

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PRACTICE IN SOUTHERN CONTEXTS

Recentring, Reframing and
Reimagining Methodological Canons

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Chapter 1

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Sharlene Swartz, Nidhi Singal and Madeleine Arnot

Educational research has long been in the academic spotlight, affected as it has been by egalitarian movements which explore the implications of the ownership and control of knowledge for social justice (see, for example, Arnot, 2002; Brown & Wisby, 2020; Husen, 1988). However, over the last 10 years, the activist and scholarly gaze has focused on the ways in which knowledge about education in Southern contexts is produced, especially in light of coloniality (see Takayama, Sriprakash, & Connell, 2017), and whether it can be uncoupled from hegemonic knowledge paradigms, which privilege Northern contexts. The movement to decolonise metropolitan knowledge draws attention to *how* practically this uncoupling could be done and what should replace it in terms of new approaches to research practice (Matias, 2021). Such debates demand that attention be given to recentring intellectual endeavour and reframing empirical research practice. They reimagine embedded orthodoxies about *what* and *how* to research such that the framing and the process enable rather than disempower marginalised Southern cultures and communities.

Educational Research Practice in Southern Contexts addresses these pressing concerns by bringing together key theoretical critiques and examples of novel methodological perspectives and research practices. Our purpose is to open up the debate about ‘what works’ when researching Southern contexts, first at the ontological (being) and epistemological (knowing) level and second by learning about first-hand experience of conducting research in such contexts. What unites those in this debate is a concern to recognise different cultural ways of *being*, *knowing*, and *doing* and the heterogeneous relational worlds of Southern contexts. There has been a tendency to stereotype, label, or misrepresent Southern worlds, especially when their historical and cultural determinants are ignored or deflected as irrelevant to research objectives.

The focus of this book, therefore, is to bring to the fore new approaches and new ways of doing educational research. Whilst not comprehensive of the richness of decolonising theory in the social sciences, it offers important opportunities to grapple with the theoretical and methodological critiques of mainstream research paradigms used in a range of education disciplines, and exemplifies, through the experiences of both experienced and novice researchers, ways of rethinking research questions, and reconsidering the relevance of the rituals, codes of practice, and the methods of knowledge production. Such examples challenge the reader to consider tricky ethical questions about, for example, cultural sensitivity and recognition of Indigenous cultures, counter-strategies to deal with issues such as informed consent, protection, and voice. It provides researchers with reflections on how to engage with real-world situations and demonstrates the potential for innovation in, for example, reading history, using audio-visual tools and poetry, investigating educational movements, or finding new ways to collaborate with those being researched. Above all, the book demonstrates that there is an emergent cadre of both experienced and early career researchers from a wide range of countries who are developing new ways of designing, collecting, and analysing data across different Southern contexts.

The advantage of an anthology drawing together previously published and new articles is to be found in reshaping research training in education. Our first-hand experience of teaching university research methods courses to students from the Global South has shown us that, on the whole, they have had little opportunity to read into the scholarship from their own country – having been largely taught the value of ‘Northern ways’. They are encouraged to use the protocols and methods of research that, on first sight, have taken little account of very different material and cultural factors in, for example, low-income economies, in societies with very different stratification systems, or in communities experiencing conflict. Students often struggle to make their research designs feasible knowing, or finding out once in the field, that such designs cannot easily cope with the different hierarchical age, gender/sexuality, and religious power relations within their communities.

Researchers’ anxiety, which results from being pressured to meet the criteria of originality and validity, can distort what they are able to achieve in the field, despite their considerable courage and tenacity to get at ‘the truth’. Young researchers who are keen to have their work published in English language international peer-reviewed journals might find that they focus less on where research might make a difference *in situ* and more on what is ‘acceptable’ to a Western audience’s concerns. In effect, many Southern scholars who learnt their craft in Northern universities are helping shape the public image of their own countries through the lens of Northern cultures – contributing to what Santos (2014) called ‘epistemicide’. Aware of this danger, they urge standard education research training programmes and researchers to reflect on

their appropriateness for such Southern contexts and to make every effort to ‘buy into’ the burgeoning research by national or local scholars.

With this challenge in mind, we have brought together key publications that contribute new approaches to educational research methods training, purposively focusing on addressing the realities of Southern contexts. Of central concern here is the desire to create what can be called ‘a just research practice’ and what Cooper, Swartz, Batan, and Kropff Causa (2021, p. 14) term ‘epistepaxis’ – “aligning theory, method and knowledge creation with an intentional justice objective” in practice. Below we consider how the decolonisation debate has worked up this agenda.

‘A just research practice’: decolonising education research

In the social sciences and humanities, since the mid-20th century, postcolonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon (1959), Edward Said (1978), Homi Bhabha (1994), Gayatri Spivak (1988), and bell hooks (1984) have foregrounded the effects of colonialism and the representations of the colonised that keep domination in place. They drew attention to the struggles by those who experience domination to carve out new intellectual paths. Their research endeavours rejected their silencing and the marginalisation of the diverse cultural identities, experiences, and worldviews of the ‘Othered’ – the invisible and the oppressed.

Today, those who identify with and use decolonising theory have expanded the work of these foundational scholars, offering ways in which colonisation and its cultural, political, and economic effects are experienced in the Academy and how they might be mitigated with just systems of power and the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge (Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004) and epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2018; Santos & Meneses, 2020). Critical awareness is now being associated with decolonising practices that use empowering, rather than disempowering, methods for collecting and interpreting knowledge, shifting its forms of authorship, widening the modes of dissemination, and rethinking the outcomes of knowledge production in the context of unequal power relations and social inequalities.

This process of decolonising knowledge production in all its aspects is of particular importance to educational researchers. Decolonial scholars from multiple locations in the Global South have written extensively about social exclusion in colonised or ex-colonial systems of education, discriminating between children and youth, for example, on the basis of cultural difference (Wiredu, 2006), language (wa Thiong’o, 1987), religion (Ahmed, 1992), gender and sexuality (Lorde, 1984; Lugones, 2003), ethnicity/race (Rollock, 2013; Strong et al., 2023), and disability (Singal, 2013). The pervasiveness of colonial systems of power (Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2013) continues within colonial forms of pedagogy (Freire, 1970), often shaped by cultural

essentialism and its deprecatory effects (Hountondji, 1990; Mamdani, 1996). Southern scholars counter such legacies with the need for democratic processes in education (Mbembe, 2001), valuing the centrality of education for social transformation (Mugo, 2004). Demands for decolonising knowledge range from “de-imperialization, de-Westernization, de-patriarchization, de-racialization, de-corporatization, de-canonization, and de-secularization” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 369). These demands have been taken up globally where students, faculty, and community activists put pressure on universities to promote ‘cognitive’ and ‘epistemic’ justice, as de Sousa Santos (2014) so aptly describes it. At the centre of this contemporary struggle has been the need to re-examine not only “the biography and geography of authoritative knowledge” (Swartz, Nyamnjoh, & Mahali, 2020, p. 166) but also the canons and orthodoxies of educational research methodologies.

Educational researchers have only sporadically engaged with these debates and perhaps, even less actively, addressed the wealth of writing and research emanating from Southern countries. Halai and Wiliam’s (2011) valuable collection *Research Methodologies in the ‘South’* and *The Handbook of Critical Theoretical Research Methods in Education* (Matias, 2021) are exceptions in this regard. As Arnot and Fennell (Chapter 4) argue, the direction of influence has largely been one way – from North to South, dependent often on the source of Northern or international funding for economic development, and the dominance of the English publishing industry and its connections to higher education in the Global North. In terms of research style, education research which is located primarily within the social sciences and humanities has worked with a diversity of methodological and epistemological paradigms – from positivism to constructivism and from experimental designs to action research – and has recently embraced multiple contemporary approaches borrowed from allied disciplines such as ethnography, autoethnography, visual methods, hermeneutics, and poetical enquiry. Quantitative researchers have complemented this with the results of surveys, experimental designs, evaluation schemes, and high-level mathematical modelling. Yet, with this diversity of methodology, the underlying conventions (or ‘canons’) are driven by the expectations of institutions in the Global North (mainly Western Europe and North America). This has meant a centring of methodological concerns which are perceived to hold ‘scientific rigour’ such as reliability, validity, and replicability, and on ensuring that social scientific methods are institutionalised and thus passed down as a toolbox of research to new generations of scholars. However, as critical schools of thinking have emerged, these canons are being called into question because of their underlying social assumptions and the unequal research relations they generate or rely upon. The perceived gap between the concerns and the hegemonic modes of production of Northern knowledge and the lived experience of those living in peripheralised Global South societies, especially in formerly colonised countries, has fuelled demands for

what is often referred to as ‘Southern theory’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Santos, 2014) – a new-world social science that engages with the scholarly theories, knowledge, and the creative work of the South (Connell, 2007).

Southern theory represents the growing critical awareness (and some discontent) in the field of education and development that researching Southern contexts has been directed and even conducted by scholars from the Global North, often using Northern funding agendas and employing generally unacknowledged Southern research staff. Part of the problem is the extractive (monetisation and marketisation) nature of Northern research. Northern canons of research practice have served important potentially benevolent purposes – aiming to build theory, ensuring rigour, and protecting those amongst whom (or more often *on* whom) research is conducted – yet there are many adverse sequelae of internationally rather than locally funded research. Such research has tended to ignore or bypass the colonial histories of educational systems that helped create the inequalities of access, quality, and outcomes that are now the concern of international policy-makers and to ignore the role that Indigenous cultures have played in encouraging learning and which continue to provide important lessons on how best, in context, ever greater learning can be achieved. Southern/Indigenous scholarship appears to have played little part in shaping educational agendas (Connell, 2007; Dei, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), yet localised, informal, and community-based initiatives and national educational reform movements could play an important part in international modelling of educational reform strategies. Recentring the canons of research implies therefore the reorganisation of funding and research leadership, greater visibility, and stronger validation of Southern scholars (one of the principles that shaped the selection of this collection).

Recentring Southern experiences of education, knowledge and power

The emergence of ‘Southern theory’ has stimulated a wide range of debates about postcolonial, critical race and Indigenous theory that are relevant to education research. In the two decades since the 1999 publication of Tuhiwai Smith’s ground-breaking volume, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (revised in 2012 and 2021), which aimed to centre Indigenous Māori knowledge in the process of research, and thus reclaim control over the activity of research itself, much attention has been paid, particularly by Southern scholars, to decentre knowledge ownership and centre marginalised voices and to respect cultural norms. Other publications have contributed towards these aims. For example, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (Chilisa, 2012) is a textbook that situates research in a larger, historical, cultural, and global context and focusses on the importance of partnerships in research from an Afrocentric perspective. The *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous*

Methodologies (Denzin, Lincoln, & Tuhiwai Smith, 2008) draws on multiple disciplinary lenses to redefine inquiry and pedagogies. It engages with critical constructs such as race/diversity, gender representation (queer theory, feminism), and culture and shows how critical and Indigenous theory helps to define and guide the field.

Yet, as persuasive and as welcome as these developments are, to date limited attention has been given to cultivating a decolonising research praxis. Such a praxis would take seriously research partnership and reciprocity, power relations within empirical studies, recognition of historical context, and local Southern cultures and agendas. Some of these issues have been written about specifically in educational research relationships (Halai & Wiliam, 2011; McGregor & Marker, 2018; Ndimande, 2012; Swartz & Nyamnjuh, 2018). *Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Educational Research* (Robinson-Pant, 2005), for example, reveals the dilemmas faced by international graduate students studying education in the United Kingdom when defining a research question, choosing appropriate methods, collecting data, deciding which language to use, and writing their theses whilst addressing cultural differences.

The canons of educational methodologies, whilst valuable, are now being challenged for the assumptions they make about their applicability to Southern contexts. The contexts in which research problems are conceptualised and designed need interrogating. Questions such as who sets the educational research agenda, what is framed as an educational ‘problem’, and the assumptions underpinning such thinking need to be examined closely. Another recurring (and more recently emerging) theme focuses on dissemination – who is the audience of the research? (Robinson-Pant & Singal, 2020). Said (1982, p. 7) asked the questions: “Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances?” This is particularly important in the field of international education and development if it uses largely homogenised and deficit-driven representations of the Global South.

In terms of the ethics of research, a consistent conceptual ignorance, or ‘presence of absence’, pervades research studies. A familiarity is assumed when relating to Southern education systems because of their colonial foundations, but the religious, political, and financial diversity of such systems requires researchers to be cautious about their research designs and generalisations. Most concerning is the asymmetry of ignorance, where Northern ignorance of Southern contexts goes unchallenged whilst Southern ignorance of Northern contexts is met with derision (Chakrabarty, 2009). Prominent in these absences are the exclusion of cultural practices, religious or spiritual engagement, the ways of doing and knowing, the informal community modes of teaching and learning, hierarchies of cultural respect and honour, and an ethics of mutuality or reciprocity amongst people in marginal and Southern contexts (Walsh, 2007). A further absence is the elision of people’s *history* in research (Bhambra, 2014). This often leads to a deficit view of Southern contexts and

different groups within them – a view arrived at by ignoring or contracting the histories of enslavement, continued contemporary global practices of domination, and exclusion from resources that led to current circumstances faced by educational institutions, communities, and people.

Scholars have pointed to assumptions about the universality of method and the imperialism involved in such assumptions (Ake, 1982; Alatas, 2006; Amin, 2011; Chakrabarty, 2009). Educational research textbooks speak of research participants as if they were universal – for example, ‘the child’, ‘the student’, ‘the teacher’, ‘the girl’ – rather than local or particular (Cooper, Swartz, & Mahali, 2018). Educational research methods handbooks emanating from the North tended in the past to draw on the experiences mainly of young people in North America or Western Europe, predominantly in urban rather than rural environments. Consequently, assumptions have had to be continuously challenged about, for example, linearity in youth transitions through schooling and into work (Arnot, Jeffery, Casely-Hayford, & Noronha, 2012), the homogeneity of female educational experiences (Unterhalter & North, 2019), expectations about teachers’ work (Moon, 2012; Sayed, 2018), the power of English language as a progressive force (for example, Kalyanpur, Boruah, Molina, & Shenoy, 2022), and about parents’, especially mothers’ educational aspirations and expectations (Lukalo, 2021) in Southern contexts.

In Part I of this book, we bring together five key contributions that engage with the process of decolonising dominant educational theory and its problematics. These five chapters represent some of the major challenges demanded by a decolonial perspective of the dominant epistemologies, ontologies, and theories in education. The authors explore, in different ways, the politics of knowledge embedded in colonial theory, by identifying exclusions, categorisations, and paradigms, which do not easily transfer or are damaging when used in Southern contexts. A common thread unites these analyses – that of aiming to achieve an ethical approach in research that acknowledges, understands, and investigates key distortions of Southern cultures. These distortions may be a result of sometimes very simplistic conceptualisations of development, or the use of Northern gender binaries, or an assumed homogenisation of experiences of children with disabilities, or the failure to engage with Indigenous knowledge or heritage. The chapters challenge hegemonic models of research to conduct research with a strong moral basis – an agenda that is carried through to the reframing of educational research methods.

Reframing the codes, rules and rituals of educational research practice

Enhanced visibility of the Southern experience is powerful in disrupting the Northern hegemonic lens in current educational research practice. Giwa’s (2015, p. 2) assertion that “if the South is worth knowing and exploring,

voices from the South should be heard in ‘knowing’ the South” is very pertinent. The chapters in Part I indicate the importance of using culture-specific paradigms, cultural engagement, bi-cultural working, and situated dialogue. A common thread in these critical reflections is the centrality of what Santos (2004) refers to as an “ecology of knowledges” (p. 168) which call for “the promotion of non-relativistic dialogues among knowledges, granting ‘equality of opportunities’ to the different kinds of knowledge to build a more democratic and just society, and the decolonising knowledge and power” (Santos, Nunes, & Meneses, 2008, p. xx). These ambitions beg the question about how Southern cultures can be captured empirically and how people’s voices can be elicited and heard.

Southern theory considers research in its broadest sense as an organised scholarly activity that is deeply connected to power (Tuihawai Smith, 2021), a site of contestation. Research as a set of human activities produces/reproduces particular social relations of power, which makes it far more political than simply a moral and civilised search for knowledge. Thus, decolonising research practice is not simply about challenging or making refinements, it is also about challenging the taken-for-granted ways of ‘performing’ research – for example, its design, the methods of data collection, interactions between Northern and Southern researchers, and between researchers and participants during fieldwork, and the analysis of data.

Research as a ‘performance’ involves rapport-building and trust, navigation, confidentiality, and anonymity; it involves ethics approval. Each of these can involve (frequently) misconceived notions of homogeneity across spaces. But when reframed through a decolonial lens, the research process has the potential to reclaim language, histories, and knowledge and disrupt power dynamics. Recent writings by various scholars are beginning to capture this shift and make visible the need to disrupt Northern hegemonic ways of *doing* research and doing it ethically (Robinson-Pant & Singal, 2013). Questions are raised about how this is done: Who is involved in knowledge creation? Whose voice counts? Who represents whom?

The recentring of power relations within research is increasingly focused on the role and position of ‘Southern researchers’ whether they be from the Global South or from the North learning to research Southern contexts. Some have addressed the notion of *who* is the researcher by referring to the insider-outsider continuum and arguing for the need for researchers and researched to share certain characteristics (for instance, in the case of disability research). A critical engagement with the insider/outside duality, and by extension the politics of identity, emphasises the fluidity and ‘in-between-ness’ of membership roles and the identities of researchers vis-à-vis the researched (Sultana, 2007). However, McFarlane (2006) argues that this divide again reflects the notion within the Western academy that the South is a space that “knowledge travels to rather than from” (p. 1418).

Breakey, Nyamnjoh, and Swartz (2021) note that one way of challenging Northern hegemony is to reconfigure researchers' relationships with the context and communities in which they carry out research. This reconfiguration can be posited in an emancipatory light, where emphasis is placed on the co-creation and co-dissemination of knowledge in order to give voice to realities otherwise marginalised by the extraverted gaze of Southern scholarship (Moletsane, 2015). However, Qureshi's (2011) poignant reflection suggests that Southern researchers are vulnerable because of the academic culture's lack of confidence in the South's ability to produce authentic knowledge. This perceived or real weak academic culture undermines the trustworthiness of the knowledge generated by Southern scholars.

Indeed, many Southern scholars have received training in educational research in Northern institutions; some with strong diasporic identities have highlighted the challenges of 'returning' to the field to undertake research with a strong Northern lens and finding themselves faced with having to think, amongst other things, about the limits of positionality. Acker (2000, p. 153) argued that the tensions of being on either side "cannot be fully resolved", suggesting that discourses around the insider-outsider dichotomy move to include creative ways of dealing with the challenges of representation. Pardhan (2011), reflecting on her ethnographic research which explored the experiences of female pre-primary teachers in Karachi, noted:

[I] often found myself on a lonely journey, uncertainly navigating predicaments in diverse aspects of the research design that I encountered in the lived world of the rural and urban research sites of a Southern context. Added to this challenge were the limited accounts of other researchers, who may have encountered similar quandaries, and from which I could draw both comfort and a sense of certainty to negotiate various dimensions of the fieldwork process.

Pardhan (2011, p. 118)

Globally, this means that researchers who are described by Sriprakash in Chapter 6 as 'brokers' or 'translators' of knowledge production need to develop not just a conscious and continuous situated reflexivity (McFarlane, 2006) but new forms of 'knowing'. This requires researchers to confront the fluidity of their identities within discourses of global knowledge production. It is also about making visible the ruptures with taken-for-granted knowledge and contributing to the growing knowledge base that chronicles the experiences of researchers from the Global South. Acknowledging and confronting these identities create permeable spaces, which allow researchers to be inside, outside, and somewhere in between (Dwyer & Buckle, 2022) and knowledge creation to be more malleable to these different experiences.

One often ignored tension between the ‘accepted’ ways of doing research and a more contextually sensitive approach that comes to the forefront in the field is when researchers are faced with the question about who has the right to be named? A common assumption in the dominant paradigm is to protect confidentiality, with most institutional frameworks assuming that disguising names is the standard ethical practice. Yet as Guenther (2009, p. 412) acknowledges, “the decision to name or not to name is rife with overlapping ethical, political, methodological, and personal dilemmas”, which are not discussed enough in the literature. This argument is developed in Gordon’s (2019) work with women in Bihar who challenged her efforts to make them ‘invisible’. As one of the participant’s stated: “Mentioning my name is positive not only for us but for village and country too (Pratibha Kumari)” (p. 546). In contrast, Qureshi (2011) raises the issues of ‘vulnerability’ and what the notion of informed consent by research participants means when working in a context where “the majority of people are illiterate and the research culture is weak, the meaning of research itself is hard to explain” (p. 97).

The chapters in Part II of this book describe other ethical issues for researchers who, even if not outsiders in the normal sense, are nevertheless ‘outsiders’ by having been trained abroad. Our selection of previously published work exemplifies the excellent work that both experienced and novice researchers have done reflecting on their positionality in relation to the insider-outsider debate, how being culturally sensitive challenges notions of informed consent and anonymity, and the link between language and translation. Research relationships highlighted in this section involve ethical questions about the requirement to properly understand cultural context, an endarkened feminist approach that embraces love, compassion, reciprocity, and ritual (Chapter 9). The section draws on examples of research from India, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, and Africa by students in the United States and the South generally. These examples show the ways in which normative ethical and practical approaches to collecting data can become of value for non-Western societies and marginalised communities within Western societies if the usual rules and rituals of research are reimagined.

Re-imagining research approaches for emancipation

Fully recentring and reframing educational praxis such that it becomes emancipatory for participants entails making explicit and preferably flattening the gradient of power and control at key stages in the research process, from determining the research agenda and design to interpretation, analysis, and dissemination (Lenette, 2022; Singal, 2018; Swartz, 2011). Participants ought to benefit from research and researchers have a responsibility to give back (Chilisa, 2012; Denzin et al., 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021).

Genuine inclusivity implies an emphasis on co-production and ultimately co-ownership by research participants. As Tuhiwai Smith (2021, p. 250) observes, “the activity of research is transformed when the researched become the researchers, changing how questions are framed, priorities ranked, problems are defined, and even the very terms of participation”. At a minimum, as Swartz and Nyamnjoh (2018) argue, research should be interactive and engaging, going beyond mere talk or survey completion. Participants should be afforded multiple opportunities to state their opinions or describe their experiences so that research contains ‘polyphonic voices’ and ‘parallax perspectives’ rather than poor representations hastily caught on paper or in once-off speech moments.

These themes of agency, engagement, and empowerment need to be expanded to include a focus on change as the study proceeds – what is usually termed participatory action research (Boog, 2003). Swartz and Nyamnjoh (2018) caution that research methods such as photo-elicitation, photo-voice, community mapping, and social network interviews may only be interactive, rather than participatory, if they lack the intent of “gains in ownership and empowerment ... [placing] participants at the centre of transforming their marginality” (p. 10). Emancipatory research, involving a far more radical level of inclusion, invites participants to set their own research agendas and understand and change their situation through the research process as self-emancipation. Research moves from interactive to emancipatory when the traditional researcher retains only the role of facilitator:

Interactive research is owned by the researcher, whilst participatory research is owned by both researcher and the researched. In emancipatory research, the research belongs to the researched. Put simply and from the perspective of the traditional researcher, ownership or power along this continuum transitions from *mine* to *ours* to *theirs*.

Swartz and Nyamnjoh (2018, p. 1)

In short, emancipatory research is ‘research as freedom’, research that changes people’s lives. Those who pursue research as freedom will need to explain to funders (and institutional review boards) the rationale for iterative research that metamorphoses to better serve the interests of the researched as the study progresses.

Furthermore, research participants themselves might need to be helped to see the potential of emancipatory research and aided to develop skills to begin to set their own research agendas and to be able to resist having research imposed upon them.

Swartz and Nyamnjoh (2018, p. 10)

The chapters in Part III of this book demonstrate not only some of these aspirations but also the tensions between concepts of research as ‘socially just’, as ‘participatory’ or action-oriented, and as potentially emancipatory. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) reminds us that these reimagined strategies do not reject “all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (p. 41).

Part III proposes innovative methods of data collection and analysis. This includes exploring the analysis of Indigenous data sovereignty, how to employ focus groups in a cross-cultural setting, and a description of social network interviewing as an emancipatory practice that offers something back to research participants. Other chapters demonstrate how to employ visual methodologies such as drawings, photo-voice and photo-elicitation, visual productions, and material culture. Working with notions of plural identities and polyvocality, researchers show how to use collective poetic inquiry, to analyse polyvocal identities with a *Habitus Listening Guide*, and how best to approach research of counter-hegemonic social movements in North America. The chapters draw on diverse contexts from Pakistan, South Africa, New Zealand, Tanzania and Native American, Afro-Portuguese, and Romani educational experiences. The imaginative work of these researchers encourages further innovations in research methodologies in the future.

Conclusion

McKeever (2000, p. 101) has very aptly pointed out that “conducting research in a post-colonial context can be like a game of snakes and ladders. The only way to proceed is to cling to the ladders of the oppressed while trying to avoid the snakes of the colonial past”. Lorde (1984, p. 112) memorably argued that:

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society’s definition of acceptable ... [those] forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know ... *the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those ... who still define the master’s house as their only source of support.

Clinging to ‘the ladders of the oppressed’ or using ‘the master’s tools’ “means that only the narrowest perimeters of change are possible and allowable” (Lorde, 1984, p. 111). The authors of the chapters in this book are in

precisely this quandary, but, through their efforts both theoretically and methodologically, we can consider the viability of using those tools in Southern contexts. Their critical insights proffer novel or adapted research tools of data collection/analysis, challenging us to be more sensitive, courageous, and innovative when researching unfamiliar cultures.

Education researchers who are concerned with the power, culture, and practices associated with institutionalised education, to social movements concerned with education, and to those involved in education, whether children, youth, teachers, parents, or youth workers in Southern contexts, are arguably still at an early stage in recognising the depth of impact of colonial legacies that frame their projects from initiation to completion. We are a long way from saying that solutions have been found to this history of dominance, for example of Anglophone or Hispanic empires, or to the social scientific research approaches we use to study education in other cultures. International education and comparative education have set agendas which assume to know what education is for and how educational institutions work.

In contrast, this collection offers scholars and students a bridge to move further into the current postcolonial and transnational debates in relation to which research methods need to be rethought or relinquished. It allows readers to consider how, in practice, they can reframe, recentre, and reimagine current research methods and, in doing so, offers an opportunity for Southern scholars to develop confidence to publish their methodological insights and fieldwork expertise and to advocate “for a wider range of experiences as constitutive of the human condition” (Cooper et al., 2018, p. 15). This search for more appropriate methods has to be active, forceful, imaginative, and different. It is this ambition that holds the authors together in a loose community of innovators.

We hope that the much-needed dialogue between Northern researchers and those from Southern contexts, especially within educational research training programmes, will be started or further invigorated by the powerful insights, epistemologies, and practices found here. Such dialogue has the potential to assist those already trained in Western social science research methodology and those in national and international evidence-led organisations and policy-making agencies to rethink their research and address concerns about Northern hegemony in the production of knowledge. It will encourage a new research culture that reflects and acts upon cultural difference and results in a more humane ethical practice attuned to postcolonial settings.

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