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Decolonising the first year physics module at the University of Zululand.

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Reading the published paper claiming that Africans discovered gravitation before Newton, one begins to wonder. How many other discoveries have been taught in the universities that completely ignore the contribution of Africans in the discourse from ancient physics to modern physics. At the University of Zululand (Unizulu), there is an emergence to include the African perspectives in our curriculum. This work seeks to highlight and bring to the fore several physics concepts that dates back prehistoric times and are based on the ancient African civilisation as we know it. The theoretical formalism that underpins those concepts is investigated as well as their applications and recorded inventions in those times.

The units and measurements, the first chapter in the first-year physics module at Unizulu begins with the metric system which emerged in the 1900s and ignore the indigenous systems that Africans or any other civilization used before then. There were already standards that called for society to measure items for an example to achieve fair trade. In around 500BC the concept of time was already a subject of measurement because of empiricism that was prevalent as an approach to understanding proposed theories. The theory at a time that Heraclitus proposed was that the principal of change was the only basic law governing the universe and that everything changes. Therefore, the role of time in the universe was being investigated.

The inclusion of African perspectives in the physics curriculum is purported to build self-esteem to an African child, seeing her ancestors having contributed to the body of knowledge. The underlying message is that physics is for everyone not for the select few.

Apply to be considered for a student ; award (Yes / No)?

No

Level for award;(Hons, MSc, PhD, N/A)?

N/A

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