Meeting Africa’s Challenges: Indigenous Research Methodologies, Why, How and With Whom

Sustainability Science for Meeting Africa’s Challenges

Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies

Bagele Chilisa

University of Botswana

Email chilisab@mopipi.ub.bw; Bagelechilisa@yahoo.com
• Why Indigenous Research Methodologies
• Indigenous Research Paradigm
• Planning indigenous Research
• Challenges in IRM
• Conclusion
WHY IRM

How is it possible to decolonize (social) research in/on the Western developing countries to ensure that people’s human condition is not constructed through Western hegemony and ideology? Patience Elabor – Idemudia (2002:231)
WHY IRM

When any group within a large, complex civilization significantly dominates other groups for hundreds of years, the ways of the dominant group, (its epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies), not only become the dominant ways of that civilization, but also those ways become so deeply embedded that they typically are seen as ‘natural’ or appropriate norms rather than as historically evolved social constructions. (James J. Scheurich and Michelle D. Young 1997:7)
The Captive Mind

- Murkherji (2004) challenges all researchers to debate whether the Social Science methodologies that originated in the West and are indigenous to the West are necessarily universal for the rest of the world. What is your reaction to the challenge?
The Captive Mind

• The Malaysian sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas (2004) developed the concept “the captive mind” to refer to an uncritical imitation of Western research paradigms within scientific intellectual activity. Others (Fanon, 1967; Ngugi 1986) discuss a process they call colonization of the mind.
African Renaissance

- The African Renaissance calls for Africans to base their knowledge production and processes on the customs, traditions and languages of the indigenous people, such as tales, myths and proverbs.

- Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981) and Mazrui (1992) have argued that since colonial times African Universities have often allowed a unidirectional borrowing and lending of Western culture, literature, paradigms, values and ideals that are not necessarily relevant to African Societies.
Research and Politics

what we know and how we know is grounded in shifting and diverse historical human practices, politics, and power. There are in the production of knowledge multiple centres of power in constant struggle; conflict, compromise and negotiation and whichever group is strongest establish its own rules on what can be known and how it can be known. A non-power related truth game is not possible, thus humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination (Foucault 151.)
Indigenous Research

Indigenous Research Approaches invite us to problematize research and doing research ‘as a significant site of the struggle between the interest and knowing of the West and the interest and knowing of the “Other” (Smith, 1999:2).
Captive to Four Research Paradigms

- Positivist/Postpositivist Paradigm
- Interpretive/Constructivist
- Transformative
- Pragmatic
IRM Interrogate the Following Questions

• How can we conduct research that impact positively on the quality of life of our communities

• How can we conduct research without using Only Western academic constructs and terminologies?

• How can we minimize the intrusion of terms in our research reports that may culturally and contextually lack contingency with our experiences? Can academic languages accurately communicate our experiences?

• What is the contribution of our languages to the building of indigenous conceptual and theoretical frameworks and the design of interventions to improve the quality of life of our people?

• Who is reading our research and in what and whose language?
Indigenous Research Paradigm A Fifth Paradigm

• Relational Ontology
• Relational Epistemology
• Relational Axiology
• Relational Methodology
• Cosmology: Connectedness and interdependence of all things in the Universe
• Teleological Assumption: Things don’t just happen. There is an intended goal for research and intellectual projects we carry out
• African Thought: African Renewal African Renaissance
Relational Ontology: Beings with Many Connections

Mitupo Ye Bakalanga

Produced by: Makani Action Campaign • P.O. Box 19041 • Freetown • Sierra Leone
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Socially Constructed Realities shaped by the set of multiple connections that human beings have with the environment, the cosmos, the living and the non-living.

There is an emphasis on an I/We relationship as opposed to the Western I/You relationship with its emphasis on the individual. Among the Bantu people of Southern Africa, this principle is captured under the philosophy of *ubuntu*. Communality, collectivity, social justice, human unity and pluralism are implicit in this principle. Reality implies a set of relationships.
Epistemological Assumptions

• Knowledge is relational
• Know oneself before you know others
• It is all the indigenous knowledge built on relations
• Knowledge is shared with all of creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research participants, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the individual’s knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge....you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research.
Axiology

• Requires researcher reflexivity informed by an “I” “we” relationship.

• Ethical protocols that draw from cultural practices informed by connectedness and a web of relationships that include connections with the living and the non-living
Indigenous Research Methodologies

Family of Research Methodologies that draw from Indigenous Knowledge, histories, languages, metaphors, world views, philosophies and experiences of former colonized historically marginalized communities to critique mainstream methodologies, challenge deficit thinking, decolonize and indigenize mainstream methodologies and/or envision other ways of doing research.

Informed by critical theory, postcolonial discourses, feminist theories, critical race-specific theories and neo-Marxist theories
African Worldview and Methodology: Caroll 2012

- How does this Research reflect the interdependence and interconnected nature of the African Reality?
- How does the research accommodate the spiritual and material nature of reality?
- How does the research reflect the communal nature of the African people?
- How does the research access the non-material; reality of the people?
- How does the research advance the interests of the African community?
- How does the research contribute to the African renaissance?
Research Approaches: Decolonization and Indigenization

- Critique literature, research approach using postcolonial theory, critical theory, critical race theory, IKS
- Invoke indigenous knowledge embodied in languages, proverbs, folktales, stories cultural experiences to bring new topics, themes, methods, processes and categories of analysis not easily obtainable from conventional methods
Decolonization and Indigenization: IRM along a Continuum Scale

Least Indigenized - Integrative - Predominantly Indigenous

To decolonize the research methodologies is to argue that people must enter the world of scientific and scholarly analysis from the path of their historically and culturally developed perspectives. These perspectives are not counter to universal truth, but imply aces the universal through the window of one’s particular view (Naim Akbar 1991:248)
Advanced form of Indigenization of Art
IRM and TDR

- Why are we doing the research?
- Who will benefit?
- Whose research is it?
- Who will formulate the research questions, decide on the methodology, the way the data is analyzed and the report written?

"Once your mindset changes, everything on the outside will change along with it."

~ Steve Maraboli

www.fictionblueprints.com
IRM Methodologies

- Participatory, transformative transdisciplinary research approaches that Draw from Indigenous knowledge systems, philosophies and Ideologies
- Researchers and participants are partners
- Mixed methods approach
- Techniques include Methods based on ethno philosophy Story telling methods Cultural artefacts; Talking circles, theatre/drama, dance, song, language

Our stories are our theories and method (Melaine Carter 2003:40)
Language, myth, truth, ancestral memory -dance, music- art and science provide the sources of knowledge, the canons of truth and the stimulus structures of truth (Molefe Kente Asante 1990:19)
Using Proverbs and Language to Inform Conceptual Framework


Tsuruta (2006): Economic concepts derived from Swahili words

Ubuntu Ethics

- Appreciation of the individual: Individual Consent
- Research part of a complex whole: Community Consent
- Research to maintain harmony and balance of any group: group consent, family consent
- Respect for heritage: Collective Consent
Rigor In Research an IRM Perspective

Starts with a call for recognition of conceptual theoretical frameworks, methods, ethics protocols that are derived from the researched frames of reference.

Emphasis on
• Fairness
• Voice
• Self reflexivity
• Standpoint judgments
• Community and participants as co-designers; co-producers of knowledge
Planning Research Using IRM

• Why carry out research?
• Will the research bring about change and transformation?
• Will the research have a clear stance against the political, academic and methodological imperialism of its time?
• Will the research take a stance against Western archival-knowledge and its colonizing and “othering” ideologies?
Figure 1: An Indigenous Mixed Methods Approach

Elicitation Phase

- Indigenous methods;
  - Storying, proverbs
  - Language

- Other Qualitative methods
  - Interviews
  - Structured questions around Theory of Planned

Pilot Survey

- Theory and culture based questionnaire
- Pilot Survey
- Determinants of risky behaviors

Designing the Intervention

- Intervention Curriculum
  - Content
  - Activities
  - Time

Testing the Efficacy of the Intervention

- EXPERIMENT
  - Testing efficacy

Evaluation Methods
  - dialogues;
  - talking circles;
  - yarning;
  - Participatory relationship methods

Qualitative summative Evaluation Results:
  - Individualized evaluation reports through promise letters

Evaluation Methods Pre-test Post-test Randomized Control Trial

Evaluation Outcome

Repeated measures evaluation results
Challenges in Doing Indigenous Research

- Marginalization and rejection of non-conventional methods by the academy
- Stigmatization and marginalization of IRM by the African University
- Isolation and limited access to literature on IRM
- Ethics Review board that are not congruent with indigenous Research Methodologies
- Undeveloped partnerships between Universities and Communities
- Advancing and gaining acceptance of a 5th Paradigm: Indigenous Research Paradigm
Working Together

- Advancing scholarship on acceptance of a 5th Paradigm: Indigenous Research Paradigm: Examples

  Shawn Wilson 2008: Research is Ceremony
  Chilisa 2012: Indigenous Research Methodologies
  Caroll 2010: African world View
Literature: Indigenous Research Methodologies

Indigenous Research Methodologies
Bagele Chilisa

Decolonizing Methodologies
Linda Tuhiwai Smith
Conclusion

We stand at the threshold of a history marked by multivocality, contested meanings, paradigmatic controversies, and new textual forms. At some distance down this conjectural path, when its history is written, we will find that this has been the era of emancipation from... coerciveness of Truth, emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe, emancipation from generations of silence, and emancipation from seeing the world in one color. (Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln 2005:212)
Conclusion

The range of contemporary critical theories suggests that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history-subjugation, dominance, diaspora, displacement that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. (Homi Bhaba 1994:172)
To Africa

We cannot in all seriousness study ourselves through the eyes of other people’s assumptions. I am not saying we must not know what others know or think of us. I am saying we must think for ourselves like others do for themselves

(Kwesi Prah 1999)
Thank You