



The erosion of such cultural and spiritual values can be explained by different factors, with the first one being the influence of successive foreign interference on the Ethiopian education system. The second reason for the absence of IK is the perceptions of scholars for IK. Against using conventional greeting expressions, some Ethiopians who have adopted Western customs hold less reverence for praising God, considering it as a sign of enlightenment and thus invoking the name of the Creator during greeting may sometimes be considered backward. The third major factor contributing to the decline of IK in developing countries has been due to the preference of political elites who often compromise the existence of traditional modes of education.

Humility has been an integral part of the cultural system in Ethiopia. The wider study found out that greetings were offered to neighbors and even strangers and animals. Humanizing animals and greeting them like human beings show the relationship between people and natural creatures since well-being is universal and it encompasses family, property, animals and surroundings. This depicts a holistic notion of respect that extends well beyond animals themselves.

The lack of integration of indigenous cultural values within the education system has led to a gradual phasing out of traditional greetings. Today's generation is less likely to engage in traditional greetings both towards other members of their society and to the broader environmental landscape. It is important to integrate traditional epistemic methods of knowledge into the education system in order for children to establish a solid base of cultural, social, and religious principles required for developing critical pro-social qualities, which have become increasingly undermined due to globalization. Thus, aspects of indigenous knowledge must be included in the education system, and Ethiopia instead of using '*eclectic approach*' as philosophy of education should reconsider its philosophy of education to emphasize indigenous knowledge.

## **2. Introduction**

Colonialism was not merely a project of territorial domination but also an epistemic enterprise aimed at restructuring the knowledge systems, languages, and cultural foundations of colonized societies. Chiblow and Meighan (2022) asserted that the colonial project sought not only to control land and resources but also to erase indigenous peoples through the suppression of their languages, governance systems, and educational traditions. This deliberate epistemic subjugation ensured that colonized populations would internalize the superiority of Western knowledge while dismissing their own. Colonizing governments understood that long-term control required more than physical coercion; it depended on shaping how people thought, what they valued, and how they learned. Education thus became a primary tool for achieving social control and cultural transformation among African peoples (Mart, 2011). Through schooling, colonial authorities transmitted Western values and worldviews while systematically displacing indigenous epistemologies, local languages, and spiritual practices, resulting in profound cultural alienation and epistemic dependency (Wangui, 2024).

The imposition of Western-style education systems across Africa, including in nations like Ethiopia that were not formally colonized, produced a deep and lasting rupture in indigenous worldviews. Modern education, presented as a universal model of civilization and progress, was in practice an instrument of cultural standardization and ideological dominance. In the process of defining educational aims and curricula, indigenous knowledge systems and cultural resources were marginalized or entirely excluded. Oba and Eboh (2011) observe that while education is globally recognized as a cornerstone of human development, its transformative power can only be realized when it is culturally grounded and internally driven. Owing to this, the research work entitled "Reclaiming Our Epistemic Values" evaluates cultural, spiritual and social practices within social interaction, considering the impact of Western education among students and assessing the continuity of indigenous knowledge practices, especially greeting and parting rituals.

### **3. Policy Problems**

Although never colonized, Ethiopia has undergone similar epistemic and cultural ruptures as a consequence of foreign influences in its education system. According to Tekeste (2006), various agencies like UNESCO, the World Bank, and USAID have dominated the development of Ethiopian education since the late 1950s. Ideologically inspired reforms have characterized Ethiopian education, including the implementation of the Marxist-inspired curriculum during the Derg regime as well as the ethnic language program adopted in 1994 (Tekeste, 2006; Seyoum, 1996); however, these reforms have tended to ignore public engagement, thereby failing to incorporate the realities of Ethiopian culture into its educational policies.

At an international level, the focus on knowledge as a means to encourage economic development illustrates the continued impact of Western influence in education policy-making at the expense of indigenous perspectives (Silova et al., 2020). Such perspectives emphasize the need for greater inclusiveness and social justice within the realm of education policies (Griffith & Arno, 2015). The value of education can be explained by its function of passing on the cultural knowledge of society, which is crucial for social cohesiveness (Moore, 2020; Bell, 2020). Consequently, meaningful education should be embedded in the society's culture, morals, and religion. Education systems that tend to emphasize Western values more than indigenous ones result in cultural rift because students may dissociate from their own culture in the name of westernizing themselves. Indigenous philosophies generated in local communities receive scant consideration, thus, resulting in the use of terminology such as "eclectic" in formulating the philosophy of Ethiopian education. The Education and Training Policy article 3.2.1 (2023) stated that the philosophy of the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy adopts an eclectic approach. In view of this, the primary purpose of this policy brief is to emphasize the importance of Indigenous Knowledge and its value as well as recommend its inclusion into the philosophy of the Ethiopian education system.

### **4. Opportunities of IK in Education**

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Supported by</b>
Strengthening cultural identity and arming children with pro-social traits	The purpose of indigenous education has been directed toward making the child capable of respecting and meeting social and cultural expectations. That is, the child has to learn the values, norms, beliefs, and ideals of the respective social group where she/he is in.	Solomon Mengistie(2020); Belay Tefera and Belay Hagos (2016); Ali Yassin Ali January (2015).
Decolonize religion to liberate spirituality	IK opens up a different horizons of life(Spirituality) that have been kept hostage by modernity, capitalism, and the belief in the superiority of Western civilization	Iveta Silova, Jeremy Rappleye, and Euan Auld (2020).
Global diffusion of Western ideas	Internationalization has become a one-size-fits-all approach with the “one-size” being Western and local contexts are ignored or minimized; this idea will be diffused.	Vanessa R. Sperduti (2017).
Stand against the notion of epistemic violence.	The notion of epistemic violence expresses the Eurocentric and Western domination and the subjugation of former colonial (African) subjects through knowledge systems. The curricula, packaged in European languages and expressing Eurocentric worldviews, were designed to degrade, exploit and subjugate the African people	Langa Khumalo and Sam Mchombo(2021); Claudia Brunner(2021).

## 5. Challenges of IK in Education

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Supported by</b>
Clashing with globalization	Excessive reliance on IK may lead to clashes with globalization	Samuel P. Huntington(1996)
Undesirable stereotypically	Indigenous knowledge practices are stereotypically labeled as backward	Zealelem Leyew (2024).

## 6. Policy Recommendations

<b>Policy Options</b>	<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Instead of taking an eclectic approach, Ethiopia should make its philosophy of education based on the country’s indigenous knowledge systems.	Ethiopia should consider making indigenous knowledge the basis of its philosophy of education rather than eclecticism.	Including it as the basis of its philosophy of education can help preserve cultural traditions and foster a strong sense of identity among students.	Some academics have difficulty conceptualizing education apart from the framework of Western education.

Integrating indigenous knowledge (IK) with Western education narrows the distance between the school and home environment or learning becomes easy.	Matching national and international benchmarks	Close the gap between theoretical learning and real-life practice, making the educational experience more relevant and inclusive for learners.	The preparation of teachers, curriculum, learning material and other resources to integrate indigenous practices with Western education is another concern since most educators work within the framework of modern academic disciplines
Increasing awareness of the significance of indigenous knowledge in the growth and development of a nation.	Develop programs that help young generations understand the significance of indigenous knowledge and pass on this knowledge to future generations.	Indigenous knowledge systems could be considered as valid sources of knowledge	The challenges of identifying what is taught from what should be taught since there are harmful traditional practices that have been practiced uncritically

## Conclusions

From the excerpts above, it is evident that greeting expressions, response to greetings, and farewell phrases used in local languages may differ in form and cultural background compared to Western greetings. The difference is mainly the extent and cultural orientation of such greetings. Western greetings tend to be shorter and more secularized (such as “hi”, “good morning” or “hello”), whereas local languages incorporate more extensive spiritual or relational elements (such as references to God), along with asking after one’s family and personal well-being. That is, contents embedded in local languages for instance in greetings and parting are important aspects of indigenous knowledge. They are not just practices; they communicate respect, social responsibility, and cohesion in communities and realization of human dependency on the will of God/Allah. In view of this, it is essential to bring these aspects of indigenous knowledge into the education system, and the philosophy of education in Ethiopia needs to incorporate indigenous knowledge as the bedrock of its philosophy. As Ethiopia is widely recognized as a defender of African independence, it should also serve as a guardian of the continent’s cultural heritage.

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