

# African Folklore for Critical Self-reflection, Reflective Dialogue, and Resultant Attitudinal and Behaviour Change: University Students' Experiences

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## Abstract

This article reports on the findings of a study, which included 154 participating university students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Qualitative data obtained from the participants were thematically analysed, using analytical induction and drawing from Mezirow's transformative learning theory. The findings showed that African folklore provides knowledge that includes cultural, folklore and morality knowledge, which is integrated with values. This knowledge is packaged, arranged and transmitted in particular ways that enable the learner or young person to engage in self-reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action. We argue that African folklore in itself is a pedagogical strategy that integrates knowledge and values with entertainment elements that expose the young people to life through a transformative phase, which encompasses psychological, convictional and life-style adaptation processes. In these processes, both the nature of knowledge and the ways in which the knowledge is communicated constitute an African folklore approach to education that when used and reinforced, ultimately leads to lasting positive attitudinal and behaviour changes in young people. We therefore, recommend that further research be conducted to explore the use of African folklore as a teaching and learning strategy in formal school settings, particularly in life-skills education,



with the aim of achieving lasting positive attitudinal and behaviour changes in young people.

**Keywords:** African folklore approach; attitudinal and behaviour change; pedagogy; teaching and learning strategy; university students; young people

## **Introduction**

This article reports on the findings of a study, which included 154 participating university students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Qualitative data obtained from participants were thematically analysed using the analytical induction method of analysing qualitative data and drawing from Mezirow's transformative learning theory. The findings showed that African folklore encompasses knowledge in the form of culture, folklore, and morality, which is interwoven with values. This knowledge is packaged, arranged and transmitted in particular ways that enable the learner or young person to engage in self-reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action. The article argues that African folklore in itself is a pedagogical approach that integrates knowledge, values with entertainment elements that provide young people with experience and makes them undergo a transformative phase, which encompasses psychological, convictional and life-style adaptation process. In this process, both the nature of knowledge and the ways in which the knowledge is communicated constitute an African folklore approach to education, which when used and reinforced, ultimately leads to lasting attitudinal and behaviour changes in young people.

Therefore, we present an introduction, literature on African folklore in education, and the transformative learning theory as the theoretical framework for the study, research methodology, findings, and discussion. Consequently, conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

## **Literature on African Folklore in Education**

Our definition of African folklore as given in this article includes proverbs, riddles, legends, folktales, folksongs, ballads, tongue-twisters, and folk dances in African languages. However, data analysed were mainly about folktales that were encountered by students participating in this research project. Therefore, the findings are based only on folktales as one part of the genre of African folklore literature.

There is a general belief that the use of folklore may soon be a thing of the past, as parents and communities, who are the custodians of folklore in Africa are pre-occupied with modern life. Generally, since the 19th century literature on African folklore has mainly focused on the collection of folklore, with the aim of preserving it (for example, Aitchison 1917; Canonici 1993; Dunning 1940; Kólájo 2014; Leslau and Leslau 1962; Msimang 1991; Nkosi and Zama 1990; Nyembezi 2000; Stuart and Malcolm 1949).

Most research studies (for example, Crandall 2002; Egede 2007; Hussein 2009; Yitah 2009) tended to analyse African folklore in an attempt to understand the nature of knowledge and the indigenous knowledge systems embedded in it. There is still dearth of research on the application of African folklore in other knowledge disciplines and subject areas—this is in spite of the fact that African folklore is said to have a wealth of knowledge (Stuart and Malcolm 1949, 5–6; Msimang 1991, 367–434).

Notwithstanding, several researchers (Amali 2014, 89–96; Asimeng-Boahene 2010, 434–445; Grant and Asimeng-Boahene 2006, 17–24; Obiechina 2002, 527–558; ) have reported on the educational value and beneficial effects of African folklore. Amali (2014, 89–96) argues that African folktales still play a significant role in the socialisation of young people. The various aspects of African folktales either add or reinforce knowledge that is prevalent in society, understanding of the rights and obligations of societal members, as well as the morals, principles, and beliefs. The analysis of Yoruba proverbs shows that there are proverbs that address the formation of character and inculcate good manners (Obiechina 2002, 527–558). Researchers such as Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006, 17–24) and Asimeng-Boahene (2010, 434–445) argue for the use of African proverbs in fostering culturally responsive pedagogies in education—particularly in teaching for social justice. In this article, we have attempted to advance further the argument on the educational value of African folklore, particularly as relating to education for behaviour change in young people.

## **Purpose and Research Question**

This article attempts to shed some light on how African folktales have contributed to the cultural/community education of young people to effect behaviour change. Thus, the research question is: “How have African folktales contributed to cultural/community education of young people for behaviour change?”

This article presents the findings of a study conducted among students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. These were students from different backgrounds. This study therefore, focused on the profiles of students from rural and urban contexts, local and international contexts, as well as from different national groups. The participating students were also inclusive of students enrolled for different degrees—undergraduate and postgraduate—who were at different study levels—that is first, second, third and fourth years. We also attempted to include equal numbers of female and male students. To ensure diversity in participation, English and isiZulu were used to collect the data—thus affording participants an opportunity to use the language of their choice. Participants also had an option of using both languages if they felt comfortable doing so.

## Reflections on Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

This study adopted the transformative learning theory as an analytical framework and argues that the African folklore approach to education provides an experience that enables young people to engage in the re-evaluation of their pre-conceived and acquired frames of reference. During this process, the young people undergo attitudinal and behaviour changes. In this sub-section, we explain briefly the transformative learning theory and its relevance to African folklore.

An American sociologist, Jack Mezirow (Mezirow 1997, 5–12), whose work was informed by the critical paradigm, founded the transformative learning theory that is mainly used in adult education. Mezirow's view is that “transformative learning is a rational process of learning and is a metacognitive way of thinking that transforms an acquired frame of reference, mind set or world views...” (Dirkx, Mezirow, and Cranton 2006, 123–139). In other words, it is a “process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow 1991). The theoretical assumptions are that “an individual acquires a coherent body of experience [such as] association, concepts, values, feelings, and conditional responses that define their life world” (Mezirow 1997, 5)—and this constitutes an individual's frame of reference. The frame of reference “functions to shape and delimit the expectations, perceptions, cognitions, and feelings” (Mezirow 1997, 5–12). The individual will thus have a tendency to evaluate other people's frames of reference, using his or her own frame of reference as the norm. Consequently, where the frames of reference is not aligned with his/ her frame of reference, the individual is likely to reject other people's frames of reference as “aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken” (Mezirow 1997, 5). Thus, transformative learning (Mezirow 2003, 58–59):

Transforms [such] problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change

The main point in Mezirow's transformative learning theory is the division of the domains of learning knowledges into three distinct types; namely instrumental, communicative and emancipatory knowledges (Mezirow 1991). The theory postulates that instrumental learning focuses on empirical knowledge that is derived from the scientific method and is concerned with task-oriented problem-solving learning, which simply put, can be regarded as having a cause and effect, or is concerned with the “how-to-do-things” (Mezirow 1997, 5–12). Instrumental learning can involve content or process reflection, and thus transforms meaning schemes, which refer to points of view and habits of mind. The communicative learning approach is concerned with the understanding we have of ourselves, of others, as well as the social norms of the society in which we live. It is in this domain that we learn to interpret the meaning behind words (Cranton 2002, 64). According to Mezirow (1991, 82), communicative learning

concerns itself with the ideas of others and frequently requires us to confront the unknown. When we confront the unknown, we either assimilate or accommodate it into our pre-existing meaning schemes. We can also create new meaning schemes of the unknown if it is not assimilated or accommodated into our pre-existing meaning schemes. The emancipatory learning involves critical reflection and is the domain of learning where we learn to free ourselves from the constraints placed on us by our uncritically assimilated assumptions and expectations (Mezirow 1997, 5–12). The main aspects of Mezirow's transformative learning theory that are commensurate with African folklore approach to learning that is the subject of discussion in this article are communicative and emancipatory learning knowledges.

Although widely accepted and applied in different contexts, the theory has received criticism. Critiques of the theory include Hart (1990), Newman (2012), Cranton (2002) and Taylor and Cranton (2013). While acknowledging a large body of research that has been developed around the transformative learning theory, Taylor and Cranton (2013) HAVE identified several gaps in research that relate to the theory. For example, the two scholars argue that research that has been done has not adequately enhanced the theory and applied it in varied contexts. In this article, we have engaged the theory within the critical paradigm and applied it to African folklore, particularly of isiZulu. In this way, we have also engaged with the theory from an African perspective, using mainly Mezirow's (1997) two domains of learning: that is the communicative and emancipatory approaches.

Transformative learning theory is relevant to the study of African folklore because the African folklore approach induces lasting changes in the learner than other kinds of learning. This is in line with the transformative learning theory definition below (Mezirow 1997):

Transformative learning is defined as learning that induces more far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning, especially learning experiences, which shape the learner and produce a significant impact, or paradigm shift, which affects the learner's subsequent experiences.

African folktales broaden one's frame of reference, which encompasses cognitive, conative, and emotional components. By their very nature, African folktales engage the young person meaningfully in a way that incorporates new information in an active process that involves thought, feelings, and dispositions. As in the transformative learning theory, African folktales have the ability to transform one's frame of reference through critical reflection of assumptions that validate contested beliefs through discourse, taking action on one's reflective insight and critically assessing it.

## **Research Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative research method, and is situated within the critical paradigm. Within this paradigm the starting point for the researcher is informed by their own values (Bertram and Christiansen 2014)—this means that the researcher takes a political stance on what is worthwhile to research and how worthwhile it is. Generally, the current school curricula are mostly devoid of cultural knowledge and approaches relating to the inculcation of life-skills, attitudes, and values in African societies. This clear lack of cultural approaches in school curricula raises a question about what counts as knowledge and what counts as ways of knowing. The article therefore, attempts to deconstruct the current scenario by engaging the African folktales as a space that provides the experience of engaging with transformative learning through a process of critical life reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action. The methodological implication for this paradigm is that data collection methods involve participation, engagement, collaboration, and involvement. As such, qualitative data was collected from 154 university students through focused group discussions, a workshop session, and a qualitative survey questionnaire.

The data collectors who worked in this research project administered questionnaires to 200 university students from diverse backgrounds, and who were at different levels of study; that is from undergraduate Bachelor of Education (BEd) to postgraduate studies. Of the 200 survey questionnaires, 154 were completed and returned, 40 were not returned, and six were returned without being completed. From the 154 participants who completed the questionnaires, 30 participants were selected for the workshop session and focused group discussions. The selection was based on willingness, availability (the sessions were conducted on SaturdayS in order not to disrupt the university academic programme), and proximity to the venue (students residing in off-campus residence of the university were preferred as they could walk to the venue).

The survey questionnaire aimed to elicit information about the students' experiences of cultural/community education through the use of African folklore. Babbie and Mouton (2002) articulate the argument between two schools of thought regarding the use of data-gathering techniques that might be traditionally linked onto epistemological and ontological assumptions. According to one school of thought qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection are non-compatible, while according to the other school of thought the two methods are compatible, depending on the research question to be addressed. The study adopted the latter school of thought, where a survey questionnaire that is ordinarily associated with quantitative studies was used to generate qualitative data. However, the survey questionnaire included mostly open-ended questions that produced qualitative data. Five focused group discussions comprising eight students in each group were simultaneously conducted and the different research assistants facilitated the focused group discussions. One workshop session was also

conducted to maximise the opportunity for engagement among participants. All ethical considerations were adhered to; the ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and was issued after all ethical issues were complied with and before the data collection process began. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. The quality of the data was compromised as the coding and re-coding process. The related codes were grouped together to form categories that were later re-grouped, leading to the emergence of themes.

## **Knowledge, Values and Attitudes in African Folktales and the Resultant Behaviour Change**

The data sources analysed to arrive at the findings were transcripts from students' qualitative survey questionnaire, students' focused group discussions, and workshop sessions. Generally, the findings of this study have shown that there is a number of educational benefits of African folktales to young people. These benefits were grouped under the three themes discussed below under the following subheadings:

- Knowledge in folktales
- Values and attitudes in African folktales
- African folktales and behaviour change

The themes were loosely structured around the research question that was presented earlier in the discussion. The discussion of the themes was substantiated with examples drawn from study transcripts.

Almost all participants indicated that they were familiar with some African folktales. Most participants learned about folktales from their homes, where mostly grandmothers, grandfathers, parents, siblings and other relatives related stories to them. A few participants stated that none of the family members related folktales to them, and that they thus learned about folktales from books, the media, teachers at school, or from friends in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, almost all participants stated that they learned some life lessons from the folktales; regardless of the source.

### **Knowledge in Folk Narratives**

The data collected from the students showed that the knowledge acquired in relation to the different aspects of life such as citizenship education, morality, folklore, culture, and heritage is embedded in African folktales. Many participants stated that the knowledge they gained from folktales made them good citizens and strengthened family ties, as one participant suggested:

*Izinganekwane zazisebenza ukusakha njengezingane ukuze sikhule sifundisekile ukuze sibe izakhamuzi eziqotho...njengezingane sibumbeke sizizwe siyingxenye yomndeni futhi sikuthokozele ukuhlala nawo. (P15)*

(“Folktales worked to mould us as children so that we grow up being well-taught and we become good citizens...as children we were moulded and we felt being part of the family and we were happy to stay with the family”). (P15)

Indigenous cultures have unwritten societal rules, which are transferrable from generation to generation through folklore. Thus, the knowledge gained from folklores helps members of the society to understand their origins and foster their cultural identity. Members also learn about the social prescription of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour from societal members. The following extracts from the data collected from students are cases in point:

Folktales help us...they taught me how society views itself and also conveyed their [society’s] notion of justice, rights and social obligation. They helped me to understand the origins of others. (P46)

Folktales help me understand the origins of people. (P51)

I learnt about my cultural background. (P12)

*Izinganekwane zifundisa ngamasiko esintu. (P17)*

(“Folktales teach about indigenous cultures”). (P17)

*Izinganekwane zangisiza zangifundisa ukuqonda okungamele nalokho okumele ngikwenze, ikakhulukazi izinto eziqondene nosikompilo, isiko lokhokho nokungaphathwa. (P24)*

(“Folktales helped me to understand the dos and don’ts, especially those that relate to culture, tradition and taboos). (P24)

The knowledge transmitted through folktales is interwoven in the story, enabling young people to extract the knowledge for themselves by learning from the actions of the characters in the story, as the following extract shows:

*Izinganekwane zingibuyisela uwazi engalufundiswa abazali bami...isibonelo sisenganekwaneni kanogwaja, eyangifundisa ngobuhlakani bukanogwaja. (P5)*

(“Folktales bring back knowledge that was taught to me by my parents...for example, the folktale of rabbit that taught me about the cleverness of the rabbit”). (P5)



Another theme that emerged from the data collected from the students concerns the awareness of the moral behaviour expected from young people. Most participants indicated that folktales taught them morals, as shown in the following extracts:

*Izinganekwane zanginikeza ulwazi lokuthi kumele ngiziphathe kanjani emphakathini.*  
(P69)

(“Folktales taught me knowledge on how to behave myself in the community”). (P69)

They taught me about morals. (P25)

Besides knowledge transmission, folktales also instil good values and attitudes in young people. Such values and attitudes are discussed in the following subsection.

### **Values and Attitudes in African Folktales**

Data collected from participating students showed that folktales have instilled values such as honesty and respect in young people. These folk stories also helped them develop positive attitudes in life. Almost all participants mentioned that through the use of folktales they learned to respect other people, elders in the community and in life in general. The following extracts provide evidence:

Folktales make me to respect people especially in the society, to respect elders and people in general. (P12)

I learnt respect....They were a way of teaching us about life and how to respect every aspect of it. (P14)

*Zangifundisa ukuthi omunye umuntu ngiyamazisa futhi ngiyamhlonipha....ngifunde ukuzimisela ekwenzeni izinto.* (P18)

(“Folktales taught me to be able to recognise and respect another person....I learnt to be determined to do things”). (P18)

*Izinganekwane zangifundisa ukuba umuntu oqotho, othembekile kuhle kukanogwaja, okhaliphile mayelana nezinqumo engizithathayo, kanye nokuqapha abantu abeze ngokubi empilweni yami.* (P26)

(“Folktales taught me to be a well-behaved and honest person, like the rabbit, [they taught me] to be intelligent about the decisions I make and be careful about people who come with bad intentions in my life”). (P26)

Participants stated that folktales granted them acceptance and taught them that one cannot get everything they want. The following extract is a case in point:

I gained knowledge to accept the situation as it is in life based on the rabbit stories [that were] told....whether [life situations are] good or bad but it is for a reason even if I fail in life I will keep on trying. (P5)

Folktales are helping me to understand that bad things happen to our own lives for our own strength....Those stories inspired me to never give up.... They have made me a better person as I have made peace with the fact that in life you cannot always have what you want (P13)

Some participants stated that they learned valuable lessons from folktales—that is they learned to have positive attitudes in life—they learned to accept and appreciate life as it is, as well as what they have in life, as articulated in the extract below:

Those stories build me everyday to new things, admiring the things I have in my life.... (P13)

I learnt about appreciation. (P14)

The knowledge, values, and attitudes instilled in the young people as a result of these African folktales cannot be forgotten easily, as they are interwoven in the story itself. The logic of the story, the characters, their actions, and experiences liven up the message. This entices young people to engage with the story cognitively in order to learn about the consequences of each action by following the characters in the story. This brings about a change in the behaviour of young people.

## **African Folktales and Behaviour Change**

In reference to the analysis of Yoruba proverbs, Obiechina (2002) argues that there are specific proverbs that address character formation and the inculcation of good manners. This power of proverbs to mould character is in line with African folktales that effect a change in the behaviour of young people. Most of the student participants stated that folktales that were related to them when they were still small brought about a change in their behaviour. Specifically, most participants stated that they changed their life styles and that they were able to differentiate between good and bad, as the following extracts show:

The folktales made me to learn to keep my culture as I learnt about the importance of how to live the westernised life and still keep my culture. (P45)

*Izinganekwane zangenza ngashintsha indlela engangiphila ngayo, zangenza ngakwazi ukuhlukanisa okuhle nokubi ngiphinde ngiziqhelelanise nezindlela zobumnyama ezingangiholela ophathe. Ukube angikhuliswanga ngezizinganekwane ngabe ngokwami angifikanga kuleli zinga lempilo engikulo manje....Zaba nomthelela wokuthi ngiqaphele ngiyihloniphe impilo nezinto zakulo mhlaba. (P15)*

(“Folktales made me to change the way of life I was living; they made me to know how to differentiate between good and bad and to drift away from ways of darkness that can lead me astray. If I was not raised up being told folktales, I would have not reached the state of life I am in now... they influenced me to be careful about and to respect life and things of this world”). (P15)

As I grew up, I experienced some of the things I was told and I avoided those that I was told they were not ethical. (P14)

*Ngiwumuntu ongcono manje ngenxa yeziyalo engangizithola ezinganekwaneni. (P26)*

(“I am a better person now because of the lessons I learnt from folktales”). (P26)

Most participants have attested that folktales made them think deeper before taking action and also enabled them to deal with the situations they encountered in life, as well as to live in harmony with other people. The following extracts attest to participants’ deep thinking:

*Izinganekwane zangenza ngikwazi ukucabanga ngijule....Zingifundise ukuthi ngaso sonke isikhathi uma ngenza into kumele ngiqaphele, futhi uma ngicabanga ukuthatha isinqumo kumele ngicabangise. (P16)*

(“Folktales made me to be able to think deeply....They taught me that every time I do something I must be careful and that when I want to make a decision, I must think deeply”). (P16)

*Izinganekwane zinomlayezo ojulile owenza ngikwazi ukusebenzisa umqondo ngokujulile, okwenza ngikwazi ukuqonda impilo macala onke. (P37)*

(“Folktales have a deep message that makes me use my own brain deeper, and that helps me to understand life from different perspectives”). (P37)

*Izinganekwane zangenza ngakwazi ukusebenzisa ingqondo....Lezo ezazixwayisa zangifundisa izifundo engisazisebenzisa namanje empilweni yami. (P20)*

(“Folktales made me to be able to use my brain....Those that had warnings taught me about lessons that I am still using today in my life”). (P20)

Folktales stimulated my imagination. (P25)

Several participants mentioned that lessons learnt from folktales have equipped them to deal with their own situations. The following extracts attest to that:

I learnt how to deal with situations I was facing at school. (P12)

The folktales helped me to make peace with myself and with other people. (P13)

Most participants indicated that, as a result of the lessons learned from folktales, they changed the manner in which they lived with other people and were also influenced to make decisions that benefited their lives; as the following extracts show:

*Izinganekwane zangivimbela ukuba ngenze izinto ezithile ngoba ngangivese ngicabange ngemiphumela yalokho. (P21)*

(“Folktales prevented me from doing certain things because I would think of the consequences of the actions”). (P21)

*Ngafunda ngamaphutha abanye abantu labo abasezinganekwaneni. (P102)*

(“I learnt from other people’s mistake, [those characters] in the folktales”). (P102)

*Ezinganekwaneni ngafunda ukuthi uma kumele wenze into ethile, kumele uyenze ungavilaphi ngoba kuba khona imiphumela yalokho. (P23; P28)*

(“In the folktales, I learnt that when I have to do something, I must do it and not be lazy because there are consequences”). (P23; P28)

*Njengomuntu wesifazane, izinganekwane zangifundisa ukuthi ngingazigwema kanjani izindawo eziyingozi nokuthi ngingabagwema kanjani abangani ababi nabantu engingabazi. (P28; P29)*

(“As a female person, folktales taught me how to avoid dangerous situations by avoiding bad friends and strangers”). (P28; P29)

*Izinganekwane zangifundisa ubumqoka bokukhetha abangani abahle. (P31)*

(“Folktales taught me about the importance of selecting good friends”). (P31)

## **Discussion**

This section synthesises the findings using the research question stated in the beginning of the article as the basis. Our aim is to extract some issues and discuss the pedagogical implications of the African folklore approach to teaching and learning.

The findings have shown that almost all student participants have some folktales knowledge—either they received these folk lessons from home—from their grandparents, parents, siblings and/or relatives—from friends at playing fields—or from teachers at school, or from reading books. The fact that other participants—although only few, learned about folktales from friends, teachers and by reading books, rather than from grandparents and/or parents shows that not every home or family exposes children to lessons contained in folktales. However, many participants were able to link their experiences and the lessons learnt from those stories with their positive attitudes towards life and their acceptable behaviour, as well as their success in life. They claimed that they would have not achieved what they had in life without lessons drawn from folktales—lessons that were passed to them when they were small. Most participants affirmed that they had applied the lessons learnt from folktales throughout their lives, to this day. This affirms the literature on African folklore, which asserts that African folklore still plays a significant socialisation role in young people (Amali 2014; Asimeng-Boahene 2010; Nyembezi 2000).

The findings revealed that African folktales are a vehicle of knowledge that includes cultural, folklore and moral knowledge, which is linked to an individual's value system. This is in line with Amali's argument that the various aspects of African folklore either add or re-enforce the knowledge prevailing in society, skills for living in society, as well as the understanding of rights and obligations, morals, principles, and beliefs (Amali 2014).

This knowledge and values, embedded in folktales is packaged, arranged and transmitted in particular ways that enable the young person to engage in self-reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action. Specifically, in African folktales, a story is created with a storyline, characters, events, and actions, as well as the knowledge, values, and attitudes interwoven in the story. The events of the story as well as the behaviour displayed by characters determine how the story ends. In this manner, the young people identify with certain characters in the story and knowing the consequences of the characters' actions, the young people choose their life path, in order to avoid negative consequences in their lives.

As discussed earlier in this article, Mezirow's communicative learning is concerned with how individuals understand themselves, and how they understand others, and how they make sense of the social norms of the society in which they live—and it is in this domain that one learns to interpret the meaning behind words (Cranton 2002, 64). According to Mezirow (1991, 82), communicative learning concerns itself with the ideas of others, and frequently requires one to confront the unknown. Folktales provide a space in which the knowledge about the social norms and values are interwoven to provide the meaning that the young listener can decode. Since in a folktale the storyline logically develops the actions of characters and liven the events, the young people's

imagination is captured. This makes the young listener to engage cognitively with the story through reflection.

Additionally, folktales provide the young listeners with other points of view and other ways of thinking through the actions of the characters—particularly because certain characters in folktales display wisdom in solving problems. In this way, the young listener interrogates their own ways of thinking as they learn that there are many perspectives to any matter. This perspective resonates with Mezirow's emancipatory learning that involves critical reflection and is the domain of learning where one learns to free themselves from the constraints placed on them by their uncritically-assimilated assumptions and expectations (Mezirow 1997). Most participants mentioned that from folktales they learned that there are different perspectives to one issue.

As stated earlier, researchers such as Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006) and Asimeng-Boahene (2010) argue for the use of African proverbs in fostering culturally-responsive pedagogies in education, particularly in teaching for social justice. Similarly, African folktales have an educational value as they are able to bring about change in the behaviour of young people. African folktales in themselves are a pedagogical strategy that integrates knowledge, values with entertainment elements that expose the young people through a transformative phase, which encompasses cognitive engagement with the story. The article therefore, argues that in this regard both the knowledge and values embedded in folktales and the manner in which that knowledge is communicated through the telling of the story constitute an African folklore approach to education. When this approach is used and reinforced, it ultimately leads to lasting positive attitudinal and behaviour changes in young people. We therefore, recommend that further research be conducted to explore the use of the African folklore approach as a teaching and learning strategy in formal school settings, particularly in life-skills education, with the aim of achieving lasting positive attitudinal and behaviour changes in young people.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study have shown that African folktales provide knowledge that is implicit and interwoven with other aspects such as values and attitudes. When the knowledge and values are communicated to young people they provide a space for them to cognitively engage with the story and reflect on the events of the story, as well as actions of the characters. This leads young people to take decisions that bring about changes in their behaviour.

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