

CONFERENCE REPORT: THE FIRST SEBOKA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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The first Seboka International Conference was held at the Mmabatho Hotel School in the North West province of South Africa from 29 November until 1 December 2016. The theme of the conference was “Revitalising African Indigenous Concepts in Community Partnership, Education and Research (CER)”. The five sub-themes were Arts and Culture, Health, Agriculture, Science and Technology, and Food and Nutrition. The conference was organised by the Seboka Team Members led by Prof. Abel Jacobus Pienaar, Acting Director of the School of Nursing Science (SONS) at the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University (NWU), and a member of the South African Nursing Council (SANC). The conference was graced by the presence of scholars from different areas such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, and the Northern Cape, Western Cape and the

North West provinces of South Africa. The conference brought under one roof nurse educators, researchers and students, students of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), pharmacists, indigenous healers, linguistics experts and members of the Khoisan community.

Prof. Lalendle, Vice Rector for Teaching and Learning at the Mafikeng Campus of the NWU, welcomed the conference delegates and guests from within and outside Africa. He acknowledged the presence of the “first lady” of the North West province (NWP), Mrs Mahumapelo, representatives of the National Research Fund (NRF), representatives of the Department of Higher Education (DHE), and members of the Khoisan community. A moment of silence was observed for the passing of the former president of Cuba, Mr Fidel Castro, who played a pivotal role in the liberation of southern Africans and made a good contribution to the South African military and the health sector. Prof Lalendle alluded that everyone on earth has a purpose. He then gave an opening address in which he congratulated the Faculty of Agriculture, Science and Technology (FAST) and SONS for organising such a successful conference. He also congratulated SONS for making the NWU proud for being dedicated, ethical and stewards of discipline. He also thanked Prof. Pienaar, the Acting Director at SONS.

The first lady of the NWP, Mrs Mahumapelo also welcomed all the delegates to the North West province by greeting them on her knees as a sign of respect in the Pedi culture. She alluded that this conference was the second international conference to have been held in the North West province, specifically in Mafikeng in 2016, thereby making it a ground-breaking conference for the province. She thanked the Khoisan community in a special way. She said the North West province is a platinum province that has wealth in terms of agriculture, minerals and different cultures. She reported that the province has come up with the Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal philosophy, which has five pillars, namely Agriculture, Culture and Tourism (ACT), Villages, Township and Small Dorpies (VTSD), Reconciliation, Healing and Renewal (RHR), Saamwerk-Saamtrek, and Setsokotsane (integrated service delivery). This philosophy is using simple methods to solve complex problems. She indicated the first two pillars (ACT and VTSD) are directly involved with indigenous knowledge. She said African communities need to revitalise the knowledge of medical plants, indigenous games, etc. She concluded that Africa remains a continent that is vulnerable to exploitation. Some of the topics presented at the conference include:

- Understanding the revitalisation of Africans: Where did we go wrong? A challenging discourse that must take place. In his presentation Prof. Jacob Mapara indicated that Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, is in the throes of death. This pending death can only be reversed through serious commitment.
- Commercialisation of medicine: The unholy alliance. In his presentation Dr Mbulawa emphasised that there is a need to stand up against the big and untouchable pharmaceutical companies. We need to understand our roots (traditional medicine)

before rendering western medication to avoid conflict of interest in nursing the patient.

- An African insight of spirituality and spiritual healing – Dr Dhamani, a nurse by profession at the Aga Khan University in Tanzania, reminded conference delegates that during spiritual care, the nurse should remain vigilant, must not have a judgemental attitude, maintain the patients' dignity, support the patients in their decisions, and facilitate their search for the meaning of illness. The majority of patients go to traditional healers first before they go to a doctor or a nurse. Hence, spiritual care is an important part of holistic care.
- Art and the science of African dance as a spiritual-bio-psychosocial interaction in healing – The presentation was done by Mr Mahlatsi who is a nurse by profession and a traditional dancer. In his presentation, Mr Mahlatsi indicated that indigenous dance is the interaction of an individual's body, mind and spirit (holism). He further mentioned that African dance in healing is already in the Traditional Medicine Act of the World Health Organization (WHO).
- African indigenous food – Moments of delight: preferences in traditional cuisine – In her presentation, Ms Kazembe opened with the statement: "Where did we go wrong?" She said food is an expression of society and concluded by quoting Kasper (1986), "show me your plate and I'll tell you who you are."
- The indigenous Khoisan community – Dr Bock gave a presentation about her journey in an indigenous Khoisan community. She started with the nursing pledge of service and outlined the important parts in the pledge and those that included spirituality. She further shared the lesson she learned during her PhD study and came to the conclusion that some of the causes of aggression in our communities are the absence of a support group and both internal and external factors. She concluded that the debriefing and de-escalation processes by using physical and verbal (tone of voice) components are the best treatment for aggression.
- The art of healing in an indigenous community – According to Ms A. van Staden, as a herbalist (healer) you must be at peace with yourself and nature in order to be able to heal people. She also emphasised that the healers are taught how to heal themselves. They do not expect payment when the service is rendered but a token of appreciation is most welcome after the person has been healed.
- Western health is at a precipice therefore Africans are forced to go back to their roots (uncomfortable conversation with Africa) – In his presentation, Prof. A. J. Pienaar argued that strategies placed by the government to deal with health issues such as the Alma-Ata Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), and the World Health Organization Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014, have failed, hence Africans should advocate for the coexistence of African indigenous practice and the Western practice.

- Cultural moorings of bereavement counselling in African ethnomusicology: The therapeutic value and learning taxonomy of Olivier Mtukudzi's music – In his presentation, Mr Nembaware informed the conference delegates about his study which is aimed at developing IKS-based eudomelody in bereavement counselling for both diagnosis and therapy. The conclusion of his presentation was that music can be used as a coping mechanism for bereavement.
- Current trends in standardisation of indigenous medicinal plant formulations – In his presentation, Dr Sakala indicated that indigenous knowledge works and that it improves immunity lipid profiles. In conclusion he said, “Never say it's not possible, it's always possible. Indigenous knowledge for anti-diabetics and antioxidants works.”
- The medicinal properties of plants used by the indigenous Khoisan community for common colds and influenza – In his presentation, Mr Taaka, who is a pharmacist by profession, looked at indigenous Khoisan medicinal plants that are used for common colds and influenza-like illnesses. His study was used to validate the Western scholars and to confirm the indigenous knowledge scholars. In his conclusion, Mr Taaka confirmed that medical plants when used in combination are more effective than when used individually.
- Conceptualisation of primal healthcare – In her presentation, Ms Nare, who is a nurse by profession, said that the western healthcare has taken old indigenous concepts of health and packaged them. She used an example of primary healthcare re-engineering. Just like the other presenters, Ms Nare acknowledged that Indigenous Knowledge Healthcare systems can coexist with the Western healthcare system.

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