



Expanding the notion of

# Indigenous Knowledge Recognition

within the Cape Town Statement on Fostering Research Integrity through Fairness and Equity

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## Introduction

International research collaborations are a vital source of intellectual capital for strengthening Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Africa's research profile. The Cape Town Statement and the African Charter on Transformative Research Collaborations were developed on African soil a few months apart to address the pervasive inequities in collaborative research, particularly in North-South or low and middle-income and high-income countries. The paper builds on the distinct perspective of the Cape Town Statement by acknowledging that unfair collaborative research practices can undermine research integrity across all disciplines and contexts (Horn et al., 2023, p. 792). It extends the research integrity discourse on collaborative research practices by comparing these two documents to understand how epistemic justice can be promoted in collaborations between low- and middle-income and high-income countries. Central to this inquiry is the research question: How does the African Charter on Transformative Research Collaborations expand the notion of Indigenous Knowledge Recognition outlined in the Cape Town Statement?

## Methods

Comparative content analysis of both the Statement and the Charter, aiming to explore the normative statements within each document that indicate a commitment to recognising Indigenous Knowledge and promoting epistemic justice.

## What is Indigenous Knowledge Recognition (IKR)?

Indigenous scholarship reflects the harmonious integration of knowledge systems that depart from respect for local cultures, values, beliefs, and practices. Masoga (2017, p.311) defines an Indigenous Knowledge System as "a body of "knowledge" owned by local people in their specific communities and passed on from generation to generation." As a knowledge system, it is locally produced, often within a specific geographic location. It is "dynamic and innovate from within and also internalise, use, and adapt externally to suit the local knowledge" (Masoga, 2017, pg. 329). The knowledge is often contained within an Indigenous knowledge-holder with the expertise to practice the knowledge and act as a knowledge custodian (Masoga, 2017, pg. 329). IKR involves respecting the collaborators' diverse epistemic, theoretical and culturally specific knowledge systems while respecting the cultural contexts and practices from which this knowledge originates, ensuring that it is treated appropriately.

## Key Finding

Both documents contend that power imbalances in international collaborative research can perpetuate unfair research practices permeating Indigenous Knowledge Recognition and epistemic justice.

Table 1 Summary of Findings

	Themes indicating similarities across the two documents	Themes indicating expansion of the notion of IKR according to the Charter
Indigenous Knowledge Recognition (IKR)	IKR is a vital aspect of collaborative research	<b>Redress power-imbalances:</b>  <b>EPISTEMOLOGY</b> Critical investigation and acknowledgement of collaborators' epistemic positions De-centre Western centric-epistemological orientations
	Potential power imbalances must be recognised and addressed by all research stakeholders	<b>LANGUAGE</b> Centre African languages at every stage of knowledge generation
	Importance of integrity and fairness in collaborative research	<b>THEORY, CONCEPTS EXTRAVERSION</b> Critical investigation and acknowledgement of collaborators' theoretical positions
	Inequities can skew research priorities, agendas, and outcomes (marginalising local priorities and needs, thus negatively affecting research impact)	Promote intellectual and institutional leadership by the African partner

## Discussion

The Cape Town Statement and the African Charter on Transformative Research Collaborations both advocate revitalising a research ecosystem characterised by fair and equitable research collaborations. However, they approach this aim from different perspectives. The Cape Town Statement focuses on how the quality of fairness and equity throughout all the stages of the research process can enhance the integrity of collaborative research between low- middle- and high-income countries. The Charter calls for a paradigm shift and repositioning of the North-South research community, aiming for more than equitable partnerships but an epistemic revival essential to upholding Africa's dignity (pan-African intellectual thought). Further work is required to translate the aspirational principles relevant to IKR into practical actions.

## Recommendations

The institutional adoption of the Statement and the Charter can assist research-producing organisations in determining norms and fostering transformative collaborations between LMIC and HIC.

Adoption of these documents requires normative reflection and the development of clear action guides.

Expand the notion of Indigenous Knowledge recognition through social dialogues with Indigenous researchers and indigenous knowledge holders.

The uptake of the values and principles inherent in these documents by all research stakeholders should be actively promoted through training programmes, interventions and policy transformation.

## Limitations and Future Direction

Preliminary findings only:



Conduct a literature control to expand on the principles and to recontextualise the findings in the current literature



Future empirical research to expand the principles guided by a specific theoretical frameworks, such as Pan-Africanism or Afro- Communitarianism (Ubuntu).

## REFERENCES

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CHATGPT 3.5 was used to confirm and expand the initial manual thematic coding, using the prompt "Compare the following texts from Document A and Document B".