



African indigenous games: Using Bame Nsamenang's Africentric thoughts to reflect on our heritage, pedagogy, and practice in a global village

Godfrey Ejoo

To cite this article: Godfrey Ejoo (2019) African indigenous games: Using Bame Nsamenang's Africentric thoughts to reflect on our heritage, pedagogy, and practice in a global village, Journal of Psychology in Africa, 29:4, 319-327, DOI: [10.1080/14330237.2019.1647496](https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2019.1647496)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2019.1647496>



Published online: 10 Sep 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 34



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

African indigenous games: Using Bame Nsamenang's Afri-centric thoughts to reflect on our heritage, pedagogy, and practice in a global village

Godfrey Ejuu 

Early Childhood Education, Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda
Author email: godfreyjuu@gmail.com

As we go global and begin to make early childhood practices universal, certain aspects of communities remain fixed in deep realms of their everyday living and can only be accessed by those who believe in it. Believing in it requires having faith in a practice that will always be better than what others bring as “best practice”. This is because that aspect is what defines who you are and changing it amounts to removing a piece of you with the intention of replacing it with an “artificial part”. This may be the case with African indigenous games that have been played in various settings to define the Africanness of given communities. The values that these games bring to the Africans as they try to hold on to what belongs to them, is discussed in this paper. Bame Nsamenang used such thoughts to propel the Afri-centrism philosophy to direct thoughts into values that are African in nature, even when there are no clear boundaries of African in Africa. This article focuses on Nsamenang's Afri-centric arguments in line with promotion of African indigenous games as a heritage, pedagogy, and a practice.

Keywords: African games, Afri-centric, Nsamenang, pedagogy

Introduction

The demise of Bame Nsamenang, one of Africa's most prolific authors of publications that have been critical of western influence on education and development in Africa, leaves behind a tender momentum that had started to build in support of his Afri-centric philosophy (Serpell, 2018). Nsamenang always made sure his writing never departed from the rich African soil from which he was nurtured. His tracing of an African version of stages of human development brings to life the connection we have had with our ancestors in the worlds of both the living and the dead. Nsamenang emphasised the need to promote Afri-centrism as a means of propping up African ideals, values, and ways of knowing to reflect Africanness in us (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011).

Nsamenang's thoughts revolved around a theory that most Africans' education was based upon curricula and pedagogies that mimicked the West and worked with teachers who failed to keep “sight of the soil out of which the existing African society had grown and the human values it produced” (Kishani 2001, p. 37). Parents trusted the school system that valued modern Western education to deliver leaders for the new century, based on the Euro-centric prejudices that portrayed African knowledge as backward (Hountondji, 2002). However, parents are realising that the education being provided in schools is based on foreign cultural values (Kaya & Seleti, 2013) that only produce job seekers (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011).

Probably, it is time for Africans to start working towards strengthening valuable indigenous capital while entrenching the spirit of *ubuntu* as its core value system (Maunganidze, Kasayira, & Mudhovozi, 2011). The starting point in this venture is to gain black consciousness which may help us to overcome the second force of oppression (Biko, 1987). Gaining black consciousness helps us to start re-Africanisation (Ntuli, 1999). Re-Africanisation should be an easy task if we can accept to

rethink our own image through the process of de-colonising the mind (Ngugi, 1986). In this process, a de-colonised mind will give us room to relinquish all that is disastrous to our development, advancement, and sustainability (Odora-Hoppers, 2001). The key message here is that we should take advantage of, and use, all the richness surrounding us; yet be careful to position ourselves to adopt an Afri-centric perspective to education and life (Nsamenang, 2003).

Recently, a move towards integrating indigenous knowledge (IK) in school curriculum started in South Africa (Kaya & Seleti, 2013). Traditional children's games and songs have also been recognised as forms of IK (Mutema, 2013). This interest in IK now demonstrates that when communities participate in indigenous games, they not only improve their quality of life but also strengthen their cultural fabric to ensure indigenous distinctiveness (Eichberg & Norgaard, 2000). Thus, games become cultural mirrors that carry with them the reflection of lived realities and cognitive maps of communities within a given socio-cultural and historical context (Burnett & Hollander 2004).

This study is motivated by Nsamenang's theory of social ontogenesis that is rooted in the traditions of ecological and cultural theorising developed from the *Nso* people of Cameroon (Nsamenang, 2006). The theory addresses how, throughout ontogeny, children are co-participants in social and cultural life in communities (Nsamenang, 2006) as they go through the three phases of selfhood (Nsamenang, 1992). Each of the phases are marked by distinctive developmental tasks, defined within the framework of cultural realities, and developmental agenda (Nsamenang, 2000). Thus, children are able to graduate from one activity setting and participative sector of the peer culture to another; steadily maturing towards adulthood (Nsamenang, 2013).

As we focus on use of the indigenous games, we are able to see how African participative pedagogies can be

embedded into educational ideas meshed into family traditions, children's daily routines, and interactive processes (Nsamenang, 2004). Indigenous games, if used as education and socialising activities, help African communities to assign sequential cultural tasks to different stages of child development as a sociogenic process. Cultural beliefs and practices guide the expectations required for each ontogenetic stage (Nsamenang, 2013).

On their own, it has been found that games lead to learning in a natural way, often without adult involvement (Kejo, 2017). Such games not only benefit different aspects of child development, but also amplify children's learning potential (Howard, 2010; Lillemyr, 2013). Furthermore, through play, specific values and biases can be shaped (Cannella, 1997). However, children do not have to play forever. Communities have built in mechanisms that allow time spent playing by children to gradually decrease as they grow older and take on more responsibilities by learning from adults through working (Lancy, 2002).

Goal of the study

While we have been able to see what role the indigenous games can play in children's life, there has been less effort in documenting them for future use. The main goal of this study was to document some indigenous games played by children in Uganda and to from them learn the cultural heritage they carry, the pedagogy used and the practices involved.

Methods

This exploratory study was done to document indigenous games that were being played in communities in Uganda. Ethical clearance was obtained from Kyambogo University Faculty of Education Board to conduct the study. Consent was obtained from the community at a clan meeting, including parents and their children who consented to participate. Pictures were taken in such a way that children's faces were not exposed, as required by ethics board.

The study used a desk review to gain insight into the contribution of indigenous games to African cultural heritage, practice, and pedagogy. The study was conducted at two sites. One was in a deep rural setting of Otuboi County in Kaberamaido district in eastern Uganda, and the other in the suburb of Wakiso district found in central Uganda. Later, participant observation was used to gain information about the indigenous games. A convenience sample of fifteen children in the age range of 5 to 15 years were observed during play and then interviewed about the rules of their games. An observation checklist and document guide were used to conduct a content analysis of observations and interviews.

Findings on indigenous games played in Uganda

The indigenous games being referred to in this study are largely informal in nature, but are governed by rules that are known by players and all players are referees. All players learn to follow the constitutive rules (Searle, 1969, 2008) and do not require adult supervision (Mweru, 2011). These games can be categorised as games of memory, simulation of experiences, or physical prowess

(Waithaka, 2009). Furthermore, these games are not exclusive to Ugandan communities, but can be seen across other communities in Africa and probably in the West (Robertson, 2016). For example, the *sokoto* game works similar to American baseball, yet it may never be recognised as possibly having originated from Africa.

Changachanga

Changachanga is depicted in Figure 1. This is a field game played on a pitch that can be as large as a netball pitch or as small as a 2-by-4 meter pitch. The size of the pitch depends on the number and age of the players. The game is played by two teams each having 3 or more members. The playing team stands on one side of the pitch facing the catching team members who stand in the pitch, each member standing in a column space between the box spaces. The team leaders face each other and clap or shake hands three times to signal the beginning of the game. As a constitutive rule, members from the catching team are restricted to only move along their assigned rows, and must not step on the line in their attempt to catch the playing team members. It is only the leader of the catching team that is free to move along both the row assigned to him/her and the middle column. On the count of three, all the playing team members run to enter the boxes with the aim of crossing all the column spaces being manned by the catching team without being touched by any of them.

The objective of the playing team is to run and get out of the pitch on the other side. When out, any of the team members must sneak back into the pitch again and run back to the starting point without being touched by any of the

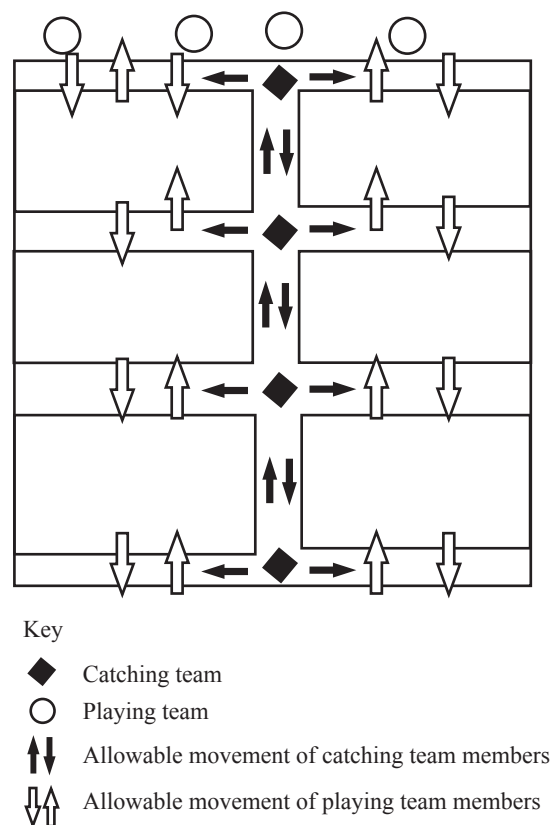


Figure 1. *Changachanga* play field

catching team. The playing team members can crisscross the boxes without going backwards. Any member who accidentally moves back to the previous step will lead to the whole group losing and becoming the catching team. If one person successfully sneaks back, the whole team wins a point and the game is restarted. However, if any of the team members is touched by any member of the catching team, the whole team will lose and they have to come into the pitch to become the catching team. The game goes on till players lose interest in it for the day.

What the game teaches

The game teaches team spirit, strategic thinking, and physical agility. As part of team spirit, no one person is able to work alone and win. When one person wins, all the other team members automatically win, just like in a game of football. Other members may distract a member of the catching team to allow their teammate to sneak into another box. Also, if one person makes a mistake, the whole team pays for it by becoming the catching team.

In terms of strategic thinking, in order for team members to sneak into the next boxes whose perimeters are being guarded by members of the catching team, each team must get a strategy. While the ones sneaking into the boxes strategize how to sneak into the boxes, members of the opposite team will also be strategizing how to trap their opponents who try to sneak into the next boxes.

Physical agility is taught through running as fast as one can while ensuring that you are not caught or trapped into any box. They have to dodge, sneak, distract, or jump to escape arrest in order to win. As one child interviewed noted: "I like this game. From it I have learnt how to dodge people who want to catch me. I know if bad people come to try to abduct me, I can easily escape from them and save myself." As alluded to by the child respondent, the agility skills learnt in this game can come in handy to save children who are targeted as victims of either kidnap or abduction for child sacrifice (a genuine hazard in some communities (Ibrahim & Muktar, 2017)).

Sokoto

This is a game where an individual competes against other individuals in a group. As indicated in Figure 2, in playing the game, two sticks (one-meter-long batting stick and a 4 cm stick sharpened at both ends) are used.

To play the game, the shorter stick is placed across at the end of a channel-shaped hole carved in the ground and hurled away using the longer stick. The other players who will be standing some distance in front of the person

hurling the short stick must attempt to catch it before it lands on the ground. If they catch it, the person who hurled it loses and is replaced by another player. In case the short stick is hurled and the other players fail to catch it, the player progresses to the next level of play. In the next level, the player puts the short stick in the channel with the sharp part protruding out of the hole. The player must then hit the other sharp part of the short stick gently to allow it to spring out of the channel before hitting it in mid-air to move to the direction of other players.

As the short stick flies towards the other players, the other players must try to catch it in mid-air using their hands as in baseball. If they do catch it, the player loses and is replaced by another person. If they fail to catch it and the short stick falls down, the player must estimate the distance from the short stick to the channel in terms of the number of short sticks needed to cover that distance. If the player over-estimates, the other group members will use the short stick as a meter rule and measure the distance to the tunnel from where the short stick landed. If the estimate was accurate or less, the number said becomes the scores for the player. However, if the number mentioned goes beyond, then the player loses and is replaced by another player.

What the game teaches

This game teaches estimation, counting, spatial relations, and catching skills. In terms of estimation, every player must learn to accurately estimate given distances as a measure of the short stick being used. The figure that is estimated becomes the score that the player earns to win the game.

Every estimate involves counting. The players use the short stick as a counter to ascertain the distance given by the player. In case one fails to count appropriately, he/she loses the marks not said. Meanwhile if the player makes a mistake and says a wrong figure, he/she will be disqualified.

Spatial relations are taught through the player learning to estimate and hit the small stick in mid-air in order to get a point. Failure to hit the stick because of poorly developed spatial relations ability makes one lose marks. Furthermore, other players may be near the player trying to hit the small stick. Sometimes, when the small stick first darts out of the hole before it is hit, another player can catch it in mid-air leading to the disqualification of the one who was supposed to hit it.

The other players must learn to catch the flying stick in mid-air using their hands. This act teaches the physical



Figure 2. Batting stick and sharpened play stick used in the *sokoto* game

skill of catching and running purposefully so as to be able to catch the flying stick.

Kakebe

This game is similar to the hide-and-seek game. In this game, a group of players meet in one place and decide who should start seeking others. An object (tin, bottle, gourd, or fruit) is placed at the centre of the group. One of the players (not the one going to seek others) then kicks the object as far away as possible to allow all the other members to run away as fast as possible to hide. The one seeking the others must run and bring the object that was kicked away back to its original position so as to begin seeking other players. In case he/she sees any other player, he/she must call the name of the person seen and run back to hit the other object. Hitting the object signals that a person has been arrested. The person arrested has to come and sit near the object and wait for others. The person seeking others will continue until all the other players have been found and arrested. If he/she succeeds, the first person to be arrested will now become the one who will seek the rest. During the process of seeking other players, should the one seeking others see a player, that player is free to run as fast as possible to the object and reach it before the one seeking. If that happens, he/she will kick the object far away, thus releasing all the other persons who had been arrested. The one seeking has to start seeking afresh. Also, any person who is hiding, upon seeing the arrested may decide to come and free the friends by running to the object and kicking it far away before the one seeking can reach it.

This game is very interesting, but also has challenges. One of the challenges is that the players hiding may run far away and then lie in the bush. While there, they can fall asleep. So the one seeking will find it difficult to get them and lose interest in the game. The other challenge can be that the ones arrested, as a way of occupying themselves, may start another game that is more interesting, thereby distracting the one seeking. Sometimes the one seeking may also join in the new game and forget the others in the bush. Similarly, the ones hiding in the bush may start another interesting game and forget the game they were playing before.

What the game teaches

Kakebe teaches cooperation, escaping from trouble, physical endurance, decision making, and emotional stability. In terms of cooperation, the players learn to cooperate in this game so as to be able to keep playing. In case one is arrested, the other players have to find a way of rescuing the person by sneaking to kick the object far away as possible, before the captor can get to it.

Kakebe teaches escaping from trouble. Specifically, when playing this game, all the players must hide in such a way that the captors are unable to get them. They try to hide in places that one would not expect anybody to hide. Thus, in times when a family is attacked by bad people, each child upon hearing an alarm is able to run and hide from the attackers, saving him or herself.

In terms of physical endurance, the constant running to stop the other players or the players running away from

the captors train the children in physical endurance and stamina to keep on without giving up.

Decision making is taught through choosing to come to free colleagues while knowing the risk involved of yourself being captured. This provides children a learning opportunity for strategic decision making.

Lastly, emotional stability is taught. In most cases, the person seeking the others may get emotional when the persons captured are released every now and then and thus denying him/her the chance to also become one of the persons being sought. Some children end up crying or giving up because they have failed to capture the other players. In this case, the cultural purpose for the game is to instil self-control: the player is expected to emotionally control him/herself and go on till the time he/she will succeed.

Hunting game

This is a common game in the rural areas. It is played using a hoop and sticks that can be equated to spears. A group of children ranging from three to over ten can play it. One of the players rolls the hoop then the other players start throwing their sticks (spears) with the aim of throwing them through the centre of the hoop so that it comes to a standstill. The person whose spears' makes the hoop stop gets a point and the hoop is thrown again.

What the game teaches

The game teaches marksmanship and physical endurance. The skill of targeting the centre of the rolling hoop trains the children in marksmanship. This skill is important for self-defence in that a child is able to aim at and easily hit an enemy who is running. The act of running following the hoop requires physical stamina that one must develop in order to be able to win.

One leg down

This is a tree climbing game played by a group of children ranging from 3 years and above depending on the size of the tree. Older children usually prefer a bigger tree, while younger children go for a smaller tree. It needs no equipment save for the tree to be climbed. In the game, one of the children catching the rest stands about 10 metres away from the tree. He/she then calls the other players saying: "One leg down ready?" The other players have to hold the tree ready to climb it, but must place one leg on the tree while the other should be on the ground. When they are ready, they will say yes. Upon saying yes, the one catching will run towards the tree and try to catch the leg of any of the persons climbing the tree. In case all the persons climbing the tree succeed in climbing, the one catching must try to jump to touch at least any one of them. If she/he fails, then she has to go back and start the game afresh. In case one person is touched, that person has to go and become the next person to catch others.

What the game teaches

This game teaches tree climbing skills, spatial relationship skills, physical endurance, and strategic thinking. The main goal of the game is to climb the tree as fast as possible without being caught. This is a lifesaving skill that all

children need to learn. In case they are being chased by a wild animal or a rabid dog, if they can dash to the nearest tree and climb it before it bites their feet, then they are saved.

In terms of spatial relationship skills, for the person coming to catch the others, they develop the skill of capturing others in flight. In trying to catch others in mid-air, they develop spatial relationship skills. They can use this as fruit gathering skills that can help them later in life.

Physical endurance is taught through the act of running to catch another in mid-air as they climb the tree. This requires physical stamina that one must develop in order to be able to win.

Lastly, strategic thinking is taught. In playing the game, the one catching the others must decide which person should be focused on, based on one's assessment of their skill in climbing. Thus, when the time for catching comes, as a strategy, one weak or less prolific person no matter the age will be targeted and captured, thus the one chasing wins.

Sagam sagam

This game is played by two players at a time. As depicted in Figure 3, the game is played on a playing area made up of two columns of four boxes each.

In playing the game the children stand with one leg in one box and another leg in the next box (Figure 3a). The players will not face each other, but have to face the opposite direction. As they start to play, each child has to

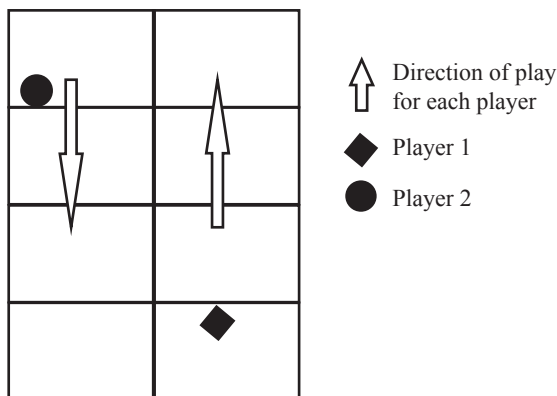


Figure 3. *Sagam sagam* play field and direction



Figure 3a. *Sagam sagam* players

jump with both feet to the next set of boxes in the opposite direction of the other child while saying the following in rhythm: "...sagam-sagam, sagam-sagam huuh; sagam-sagam, sagam-sagam huuh." The jumping is done twice in two sets as the word sagam is mentioned. At the point of mentioning *huuh*, both must jump to the others boxes in an exchange.

Should they collide or one of them steps on the line in the process of play, the one who made the mistake is replaced by another player.

What the game teaches

Sagam sagam teaches rhythm, concentration, and coordination. In terms of rhythm; moving together following a given rhythm is key in winning this game. Concentration is taught through each player being required to concentrate to follow his/her path in order to avoid colliding with the other. In terms of coordination; one must be able to balance and only stay within the given boxes without falling off. The cultural purpose of this game is to teach both balance and partnership in order to overcome a given challenge.

Chodi-chodi

This is a hopping game. The playing area is shared with the *sagam sagam* game (see Figure 4). The game is played by an individual but watched by others to detect foul play. In playing this game, the player has to stand in two boxes, with one leg in a box. When the player is ready, he/she closes the eyes and jumps to the next set of two boxes before moving backwards one step. While in that position, the player must again jump to the next two sets of boxes before moving backward another step. This is done on and on till the player exits the play area from the opposite side. All this must be done without opening the eyes. The rest of the players act as referees to ensure that the player does not open the eyes and at the same time must not step on any of the lines drawn on the play area. If the player goes to the end without opening the eyes or stepping on any line, he/she gets a score and starts afresh. Breach of any of those rules leads to losing, and another player comes in.

What the game teaches

Chodi-chodi teaches estimation of spaces, concentration, and coordination. Estimation of spaces is taught since



Figure 4. *Chodi-chodi* players

the player must estimate the area of the spaces so as to move through them without seeing. That estimation teaches them to find their way in the dark. In terms of concentration; each player must concentrate to move in the given direction without getting lost. Lastly, coordination is taught because the act of jumping from one box to the other with closed eyes requires one to coordinate the body for better movement. One of the key cultural purposes for this game is fairness and honesty by all involved. Both the player and referee must acknowledge where a fault has been made.

Epiki

This game is much like a game of gambling. As depicted in Figure 5, the game uses a small hole made in the ground and seeds, stones, coins, or bottle tops contributed by each player in equal numbers. In playing the game, each member throws a stone into the hole. The one whose stone is nearest to the hole will be the first to play. When play starts, a player will get all the stones or coins contributed and throw them into the hole. The player will claim any stone or coin that enters the hole. Then, from those coins that did not enter the hole, the other players will choose one to be hit. If the player hits the identified coin without hitting any other coin, the player takes all the other coins. If the stone used for hitting the coins enters the hole, the player loses all the coins gained and another player goes to play. If the coins are all taken, players have to contribute more coins for the game to continue.

What the game teaches

Epiki teaches targeting, concentration, and strategic thinking. Targeting is taught since the player must have good aim to ensure that all coins thrown enter into the hole in order to gain them. That skill is needed later in life for fishing or defence. In terms of concentration; each player must concentrate to hit a given target. Lastly, strategic thinking is taught since the one who throws the coins must be strategic enough to cast the coins with the aim of making all of them to enter into the hole. In case of a miss, the next best option is for the coins to just scatter around the target hole to make it easy for the player to hit any one of them without touching any other.



Figure 5. *Epiki* player

Naget

This is a popular game among girls, although boys also play it. In playing this game, seven stones that vary in size are placed at the centre of the play area. Then, two players form a team standing on opposite sides of the play area, and throw a ball towards each other as they target a third player (their opponent) standing at the centre where the stones were placed. The objective of the one in the centre is to dodge the ball, but she must also find time and space to pile the stones one on top of the other till all stones are in one heap. A score is recorded if one succeeds in making a complete pile.

What the game teaches

Naget teaches concentration, seriation, and team spirit. Concentration is needed to ensure that children pay attention to both the ball and stones. Seriation is taught since the stones must be placed starting with the largest to the smallest for the pile to be made. Usually younger children are unable to play if they have not yet developed seriation skills. In terms of team spirit; the teams must cooperate in order to win or be able to target and hit the person piling the stones.

Discussion

African indigenous games as a heritage

Some of the games played can be seen as unique to given communities and help to socialise children into their respective cultures which is now slowly vanishing (Mutema, 2013). In trying to pursue a “best practice”, we have to know that such a practice is actually another person’s indigenous practice. If we are to follow the best practice, we need to understand that every indigenous game is rooted in a given cultural context (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004) that may not be relevant in another environment.

Additionally, indigenous games have been used as a form of entertainment, cultural transmission, and learning (Gobet, de Voogt, & Retschitzki, 2004). In playing the games, children share with the elders their respected cultural elements that are used to share information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes, and motor skills for all (Wanderi, 2011). As children play the games, the elders watch and reminiscently reflect on their youthful years, thus connecting with the children. These memories represent an indigenous cultural heritage the elders are seeking to preserve in the face of globalisation trends.

As children play, they ground the cultural and traditional setting of play that are seen as unique to Africa. People who insist on following their culture are not disconnected into the universal abstract but instead are grounded in a people and place (Dei, 2002). Already, different countries are known for the games they promoted. For example, the Japanese wrestling game defines the Japanese and keeps them in high esteem especially when they see persons from other cultures getting into the Japanese attire and playing the same game. The Japanese are happy because they know that games and sport have been found to reflect the evolution of a people’s culture (Eichberg & Norgaard 2000). In keeping this culture, the Japanese do not only keep a tradition, but also maintain

a cultural heritage that is passed on with pride from one generation to another. Thus, cultural games sustain and keep the cultural heritage alive (Nabie, 2015).

African indigenous games as a pedagogy

In each of the games played, there were rules to be followed. Those rules also apply in everyday life. These rules can be difficult to master, but when built into games they become easier to master. Thus, cultural games have been used to operationalize an indigenous knowledge system. In turn, this turn brings in authentic engagement (Nabie, 2015). The same rules have been found to offer players structure and motivation to learn (Prensky, 2001). If followed diligently, these rules have the potential to enhance players' perception, memory, and thinking (Gobet et al., 2004). Some games have the potential to offer players computational thinking skills such as conditional logic, algorithms, debugging, and distributed computation (Berland & Lee, 2011).

Furthermore, the games have been seen as tools that can be used to make learning relevant. All the games teach skills that are required in the environment. Thus, anybody who wanted to develop some skills in children needed to first make sure that the identified skill is relevant to members of the community before it can be taught. It was just a question of moderating the curriculum to ensure that it taught what was needed. The intent of any teacher was to use games as alternative instructional tools to make content relevant, accessible, pleasurable, and memorable (Nabie, 2015). Since these games were found in the community and used familiar materials, they developed skills that children needed to use as adults in the society (Owusu-Mensah & Quan-Baffour, 2015).

Playing indigenous games provides opportunity for learners to practice skills. Communities know this well and therefore encourage such play as a training facility in the apprenticeship mode as a dynamic pedagogical way of developing specific skills in children. Thus, every game that is introduced provides spaces for interactive apprenticeships and skills practice (Nyota & Mapara, 2008). In this context, the African games become learning environments just like apprenticeship workshops where trainees acquire various life skills and values (Mutema, 2013).

African indigenous games as a practice

The games are also played according to an age grade system that teaches hierarchy in the community. Those within a group are always reminded to be faithful to the group and stick to the cultural tradition with a strong warning that "*mwacha asili ni mtumwa*", translated as "he who discards his traditions and culture is a slave" (Abubakar, 2011). Thus, entry to each grade is during an initiation ceremony that helps one to graduate to the next level to enjoy the responsibility, accountability, and privileges of a given group (Omolewa 2007).

Indigenous games have always been played as a practice by children and adults alike. This has always been done as a way of life because it is what they know how to do best. Additionally, the practices define what has to be learnt immediately because need will arise soon. Thus, in

the practice, games can be played simply as an educational entertainment (Eichberg & Noogaard, 2000). Since many communities did not have specific entertainment industries, in the time of need, games became that entertainment that gave them fun, enjoyment, and pleasure (Prensky, 2001).

Sometimes games may not just be a reserve for certain occasions or a certain season. Some games were, and still are, part of daily activities in Africa (Nkopodi & Mosimege, 2009), making them a way of life (Mutema, 2013). In doing it again and again, the mechanics of actions, rules, and type or quality of interactions players make during play (Arnab et al., 2015) keep reminding all who play about their knowledge, know-how, and practices that have been developed and maintained from a long history of close interaction with the natural environment (Soni, 2007).

Conclusion

When we focus on our cultural heritage, we are not simply going back to regurgitate something whose usefulness has passed, but rather trying to find our bearings in the current confusion. Being in the culture helps us to locate ourselves and be able to proudly go out there and tell other people who we are as opposed to us trying to mimic other people. Our uniqueness helps us to have something distinctive that the rest of the world can learn from. In this respect, we shall be seen from the values we treasure, the practices that define our people, and the pedagogy that has helped us transfer life skills to the next generation that is able to fit in the community. The indigenous games can further be improved and regularly practiced in the same way we have had other games played in the international scene. At one time, all those games were mere indigenous games, which continue to pass on cultural heritage of communities that once practiced it.

Recommendations

Reflecting on the indigenous games in this study, the following recommendations are suggested. First, African communities need to start taking the indigenous games seriously; it is a tool they can use to inculcate cultural heritage in their children. In most cases, some people in the communities look down upon such games in favour of the western games. As a result, we continue to see a proliferation of western indigenous games as a sign of development, yet we forget that they too worked hard to develop and market their games.

We need to encourage communities that have started reintroducing indigenous games and holding festivals or competitions in such games. These gestures have been able to bring alive the cultural heritage which had been lost due to disuse.

Teachers in schools need to start using indigenous games as pedagogy in class to teach academic skills. In doing this, they will be using familiar pedagogy, promoting cultural heritage, and also make the learning relevant to the community.

More efforts to document some other indigenous games are needed so as to establish a repertoire of such games for the use of the new generation that has never been exposed to them. Both written and digitalised versions of the games

can be uploaded into specific open access repositories that can be accessed by all those interested in them.

Finally, more African scholars need to emulate Bame Nsamenang in speaking of African renaissance as opposed to always thinking that nothing good can come out of it. Africentric thinking, pedagogy, and decolonisation of the African mind can start with our indulgence in indigenous African games both within and outside the community.

ORCID

Godfrey Ejuu  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3772-1824>

References

- Abubakar, A. A. (2011). Proverbs as a Source of Philosophic Ideas about African Education. In A. B. Nsamenang, & T. M. S. Tchombe, 2011 (Eds.). *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum* (pp. 68–76). Bamenda: Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC).
- Berland, M., & Lee, V. (2011). Collaborative strategic board games as a site for distributed computational thinking. *International Journal of Game-Based Learning*, 1(2), 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijgbl.2011040105>
- Biko, S. (1987). *I write what I like*. Harlow, UK: Heineman.
- Burnett, C., & Hollander, W. J. (2004). The South African Indigenous Games research Project of 2001/2002. *S.A. Journal for Research in Sport Physical Education and Recreation*, 26(1), 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.4314/sajrs.v26i1.25873>
- Cannella, G. S. (1997). *Deconstructing early childhood education: Social justice and revolution* (3rd ed.). New York: Peter Lang publishing.
- Eichberg, H., & Norgaard, K. (2000, September). *Education through Play and Games-Danish Experience*. Paper presented at the University of Southern Denmark and Workshop of Sport History, Gerlev.
- Gobet, F., de Voogt, A., & Retschitzki, J. (2004). *Moves in mind: The psychology of board games*. New York, NY: Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203503638>
- Hountondji, P. J. (2002). Knowledge appropriation in a post-colonial context. In C. Odora Hoppers (Ed.), *Indigenous knowledge and the integration of Knowledge systems: Towards a philosophy of articulation* (pp. 23–38). Claremont: New Africa Books.
- Howard, J. (2010). Making the most of play in the early years: The importance of children's perceptions. In P. Broadhead, J. Howard, & E. Wood (Eds.), *Play and learning in the early years* (pp. 145–160). California: Sage.
- Ibrahim, B. & Muktar, J. I. (2017). An Analysis of the Causes and Consequences of Kidnapping in Nigeria. *African Research Review*, 11(4), 134–143.
- Kashoki, M. E. (1982). Indigenous scholarship in African universities: The human factor. In H. Fahim (Ed.), *Indigenous Anthropology in non-Western countries* (pp. 35–51). Durham, North Carolina, USA: Carolina Academic Press.
- Kaya, H. O., & Seleti, Y. N. (2013). African indigenous knowledge systems and relevance of higher education in South Africa. *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 12(1), 30–44. <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/IEJ/article/view/7436>
- Kejo, S. M. (2017). *Exploring Play in Early Years Education: Beliefs and Practices of Pre-Primary Educators in Tanzania*. Victoria: University of Victoria.
- Lancy, D. (2002). Cultural constraints on children's play. In J. Roopnarine (Ed.), *Conceptual, social-cognitive, and contextual issues in the fields of play*. *Play & Culture Studies*, (pp. 53–62). Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Maunganidze, L., Kasayira, J. M., & Mudhovozi, P. (2011). Educational Assessment and Analysis in the African Cultural Context. In A. B. Nsamenang, & T. M. S. Tchombe, 2011 (Eds.). *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum* (pp. 321–336). Bamenda: Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC).
- Mutema, F. (2013). Shona traditional children's games and songs as a form of indigenous knowledge: An endangered genre. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 15(3), 59–64. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-1535964>
- Mweru, M. (2011). Sibling Caregiving and the Teaching Roles of Children during Early Childhood Years in Kenya. In A. B. Nsamenang, & T. M. S. Tchombe, 2011 (Eds.). *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum* (pp. 245–256). Bamenda: Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC).
- Nabie, M. J. (2015). Where cultural games count: The voices of primary classroom teachers. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology*, 3(3), 219–229. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1066367.pdf>
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The Politics of language in African literature*. London, UK: James Currey.
- Nkopodi, N., & Mosimege, M. (2009). Incorporating the indigenous game of morabaraba in the learning of mathematics. *South African Journal of Education*, 29(3), 377–392.
- Nsamenang, A. B. (1992). *Human development in cultural context: A third world perspective*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483326030>
- Nsamenang, A. B. (2000). Issues in indigenous approaches to developmental research. *ISSBD Newsletter*, 1, 1–4. https://issbd.org/resources/files/newsletter_0100.pdf
- Nsamenang, A. B. (2004). *Cultures of human development and education: Challenge to growing up Africa*. New York, NY: Nova.
- Nsamenang, A. B. (2005). Educational development and knowledge flow: Local and global forces in human development in Africa. *Higher Education Policy*, 18(3), 275–288. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300090>
- Nsamenang, A. B. (2006). Human ontogenesis: An indigenous African view on development and intelligence. *International Journal of Psychology*, 41(4), 293–297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207590544000077>
- Nsamenang, A. B., & Tchombe, T. M. S. (2011). Introduction: Generative pedagogy in the context of all cultures can contribute scientific knowledge of universal value. In A. B. Nsamenang, & T. M. S. Tchombe, 2011 (Eds.). *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum* (pp. 4–19). Bamenda: Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC).
- Nsamenang, A. B. (2013). Dilemmas of Rights-Based Approaches to Child Well-Being in an African Cultural Context. In D. J. Johnson, D. L. Agbényiga, & R. K. Hitchcock (Eds.), *Vulnerable Children: Global Challenges in Education, Health, Well-Being, and Child Rights* (pp.13–25). New York, NY: Springer. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-6780-9>
- Nyota, S., & Mapara, J. (2008). Shona traditional children's games and play: Songs as indigenous ways of knowing. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 2(4), 184–202.
- Odora-Hoppers, C. (2001). *Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge systems: towards a conceptual and methodological framework*. Pretoria: HSRC.
- Omolewa, M. (2007). Traditional African modes of education: Their relevance in the modern world. *International Review of Education*, 53(5-6), 593–612. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-007-9060-1>

- Owusu-Mensah, J., & Quan-Baffour, K. P. (2015). Demystifying the myth of mathematics learning at the foundation phase: The role of Akan indigenous games. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 8(2), 313–318. Retrieved from [http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/IJES/IJES-08-0-000-15-Web/IJES-08-2-000-15-Abst-PDF/IJES-8-2-313-15-440-Owusu/IJES-8-2-313-15-440-Owusu-Tx\[8\].pdf](http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/IJES/IJES-08-0-000-15-Web/IJES-08-2-000-15-Abst-PDF/IJES-8-2-313-15-440-Owusu/IJES-8-2-313-15-440-Owusu-Tx[8].pdf) <https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2015.11890253>
- Prensky, M. (2001). *Digital game-based learning*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Robertson, E. C. J. (2016). *7 Traditional African sports that should be in the Olympics*. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from: <https://www.okayafrica.com/7-traditional-african-sports-olympics/>
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Rules of play: Game design fundamentals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139173438>
- Searle, J. R. (2018). Constitutive rules. *Argumenta*, 4(1), 51–54. <https://www.argumenta.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/4-Argumenta-41-John-R.-Searle-Constitutive-Rules.pdf>
- Serpell, R. (2018) Human development in Africanist settings: Advancing the research scholarship of Bame Nsamenang, *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 28(6), 522. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2018.1547868>
- Waithaka, E. (2009). *Emerging modes of children's involvement in informal games in Kenya: A case of Kiambu East and Kiambu West Districts*. (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation), Kenyatta University, Kenya.
- Wanderi, M. P. (2011). *The Indigenous games of the people of the coastal region of Kenya: A cultural and educational appraisal*. Nazareth, Ethiopia: OSSREA.