums was still cherished. What is important to note is that in Honde Valley there still remain a lot of wealth such as the Falls, the Bushmen paintings, sacred caves, rich soils and rivers which can be turned into use for economic growth and even job creation. The natural resources can be effectively used to attract tourists, for agricultural purposes and electricity. While the spirits of this land still exist some of the traditional leaders are not aware of them
because of the long period under colonial relative deprivation. This has led to the cessation of the latent functions, suffocation and dysfunction of the relationship with their spirits, leading to serious effects of social disequilibrium, social conflicts and poverty.

If the community leadership would unite and restore the indigenous knowledge systems, this will help in establishing effective programmes that are aimed at promoting sustainable economy in the area. For decades the original community in the Valley gained total protection and prosperity from its spirits. Unity and positive cultural identity were a result of the respect that the community gave to its spirits. The manifestations from rivers and forests were a result of the well timed rituals that were performed; thus the culture for the Honde Valley community. The new leadership failed to respect the spirits of the area. It became too envious of the alien cultures allowing relative deprivation to prevail. From this study, therefore, it is clear that the spirits are important in the African tradition because of their role in guiding and protecting the community as well as enhancing wealth. The latent functions play significant role in uniting the community and the spirits of an area. Therefore, it is important for the leadership to keep on reminding its subjects to respect the ethics and morals as directed by the spirits. It is important for the community to uphold its cultural values and moral virtues for the sustenance of its identity.

One other conclusion is that traditional knowledge systems in Honde Valley and the rest of Arica, suffered a severe blow when it came into contact with alien religions. This was particularly true in the case of Euro-Western Christianity that planted itself in the continent during the nineteenth century. The arrival of Christianity coincided with the unchallenged supremacy of Europe; and the material transformation ushered in by the European advent helped weaken African indigenous knowledge systems in Honde Valley. With the withering away of traditional African self-confidence, social changes that were previously resisted began to gain wider acceptance.

It emerged that in Honde Valley there are valuable indigenous resources which can sustain the life of the community if correct mechanisms such as restoration of the indigenous knowledge systems by the traditional leaders are put in place.

## Recommendations

The study gave the following recommendations:

1. To ensure fulfillment of the above, the community in Honde Valley should receive more education that enables them to be more culturally conscious and alert to the uniqueness of their indigenous knowledge systems. This is because culture is inseparable from people and should therefore be cherished and relished for economic growth and poverty alleviation.

2. The social institutions such as the family which shoulders the responsibility of procreation and orientation of new ones should not be loose in the function of socialization, conscientisation and teaching the agents of which should be closely monitored. Rather, they should be made to internalize the values and virtues, which are in tandem with the family's indigenous knowledge dictates so as to ensure behavioural sameness and ideological similarity for continued societal common wealth.

3. On the part of the government, political power should be utilized to encourage cultural peoples, regardless of their tribal divergence, to develop interest in promoting and marketing their cultural uniqueness and potency for socioeconomic advantage.

4. It can be unarguably stated that no culture is better than another. The so-called superior or dominant ones on the global scene are only fortunate. Forceful
imposition of a people’s cultural lifestyle on another is strongly discouraged in the light of cultural relativism.

5. The indigenous knowledge systems should be restored through resuscitating rituals and educating the new generation on the importance of moral values, ethics, beliefs and norms for the protection and development of the community. This will help to promote a society which is always conscious of its culture.

6. The local community should be encouraged to advertise indigenous resources to the international communities so as to attract tourism and to get support for continued economic growth.

7. The leadership should encourage more research on indigenous knowledge so that more ideas and knowledge may be gained for the restoration of identity and for sustainable economic, social political, cultural and moral development.

References


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