Relational ontologies and epistemologies that are informed by our philosophies: Inaugural Ubuntu Annual Lecture 2022

Professor Bagele CHILISA

ABSTRACT

It's always a pleasure, a privilege, and an honour to share my thoughts with other African scholars. So, today I chose to talk about decolonising research and evaluation methodologies. I'll start off with my understanding of what social workers do, then talk about the challenges that are there for social workers and others as evaluators and researchers. And then I introduce the decolonising paradigms and present the opportunities that are there for us as African scholars to work together to further our vision of an Africa that is liberated from only hearing from the global north. I understand that as social worker, you provide help and support to children and others in need, and that in doing so, you are informed by research. I understand that social workers are also evaluators, and they evaluate interventions to inform policy revisions and even modification of their interventions. I understand that social workers, they do research on social problems to inform design and evaluation of the interventions they design for efficacy. According to the SDGs, social workers have a responsibility, and this responsibility includes making sure that the interventions that they design are sustainable, that they provide long-term solutions for the wellbeing of the entire ecosystem that includes human beings and nature. I understand that social workers are also guided by the principles of social justice, human rights, and holistic and sustainable development to reach freedom and wellbeing. And I understand that social workers are expected to use various theories that take into account historical, cultural, and environmental underpinnings of society. Now, there are challenges with evaluation if you are a social worker. And the biggest challenge that we have today is that the paradigms that we use, the world views that we use that inform how we do evaluation have been informed by the ways of knowing of the West, the ways of seeing reality of the West, and the value systems of the West, and are also driven by Euro-Western methodologies. This has resulted in stagnation of thinking about other ways of doing evaluation and other ways of doing research. The biggest problem is that Western researchers and evaluators and the funders and donors from the West are reluctant also, because remember, most of our development interventions are funded from the West. These people are reluctant to engage with philosophies that see a connection between the living and the non-living. And these are called relational ontologies and epistemologies that are basically informed by our philosophies, especially the philosophy of Ubuntu.

KEY TERMS: *African paradigms, decolonising research, indigenous, made in Africa evaluation, philosophy, Ubuntu*

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Doctor Rugare Mugumbate: So, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Professor Bagele Chilisa to the inaugural lecture, Ubuntu lecture. Professor Chilisa is a renowned post-colonial scholar, researcher, author, educator, and an important African thought leader. She has over 30 years of teaching experience. That's a lot, prof. As a full professor at the University of Botswana where she is currently based, she has supervised more than 50 master's and PhD dissertations with diverse academic discourse and has served as external examiner for PhD thesis in the Southern African Development Community. That's the SADC region. Professor Chilisa's interest in community-based research has driven her to write extensively on indigenous knowledge as well as to publish a book titled Indigenous Research Methodologies. It's a book that I've personally read. I use it in my teaching as well as in my supervisions and I encourage my students to use this book. So, Professor Chilisa, thank you for joining us. Let us welcome Professor Chilisa as she delivers the first lecture for today's session. Over to you, Professor Chilisa.

Professor Bagele Chilisa: Thank you, chair. Thank you so much for that introduction. It's always a pleasure, a privilege, and an honour to share my thoughts with other African scholars. So, today I chose to talk about decolonising research and evaluation methodologies. I'll start off with my understanding of what social workers do, then talk about the challenges that are there for social workers and others as evaluators and researchers. And then I introduce the decolonising paradigms and present the opportunities that are there for us as African scholars to work together to further our vision of an Africa that is liberated from only hearing from the global north. I understand that as social worker, you provide help and support to children and others in need, and that in doing so, you are informed by research. I understand that social workers are also evaluators, and they evaluate interventions to inform policy revisions and even modification of their interventions. I understand that social workers, they do research on social problems to inform design and evaluation of the interventions they design for efficacy. According to the SDGs, social workers have a responsibility, and this responsibility includes making sure that the interventions that they design are sustainable, that they provide long-term solutions for the wellbeing of the entire ecosystem that includes human beings and nature. I understand that social workers are also guided by the principles of social justice, human rights, and holistic and sustainable development to reach freedom and wellbeing. And I understand that social workers are expected to use various theories that take into account historical, cultural, and environmental underpinnings of society. Now, there are challenges with evaluation if you are a social worker. And the biggest challenge that we have today is that the paradigms that we use, the world views that we use that inform how we do evaluation have been informed by the ways of knowing of the West, the ways of seeing reality of the West, and the value systems of the West, and are also driven by Euro-Western methodologies. This has resulted in stagnation of thinking about other ways of doing evaluation and other ways of doing research. The biggest problem is that Western researchers and evaluators and the funders and donors from the West are reluctant also, because remember, most of our development interventions are funded from the West. These people are reluctant to engage with philosophies that see a connection between the living and the non-living. And these are called relational ontologies and epistemologies that are basically informed by our philosophies, especially the philosophy of Ubuntu. This has resulted in blind reliance on Western-based research and evaluation models, frameworks, strategies or data gathering instruments, especially in low- and mid-income countries leading to assessment that are inadequate, so that most of the time, we say that our interventions are successful while on the ground, nothing has changed. This has led people to talk about the methodological colonialism where you get funding, and the funder tells you how the intervention should be implemented and how it should be evaluated leading also to funder colonialism. Also, in low- and mid-income countries, evaluation carries with it power and colonial attitude that whatever is from the North is considered as superior. Some interventions, of course, that you may think they're helping the poor, they cause harm to the environment. You may report some success in the intervention and ignore the fact that there has been harm caused by the intervention, harm to the environment. When we talk about research, we always have to be cognisant about the politics of knowledge production, that research happens in the context of our historical power relations between the North and the South, and that we sometimes group countries along socioeconomic and political characters with South described as developing and the North developed. And we also have historical power relations summed up in discourses of colonisation, imperialism, and globalisation. As an evaluator and researcher, one has to be aware of these groupings and these political discourses because they will inform how you go into the field and design interventions and evaluate them. They will inform how you do your research that informs your interventions. When you talk of colonialism in research and evaluation and knowledge production, we are talking of loss of control of an ownership of knowledge systems, beliefs, behaviours, and subjection to overt racism, resulting in the captive or colonised mind. There is racism. It continues. And if you remember COVID 2021, you will agree with me that the research that was reported or the article that was reported during COVID-19 of two French

doctors accused of racism speaks to the current practices in research. We are told that two French doctors were accused of racism after they suggested that a trial on whether a tuberculosis vaccine would be effective against coronavirus should be conducted in Africa because in Africa, there are no masks, there are no treatment, no resuscitation – a bit like as is done elsewhere for some studies on AIDS. In prostitutes, we try things because we know they are highly exposed and that they do not protect themselves. So, Africa was going to be used as a laboratory because under the stereotype and prejudice that we have nothing to lose even if we are exposed to dangerous interventions. That is racism in research and it continues and one has to be aware of how to see racism in the research that we do, especially because at times, we do a lot of collaborative research. And Blaut has come up with these stereotypes about the North and the South that can help researchers and evaluators analyse and interpret the work they do to detect the stereotypes. Blaut has – say that – in the book "The Colonizer's Model of the World", he shows how during colonisation, the white men thought it was his burden to civilise Africa and other colonies. And in doing so, they had a model of the world where they are credited with inventiveness – they can invent, that is why we'll give them raw data in the form of the data that we collect. And then they will put the raw data into theories about us and theories that when they present to us, we may not even recognise. So, they're credited with inventiveness, with intellect, with theoretical reasoning, with discipline, with science, with progress. And the colonised, us, we are credited with imitativeness – we imitate the West, we take their theories, their models, irrationality, and sorcery, and stagnation, so that when you are an evaluator and you are looking at a clinic and evaluating the clinic and saying, "This was meant for the poor and the villages who could not afford expensive private practice, but they are not coming to it because they say that this is built on a sacred ground," then you'll say, "There it goes – sorcery. They believe in sorcery. They believe in witchcraft – a sign of a lack of progress." There is also globalisation that we have to take into account, and this is about the relationship with the colonial societies and the former colonisers where two-third of the world provide raw materials. I've already said that in the form of raw data and the colonisers turn them into theories. And this is marketed and becomes the global trend. And also saying that under this kind of the globalisation where we bring in people from the North, collaborative research can easily become another form of colonisation. But you see, there are also challenges from within. Africans are also not convinced that there's any need to invent African models of evaluation, African models of interventions when we design programs for our people, especially social workers because the bulk of your work is in looking at the social problems and seeing what you can do to help. What do we do? The challenge is some people think we should just borrow from what is already existing and stop reinventing the wheel because they say the wheel is universal. And when it comes from some of the Africans, we begin to wonder whether – we just begin to see that we have a long way to go and that we have to keep on saying the same things and trying to convince people that decolonising methodologies, evaluation practices is the way to go. Here I cite one of the authors who is African, who writes that most indigenous African conceptions of causality, beliefs in magic and supernatural powers, which are associated with African indigenous philosophy of Ubuntu and communalism cannot systematically and scientifically be proven. So, he's saying why talk about Ubuntu and how Ubuntu can be used to address some of the problem. Why talk about Ubuntu and use it as a base for theorising about interventions, for theorising about evaluation models, for theorising about research paradigms? But you see, the African university is also a problem. We like collaborating, which is good because our governments do not provide enough money for funding, so we rely on the West for funding, and sometimes the catch is if you want to be funded, then you have to partner with Western universities. And the reality is that collaboration has become a form of colonisation. Collaborating from adherence and mimickery of Euro-Western exports in the form of models, theories, paradigms, formulas which are marketed in books, journals, grants, franchise. And basically, we are prone to using Euro-Western standards and we judge ourselves with those. Summing up the research politics discourse, people are saying that we have a problem. When any group within a large complex civilisation significantly dominates other groups for hundreds of years, the ways of the dominant groups' epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies, not only become the dominant ways of that civilisation, but also these ways become so deeply embedded that they typically are seen as natural or appropriate norms rather than as historically evolved social constructions. That is why some people are questioning, "Why do we want to reinvent the wheel? Why do we think Ubuntu can inform the way we think about research and evaluation?" And it tells us that our current range of research epistemologies from post-positivism to post-structuralism arise out of the social history and culture of the dominant race. These epistemologies reflect and reinforce that social history and that social group, and this has negative results for the people of colour in general and scholars of colour in particular. So, what is the mood right now? The mood is that even Europe, they are saying that it's time that we speak out. It's time that they hear from us. And we hear from these renowned scholars from the West who are saying that we stand at the threshold of a history marked by multivocality, contested meanings and pragmatic controversies, and new textual forms. And they are saying that at some distance down this path, when its history is written, we will find

that this has been an era of emancipation, emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe, emancipation from seeing the world in one colour. And so, here we go, people are expecting to hear from us. So, what do we want to achieve? We want to make visible – we are invited to make visible indigenous science, cultural paradigms – informs by assumptions about – by relational ontologies, epistemologies, and value systems from Africa and the Global South. We want to engage and transform the mindset of researchers and evaluators who are reluctant to engage with philosophies that see a connection between the living and the non-living, and the value of spirituality in research and evaluation. We want to call upon the field of research and evaluation to recognise its own geopolitical and cultural location and embeddedness in coloniality, and therefore promote the naming of the epistemic location of knowledge in research and evaluation practice. That is, we have to name our own. There's no need for us to name Ubuntu, to take Ubuntu and start giving it a different name. We have to recognise the location of the knowledge systems that we are creating. We want to promote documentation, uptake and testing of innovative techniques from Africa, the Global South, and build new theories, frameworks, and approaches based on the Global South experiences. So, what are we doing? Africa is imagining paradigms. The Global South is imagining paradigms that are built on their histories, their experiences, their knowledge system, their values, the culture. And I for one have theorised relational ontologies and epistemologies of Africa and the Global South which require deliberate effort to expose prejudices, and its brutality in maiming identities of non-Western people, not only to theorise, but to speak difference in terms of what difference these epistemologies bring to the wellbeing of the people and promotion of good health. We want to theorise about relational ontologies and epistemologies that enable researchers and evaluators to reflect on the rules as colonisers imposing and reproducing dominant discourses and incapable of imagining better lives for themselves. We want to imagine, to envision, and to theorise relational ontologies that embrace theorising and drawing concepts from indigenous knowledge, from proverbs, from saying, from folklores, from language, from metaphors, and from our interaction with the environment. We want to think of embracing theories that come from indigenous knowledge of those generally who have been excluded from the production of knowledge. So, in doing so, we try to decolonise the paradigms. Currently, our thinking is dominated by the four research and evaluation paradigms. That is the post-positivist, the constructivist, the pragmatic, and the transformative. We are imagining an indigenous science paradigm, and this indigenous paradigm is an umbrella for indigenous cultural paradigms coming from the South, coming from Africa, and taking different names. These paradigms have informed also the way we think about evaluation. Evaluation has been theorised by Western scholars in the form of a metaphoric tree, and these trees have branches that correspond to the paradigms. The methods branch, for example, correspond to the post-positivist they use to – pragmatic, social justice to transformative, and values to the constructivist. You see that we now have a needs and context branch, and that needs, and context branch is an imposed branch that I imposed, which in my thinking should represent the indigenous science paradigm. And the indigenous science paradigm is basically saying pay attention to context, pay attention to culture, pay attention to the philosophies, and pay attention the needs of the Global South and the Africans. So, this is the indigenous science paradigm. You'll see that the indigenous science paradigm, it has – already we have what we call the Māori culture paradigm. And if you look at Māori cultural paradigm, you'll see that they discuss how to do research that is embedded in Māori culture and philosophies. You'll see Hawaiian philosophy, cultural paradigm. You'll see that it also talks about how to do research and evaluation that is embedded in Hawaiian culture and philosophies. You'll see that there is African cultural paradigm, which is basically saying, "Let's talk about how our culture and philosophy is going to inform how we do research, how we do evaluation in Africa." So, in Africa, I came up with – I've called a postcolonial indigenous paradigm which is – of course, if you look at the book and some of the writings that I do, you'll see that I talk of a postcolonial indigenous paradigm coming out of Africa and which is informed by discourses on development – not the dominant development theories but the marginalised development theories like Sen's work on Development as Freedom. We want to talk about a paradigm that is informed by indigenous knowledge system, by critical theory, postcolonial discourses, feminist theories and critical race-specific theories. And we want to talk about a reality that recognises spirituality, sees the connection between the living and the non-living, and therefore, so that we can avoid intervention that may do justice to people but harm the environment. We want to talk of relational knowledge that allows us to talk about the future. If you look at our Africa and we look at some of the methods that are coming out of Africa like the Sankofa from Ghana. I don't know if it's Ghana. I think it's Ghana. The Sankofa method which says that you can't talk about the now without talking about past and the future. If we did talk about the future in the work that we do, we can address problems of sustainability, because most of our interventions are not sustainable. And of course, we want to talk about values that are guided by respect for our people, by reverence for our environment, by thinking of ecological justice as well as social justice. We cannot talk about justice and validity and not talk about justice to the environment as well. So, what is the progress and what are the opportunities? In Africa, scholars need to work

together. We need to cite other. We need to recognise each other. And I'm saying here that already there is a lot that is happening. And we only have to make it visible. The African Evaluation Association, for example, has proposed what they call African-rooted evaluation, which is evaluation that is rooted in African world views, cultures, and evaluation that shows the importance of indigenous tools and African methods and African knowledge systems. And they've now come up with what we call the Made in Africa Evaluation which is an umbrella name for evolving approaches, frameworks, models, and evaluation models that are guided by diverse philosophies, cultures, values, histories, languages and so on. And they talk about evaluation that has a decolonisation intent and apply African paradigms, for example, the Afrocentric paradigm. The Made in Africa Evaluation is also informed by a synthesis paper on the Made in Africa Evaluation which was commissioned by Africa. It is available for people to see, to read, so that you can see, because the synthesis paper summarises the methods that are coming out of Africa, the philosophies, the frameworks, the work, like a professor today who is going to present after me. You'll find that his work is also summarised in that synthesis paper. And for me, the Africa Social Work Network can benefit from reading the synthesis paper on the Made in Africa Evaluation because that will also help them to do evaluation that is informed by African views. I believe that the Africa Social Work Network is doing a good job. They have the decolonisation calculator which I loved. I went through the website, and I was highly impressed because they are taking a deliberate effort to operationalise decolonisation of evaluation and they have asked questions, and I just added – out of every ten students how many use local philosophy, e.g. Ubuntu, e.g. the Afrocentric paradigm by Asante. Out of every ten research, how many use local research methods? And I've added the research methods that are there, that are available – the Mmogo method, the Lekgotla method, which is practiced in Southern Africa, and in Uganda. And then talking circles, the postcolonial indigenous interview that I cover in my book, Mbizi group model and Reviere's five canons of validity, which are Ukweli, Kujitolea, Utulivu, Uhaki, and Ujamaa. To what extent do we use these? They are there. They are available. We can talk of designing. We can talk of coming up with alternatives, but we also have to use what's already there. For example, <inaudible> *0:34:59 in this book, Indigenous Research Methodologies. The book is a milestone in terms of trying to make visible what is available from the continent of Africa. And given the emphasis of the Africa social network association on decolonising social work, some of these resources can be valuable in terms of moving the discipline forward. But it is not only that. Already Africa, the Global South is busy. Those that have been marginalised are busy. There are many books. You must know or expose your students to "Decolonizing Methodologies" by Smith, "Research is Ceremony" by Wilson, "Indigenous Methodologies" by Kovach. "Indigenous Statistics" is an interesting book also by Walter. These are important resources that can help us to move forward and enrich the way we do evaluation and research in such a way that it benefits our people. In conclusion, paradigms from Africa and the South have not received enough attention in the theoretical formulation of principles and policies that define the present and the future of our world. It is time that the ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies of Africa and the South contribute to concrete, applied research practice. Today, the philosophy of Ubuntu is at the centre stage of global research and evaluation and set to contribute to the design of better research and evaluation theories with transformative concept. Our interventions basically show us success, when on the ground, nothing has changed. We fail to report that our intervention have caused harm because we ignore natural systems in our evaluation. The Africa Social Work Network can collaborate with AfrEA. The Africa Social Work Network has a powerful website that summarises some of the methodologies that they've come across is a good thing that ASWNet should continue. And I am going to sell the idea to AfrEA so that they can too also begin to summarise some of these methodologies in the website. I loved the decolonisation calculator because it keeps us on our toes. Kwame Nkrumah reminds us that if we do not approach the problems in Africa with a common front and a common purpose, we shall be haggling and wrangling among ourselves until we are colonised again and become the tool of a far greater colonialism than we suffered hitherto. So, AfrEA and ASWNet I think can collaborate. Scholars across disciplines can collaborate. And I thank you for inviting me to share with you, even though I am not a social worker, but I am in education. And Kwesi Prah encourages us to continue to do things for ourselves, saying that we cannot in all seriousness study ourselves through the eyes of other people's assumptions. I'm not saying we must not know what others know or think of us. I'm saying we must think for ourselves like others do for ourselves. So, decolonisation, it's very important. Decolonisation intention in social work is important because social work has – at the forefront of addressing social problems, and to do so, they need to encourage participation of communities, and communities can only participate if they understand the language that we use and we use indigenous tools that they're familiar with. Thank you for inviting me.

Doctor Rugare Mugumbate: Thank you. Thank you very much, professor, for taking us through what it means to decolonise, for taking us through what I think are two dimensions in terms of where we are in terms of the decolonisation project. And from your lecture, you did allude to two issues – pressure from outside, but also us

as Africans, there's also some issues that we should talk about from within. From outside, you did talk about the position that funders occupy when it comes to research, when it comes to evaluation, when it comes even to education. So, funders do play a role and we need to be thinking about what role does funding that we receive play in this. From the outside perspective, you did talk about collaborations. So, at times people we collaborate with, where they're coming from, the philosophies they have and the things that they prioritise, there may be a difference there and we need to be cognisant of that. You talked about several other issues that impact research and evaluation from an external point of view, but you did then go further to say there are also issues within. And I do like the aspect of the imperial university. Our own educational system, being a system that teaches us to reproduce, that teaches us to imitate, and thus the whole educational system represented by the university that you talked about – that's an important idea. You even go further to say that ourselves as researchers and teachers and learners, do we cite each other's work? Do we read each other's work? What do we prioritise when we are writing and reading? I think that was very powerful. So, it's not about external pressures, but also what we do as African writers, researchers, teachers as well as learners. Thank you so much for that. Now, we move on to questions and answers.

Muhammad Bello Mahmud: Because I'm just in my early year as a researcher, so I'm an African in diaspora, so I'm currently a PhD student at the University of Wollongong. And my supervisor is very hellbent on – he's very more about using indigenous methodology. And what I wanna check with you guys – what is the implication of – because as an early researcher in the Western system, what is the implication of using these theories? Just because as an early researcher – so, you are only just starting. You're only just new in the research sector and whatever you have to put forward, especially if you happen to do your research in a Western system, what is the implication of using indigenous methodology for an early researcher in the Western countries?

Professor Bagele Chilisa: I've seen students that do research in Europe taking up indigenous methodologies and their professors encouraging them and sometimes they co-publish with their students after their dissertation is done because people also want something new. We are in a crisis. Climate change crisis is there. The research is done, but it's not addressing the crisis, the sustainability, the connection between people and the environment. And people are now eager to say, "We want to understand this interconnectedness of the environment and human beings." Perhaps it will help us address the climate change crisis that we are in. So, as I said, there's a movement. We do not only want to hear the voices of the global mouth.

Muhammad Bello Mahmud: I just wanna say thank you to professor because just as an early researcher, it's actually part of – my research is actually part of the methodology I'm trying to use, because there is a need for it even in the Western world like in Australia and everywhere. There is a need for us to do our own research and to tell our own story as an Africa, so not for outsider telling our story. So, I just wanna thank professor for her comment.

Doctor Rugare Mugumbate: Thanks so much. And in the presentation, professor also talked about the need to decolonise. It's not only because we feel the impact of colonisation, but the West is also expecting to hear from us, is also expecting to hear new methods, new theories, new conceptualisations, and new understanding. So, feel confident to use indigenous research methodologies. So, thanks for that. Abigail, your hand was up. Please go ahead.

Abigail: Okay. I just want to thank Professor Chilisa for the insightful presentation. Just like Muhammad, I'm also a new PhD student and when I first – just about a couple of months ago, I have worked in Ghana as a researcher. I've done my master's, my first master's in Sweden, and I worked there as well. Then a second one in Germany, I worked there as well. And then I started my PhD – all this while I've been using qualitative. That's the only thing I knew. So, it's new to me. When I first came and I presented my proposal to my professor here in Canada, then she said, "No, these are not – you should look at something that is more culturally appropriate," because I'm working on Ghana immigrant women in Canada and their postpartum experiences. So, she told me, "Find some theories and methodology that is more culturally appropriate for the population that you are trying to study." And so, she gave me professor's book on Indigenous Methodologies, and I finished reading it and my mind is absolutely blown. And this professor is not an African woman and I have other professors in my school who have been applauding the proposals that I have been writing because of the direction I'm going now with indigenous African methodologies and theories. So, obviously, like you just said, the West wants to hear from us. We Africans coming to study abroad is not something that is going to end. We are going to have people from Euro-Western countries being our professors and our teachers for a long time to come. And they want to change. Like I said, in my past research experience, I have never used an African methodology or – all this while. So, all

those professors that I've had in the past, it's like they don't know about these methodologies and theories. So, let me get to the point and stop – my question, how can we –

How do we take it to them? Beyond reading a book like professor's and association or an organisation like yours, how do we take it to them so that they can give it back to our own people who are studying under them? By them, I mean professors in the Western or the Global North. Thank you.

Professor Bagele Chilisa: I didn't understand your question. What is the question again?

Abigail: My question is how we take African indigenous methodologies, ontologies, and theories to Western educationists? Because they also want to hear fresh perspectives, they want to hear what we are doing. How do we take it to them? Because they'll continue teaching our children, and so, if they're aware of these new and fresh methodologies and teaching back to our people – so, how do we take it to them? Can we use some of the collaborations as an opportunity to teach them some of these things? Or what are some of the practical ways to reach out to the West with African indigenous methodologies?

Doctor Mugumbate: Thanks for that. Is the question clear, professor?

Bagele Chilisa: Yes.

Ndilimeke Nashandi: Okay. Good morning and thank you very much for this conversation and this platform. My name is Ndilimeke Nashandi. I recently graduated from the University of Minnesota in the School of Social Work. I want to applaud Prof Chilisa for this wonderful work. And it could not have been more timely than ever and also for ASWNet to bring her to our platform. I don't have a question for prof, but I want to share the significance of her book. Her book came out just as I was preparing to submit my proposal to defend. And what an enlightenment it was and a pleasure for me because during my studies, one of the issues that I was grappling in the theory class was the question that I persistently got – "How is Ubuntu a theory?" And I'm sure that many of us here are grappling with this question just as social work was also question – is social work really a profession? And so, it is a pleasure that we have the book Indigenous Research Methodology from Professor Chilisa, but of course, other books. I have a collection of indigenous research methods. I was fortunate to study in Minnesota, the home of so many Native Americans. And so, what this platform does for social work is the call for social workers in Africa to truly inhabit research methodologies that are indigenous and more so psychosocial methods that are indigenous. In my research, I focus on young mothers' education, but I deliberately challenge deficit-centred approaches, and to look at what are the strengths perspective, the local realities. How do we as communities solve our own psychosocial challenges? What are our aunties, our grandmothers, our uncles? I look at Samkange's on Ubuntu that tell us that who are the counsellors in the communities. And so, I bring those talks. I look at that literature and bring it in my classes and ask my students to go back to their uncles, to their aunties, and to their parents and ask them – when you were experienced – when in communities we were experiencing psychosocial challenges. I want to commend this, and I would like us to see a conference out of this.

Professor Bagele Chilisa: Let me start off by saying that, of course, the West is already engaged with us because they've realised the need for partnership of knowledge systems. They've realised the need for integrating knowledge systems and you cannot integrate that which you do not know. So, already there is that engagement because there is a debate on whether we need indigenous paradigms or we need an integrated paradigm that takes the best of the West and the best of indigenous and put it together. From that perspective, it is already saying that they are engaging with us. But I think this is also a good question because some people will say that – "Oh, yeah, if you try to talk about indigenous paradigms as a separate paradigm, the West won't engage." The best way to engage is to come midway where they bring what they have, you bring what you have, and we have an integrated new paradigm that can address –

Doctor Rugare Mugumbate: I'll be stopping you, Prof Chilisa. I know you've got a lot to say to Abigail. Would you mind going to the other question?

Professor Bagele Chilisa Yes. Indigenous knowledge – a form of literature – we can use indigenous proverbs. We can use proverbs. We can use folklores. We can use legends as a basis for literature that inform us about the past.

Doctor Rugare Mugumbate: Thank you. Thank you very much, Professor Chilisa. I'll ask the audience to put questions in the chat. If we've got a bit of time at the end, we'll have those questions answered. We can also pick your questions from the chat for responses later on. So, thank you so much everyone for the engagement, more

importantly to you, Professor Chilisa, for taking us through what indigenisation means, what is happening, where gaps are, and what we could do as individuals.

Biography

Professor Bagele Chilisa is a renowned post-colonial scholar, researcher, author, educator, and an important African thought leader. Some of the courses that she has been facilitating for over 30 years include Research design, policy design, and Measurement and Evaluation courses, among others. As a full Professor at the University of Botswana she has supervised more than 50 masters and PhD dissertations with diverse academic discourse and has served as external examiner for PhD thesis in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Her interest in community-based research has driven her to write extensively on indigenous knowledge as well as publish a book titled "Indigenous Research methodologies". A book that has sparked international discourse on importance of indigenous methodologies, especially in Africa. She has shared her intellectual knowledge about indigenous research methodologies on several platforms and at several conferences in Universities in South Africa, USA, Norway, UK, and Italy. With over 80 publications, Prof. Chilisa has been recognized as the Researcher of the Year and awarded UB Research Team Leadership at University Research Awards Ceremony in 2019. She has also been awarded the Prestigious USA National Institute of Health Research Award on capacity building on HIV/AIDS.

References

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