

A Hermeneutical Consideration of What Knowledge is Produced Before How it is Shared

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<https://doi.org/10.15641/978.0.7992.2561.7>

Abstract

This conceptual essay deviates from the focus on how scholars share their output with their academic and other communities (scholarly communication) and instead focuses on scholarly output itself and how this embraces the decolonisation concepts of 'lived experiences' and 'other ways of knowing' to produce socially responsive and impactful scholarly output. This deviation is based on the hermeneutical understanding that what knowledge is produced is as important as how it is shared. Thus, the essay responds to the need to advance social justice through the nuancing of Library and Information Science (LIS) pedagogy with the embedding across the curriculum of decolonisation concepts of 'lived experiences' and 'other ways of knowing', not only for transformative scholarly communication but also for transformative knowledge production leading to socially responsive and impactful research output available for equitable scholarly communication. The objective of the essay, in response to this research problem, is to unpack the concepts of 'lived experiences' and 'other ways of knowing' to better understand their role in transformative LIS knowledge production for purposes of LIS curriculum consideration. The essay recommends that the inclusion of the transformative potential of 'lived experiences' and 'other ways of knowing' in a context of real-world scenarios from the LIS sector in different global locations as well as a hermeneutical reflection of the philosophical constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that inform the philosophical assumptions which guide socially responsive and impactful research, be considered in LIS curriculum design and development for purposes of preparing the next generation of LIS professional practitioners, educators and researchers committed to both transformative knowledge production as well as equitable scholarly communication of knowledge output.

Keywords: decolonisation, LIS education, lived experiences, other ways of knowing, scholarly communication

Introduction

To set the tone for critical engagement of the place of scholarly communication in Library and Information Science (LIS) curricula which is the focus of this section of the edited volume, this keynote essay deviates somewhat from the focus on how scholars share their output with their academic and other communities (that is, the process of scholarly communication). Instead, it goes back a step or two and focuses on the scholarly output itself and how this embraces the decolonisation¹ concepts of ‘lived experiences’ and ‘other ways of knowing’ to produce socially responsive and impactful scholarly output. Such awareness about what is communicated or shared is as important, if not perhaps more important, than the actual scholarly communication process. In other words, LIS curriculum and pedagogy also need alignment in terms of socially responsive and impactful knowledge generation in anticipation of appropriate scholarly communication.

Research problem and objective

Lived experiences of research subjects and ways of knowing outside of dominant knowledge systems have an innate potential for decolonising knowledge production through their hermeneutical influence of the constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology² that inform the philosophical assumptions that guide socially responsive and impactful research. Marginalised and under-served individuals in society have a certain awareness based on daily experience which provides them with a special ‘worldview’ or knowledge of certain social realities not generally known to others (Cooke & Kitzie, 2021); and hence the ontological and epistemological value of the inclusion of their lived experiences in the research process.

¹ While “decolonisation is a complex and multifaceted concept” (Birdi, 2022: 102), in the context of this paper it refers to the intentional revealing and undoing of cultural, economic, psychological and other effects (including latent institutional forces) of the colonial experience which was historically imposed on many parts of the world.

² **Ontology** refers to a researcher’s philosophical understanding of the nature of the social world - it is a philosophical study of ‘being’, that is, *what* entities exist in a subject domain, including concepts and categories as well as their properties and relations among them; **Epistemology** refers to the principles that describe *how* we know that which is known about a particular knowledge domain - it describes ways of knowing; **Axiology** refers to the researcher’s understanding of values brought by the research to the study. Such values include, *inter alia*, usefulness of knowledge gained through data collection and its analysis, ethical considerations and possible biases brought by the research and how these are mitigated to minimise impact on the research; **Methodology** refers to the overarching strategy for executing a research study and involves the systematic use of tools in response to a research objective or question, including the use of principles, theories, procedures and methods (Berryman, 2019; Chilisa, 2020; Leavy, 2023).

Therefore the privileging, in LIS curriculum and pedagogy, of the subject of lived experiences of research subjects not only serves to question existing forms of knowledge but also exposes LIS students as future professional practitioners, educators and researchers to a diversity of systems of knowing, both of which serve to incentivise the decolonisation of knowledge production not only for socially responsive LIS research but also for decolonised scholarly communication. Such critical engagement of ways of knowing in the research process is necessary to challenge the often-systematic subordination (Patin et al., 2021; Sebastian, Youngman & Patin, 2022) of the knowledge and cultures of communities outside of the hegemonic global north, notably Europe and North America.

Hence the problem that requires addressing is the need to advance social justice through the nuancing of LIS pedagogy with the embedding across the curriculum of decolonisation concepts of 'lived experiences' and 'other ways of knowing', not only for transformative scholarly communication but also for transformative knowledge production (or understanding thereof) leading to socially responsive and impactful research output available for equitable scholarly communication. Thus contextualised, the objective of this essay is to unpack the concepts of 'lived experiences' and 'other ways of knowing' to better understand their role in transformative LIS knowledge production for purposes of LIS curriculum realignment.

Literature and discussion

The section is divided into two sub-sections and integrates a review of relevant literature with critical discussion relating to the research problem and objective outlined earlier. The first sub-section highlights the transformative potential of 'lived experiences' for decolonisation of LIS research, drawing (via relevant literature) scenarios from the LIS sector in different global locations and reflecting on this in the context of the philosophical constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that inform the research process. The second sub-section reflects on the transformative potential of 'other ways of knowing' for decolonisation of LIS research, also drawing (via relevant literature) scenarios from the LIS sector in different global locations and, again, reflecting on this in the context of the philosophical constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that inform the research process.

'Lived Experiences' in LIS research and knowledge production

Lived experiences are generally central to qualitative, usually phenomenological, research which seeks to understand social reality through people's real-life experiences, and the knowledge gained from such experiences. Hence, as already mentioned, lived experiences of research subjects have an intrinsic probability for decolonising knowledge production.

Drawing from the LIS sector, the paragraphs that follow highlight the transformative potential of lived experiences for decolonisation of LIS research and knowledge production.

The literature (for example, Patin et al., 2020; Patin et al., 2021; Cooke & Kitzie, 2021; Sebastian, Youngman & Patin, 2022) captures the continued dominance of western knowledge systems in LIS research (and professional practice). Hence Cooke and Kitzie (2021: 1288) encourage LIS researchers “to challenge existing power-knowledge structures by privileging the perspectives of those experiencing marginality within and outside of the field”. As already mentioned, marginalised and under-served individuals have a certain awareness based on daily experience which provides them with a special ‘worldview’ or knowledge of certain social realities not generally known to others (Cooke & Kitzie, 2021), and that privileging of such lived experiences serves to question existing forms of knowledge which in turn motivates the decolonisation of research for socially and culturally responsive LIS research.

Dick (2013) offers compelling evidence of this by questioning the traditional application by Ingwersen and Järvelin (2005, as cited by Dick, 2013: 8) of the information seeking and retrieval (IS&R) model to explain the instance of a local African tour guide in the Okavango Delta (in south-western Africa), whose boat “falls behind another” that is leading a boat safari. The tourists, Dick explains drawing from the work of Ingwersen and Järvelin, “are surprised at how quickly the tour guide negotiates the maze of waterways” to catch up with the lead boat “by detecting things like wet reeds caused by the leading boat, and by the direction of the water lilies”. Dick laments that “the socio-cultural contexts of the local African tour guide’s information acquisition ... [are] completely overlooked”. In other words, the role of local context is not used by Ingwersen and Järvelin “to explain how the African cultural environment and information space influence the way the tour guide acquires information Instead, individualism and non-sociality is [sic] affirmed in the description of how the tour guide sets about seeking and acquiring the information that he needs to find his way back to the leading boat”. Dick explains that input from the local tour guide himself about his ‘lived experiences’ with “wet reeds and turned water lilies” (that is, indigenous knowledge held collectively by local people that informs the way they understand the world), would have been a more effective way of understanding the tour guide’s cognitive processes that so quickly enabled him to find his way to the leading boat (the worldview of the local tour guide), instead of drawing from the observations of the European tourists (the worldview of the tourists). Dick (2013: 9) cogently points out that the local African tour guide’s “own world shapes the way he uses signals from nature” to understand reality. “There is, in other words, an alternative way of knowing and constructing reality at work in indigenous knowledge” and Dick goes on to make the point that until western developed theories and models like the IS&R model accommodate alternative epistemology,

they will be socially and culturally biased - abstract theoretical concepts cannot be considered applicable for all information seekers irrespective of their “geographical and socio-cultural contexts” (Dick, 2013: 9).

In her argument that dominant western epistemologies have “downplayed the ... importance of indigenous knowledge” and have “not given voice to the research communities”, Moahi (2020: 245) similarly appeals for “respect for the researched, their culture, language and knowledge (in all its forms)” and to consider this “in determining research agendas, research questions, methodology, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of the knowledge”. Chilisa (2012: 39), too, makes the point that research participants should be involved in all parts of the research and that the “histories, worldviews, ways of knowing, and experiences of the colonized and historically oppressed [and marginalised]” should be recognised for the contribution they can make to research.

Cooke and Kitzie (2021: 1285-1286) in taking a critical view of “outsiders-within-Library and Information Science” in the North American LIS academy, call for the “centering of the standpoints of marginalized groups, incorporating the social and structural contexts informing their experiences” in the academy. Historically, people of colour and women LIS faculty, for example, found that their scholarship “wasn’t recognized, valued, or highlighted as it should have been because it diverted from ... white western norms” (Cooke & Kitzie, 2021: 1286). Cooke and Kitzie posit that the heterogeneity in the backgrounds and experiences of under-served and marginalised groups compared to “mainstream (i.e., white and western)” faculty, could, to some extent, explain the former group’s historical lack of presence in influential positions in the LIS academy which perpetuated a lack of diversity in the academy; and they go on to considerately point out that a similar scenario played out in higher levels of the academy traditionally occupied by “white male scholars” as white women have historically been “discounted”. Scholarship that features issues of “race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability” and which do not necessarily center “white western norms”, is not new to the LIS academy, Cooke and Kitzie claim – “it just has not been widely accepted or appreciated” *by, for example, publishers, editors, reviewers, higher education institutions, etc. – key role players in scholarly communication* (author’s extension of this point). This exclusion is reiterated by McKenzie and Dalmer (2020: 2) in reflecting within the North American LIS context on methodological strategies to bring “invisible work to light” and they, too, explain that such “work may be invisible because it is ignored or overlooked, socially marginalised, economically or culturally devalued” (*again, by role players in the scholarly communication process* – author’s addition). Such transformative analysis of a social reality in the LIS academy in the global north, is instructive in reflecting the ontological and epistemological value of the inclusion of lived experiences in research and scholarship towards decolonisation (in all its forms) of LIS research. And usefully, Cooke

and Kitzie (2021: 1286), remind us that significant work capturing the lived experiences of marginalised faculty “has been produced on the fringes of mainstream quantitative” LIS research.

Whilst not necessarily about LIS faculty, but with ontological relevance for decolonising LIS scholarship through transformative analysis of lived experiences, is the edited collection, *Pushing the Margins: Women of Colour and Intersectionality in LIS* by Chou and Pho (2018) with poignant contributions, amongst others, such as “‘When I Enter’: Black Woman and Disruption of White, Heteronormative Narrative of Librarianship” (Pollock & Haley, 2018) and “‘Sister, You’ve Been on My Mind’: Experiences of Women of Color in the Library and Information Science Profession” (Minter & Chamblee-Smith, 2018). This is one of many exemplars of “powerful and significant work” (Cooke & Kitzie, 2021: 1286) by the marginalised in the LIS academy which provide a “heuristic lens and framework ... to understand ourselves and our experiences” (Chou & Pho, 2018: 4); and, in addition, such ‘lived experiences’ serve as a critical basis for decolonised research that unpacks social reality in the LIS academy as well as in professional sites of practice by privileging the voices of the researched and the marginalised.

Moahi (2020: 248) makes reference to “indigenous epistemology”. The adoption of such epistemology in research, among other things, empowers researched communities by enabling their lived experiences to be articulated through their engaged participation in the research process, thus cultivating a decolonised practice of researching *with* communities as opposed to conducting research *on* communities. Such decolonised research practice would use methods that are participatory, emancipatory and transformative in approach; that enable active participation of researched communities throughout the research process; that recognise community cultural assets; and that allow the researched to communicate from their frame of reference. Such methodological empowering of research participants would also speak to axiological constructs in the research process such as being inclusive of values that enable, in LIS research, respectful representation of both the researcher and the researched; reciprocity in research relationships; recognition of the rights of the researched; self-determination of researched communities; and general fairness and equity in society. Role-play, storytelling, observation, semi- and unstructured-interviewing and ethnography (study of individual cultures), that is, interactive and engaging methods of collecting data from the point of view of the research subject, as opposed to, for example, structured questionnaires which limit understanding of social reality from the frame of reference or worldview of the researched, are relevant for research wishing to enable lived experiences of research subjects to be articulated through their engaged participation in the research process. In articulating lived experiences, empowered researched communities sharing data within a decolonised frame, would be sharing, for example, traditional practices and

rituals, stories, folklore, proverbs, songs, etc. Researchers working in such a decolonised frame need to be able to extract meaning for the research from these lived experiences and cultural assets and learn how to use them “to generate theories, concepts, and questions to guide studies” (Moahi, 2020: 260).

At the same time, Lilley (2018: 80-81), a Māori indigene scholar, cautions about the analysis of data collected on lived experiences from indigenous communities - such analysis, Lilley claims, should be done through a lens that reflects the worldviews of the indigenous community and that it is for this reason that non-indigenous researchers should consider the inclusion of “an indigenous researcher, preferably from the actual community” who

would be invaluable in the process of analysing the data using a lens that is conversant with the values, beliefs, customs, behaviours and knowledge that forms [sic] the core elements of their worldview. This is particularly important when analysing data that has been expressed in an indigenous language Without such a lens or an intimate knowledge of the language ... likely outcomes would be a lack of critical awareness of the cultural nuances of the data, possibly leading to lost opportunities and findings that do not accurately reflect the knowledge that has been shared.

This scenario from a Māori indigenous context in New Zealand resonates with the one from across the globe in the Okavango Delta described earlier in this essay, citing South African scholar Dick’s (2013) lament about the neglect by western scholars of African indigenous knowledge in the analysis of a case of information acquisition by a local African tour guide. These instances, and probably many more in other parts of the world with indigenous and other marginalised communities, reiterate the criticality of what Moahi (2020: 248) refers to as “indigenous epistemology” (and is also a basis of the seminal works of Smith (1999, 2021) and Chilisa (2012, 2020) when using ‘lived experiences’ as a decolonising tool in research for socially responsive and impactful LIS knowledge generation in preparation for appropriate (that is, equally decolonised) scholarly communication.

Axiological observance in research capturing lived experiences of communities is also reflected on by Lilley (2018: 78) who explains that those conducting research with Māori indigenous communities in New Zealand

are expected to be familiar with the specific expectations associated with the Treaty of Waitangi. These relate to participation, protection and partnership, including recognition of the important role that tikanga Māori [Māori culture], cultural values and te reo Māori [Māori language] have in the organisation and transmission of knowledge.

Such guidelines for observing ethical compliance in research involving community participants, explains Lilley, have been developed and are applied by universities, research institutions and funding agencies across New Zealand.

Similarly, Moahi (2020: 260) makes reference to: “Researchers immersed themselves in the Herero community [southern Africa] in order to understand their history, language, philosophy and myths” to research the development of a computer interface for digital documentation of this community’s indigenous knowledge, intentioned to be “intuitive to the local community”. These are but a few exemplars that exist globally of the decolonising role of the axiological construct, emphasising values and ethics, in the application of research to the lived experiences of historically colonised and other marginalised communities.

This sub-section highlighted the transformative potential of ‘lived experiences’ for decolonisation of LIS research, drawing scenarios from the LIS sector in different global locations and reflecting on this in the context of the philosophical constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that inform the research process. Such hermeneutical reflection is intentioned to inform LIS curriculum and pedagogy towards being inclusive of not just transformative scholarly communication but also transformative and decolonised knowledge production in anticipation of appropriate dissemination of scholarship output. While the next sub-section seeks to unpack the role of ‘other ways of knowing’ in decolonising LIS research, the inherent overlap between ‘lived experiences’ and ‘other ways of knowing’ in approaching the decolonisation of LIS research, should be acknowledged – the separation into sub-sections is purely expedient to facilitate systematic presentation.

‘Other ways of knowing’ in LIS research and knowledge production

Other ways of knowing, too, are critical to decolonising research through their hermeneutic engagement with the constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that inform the philosophical assumptions conducive to socially and culturally responsive research. This sub-section too draws from the LIS sector to highlight the transformative strengths of other ways of knowing for LIS research and knowledge production.

Dick (2013: 7) cogently remarks that “there can be no single way of knowing the multiple realities of LIS”. Herein is located the ontological and epistemological value of ‘other ways of knowing’ in its transformative contribution to the decolonisation of LIS research. And it is in this context that Dick questions the production of LIS research models and theories (for example, in information seeking and retrieval) in global north countries and their utilisation in global south localities, where alternative ways of knowing (or constructing realities) in

specific socio-cultural contexts informed by different worldviews and interpretations of social reality, need consideration.

Patin et al. (2020: 2) posit that the LIS field is indeed “guilty of privileging certain knowledge systems and ways of knowing over others”. An example is the bibliographic control tool, Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) which is used for the organisation and discovery of information sources. It was developed in the United States of America (US) and is used globally by libraries for knowledge organisation purposes. As a subject naming system conceptualised in the global north, LCSH reflects, in its naming conventions, dominant western knowledge systems which often results in subject headings for indigenous and other historically marginalised groups that are inaccurately reflected or even, not reflected at all. Sebastian, Youngman and Patin (2022: 72-73) point out that “LCSH aligns with canonical, patriarchal norms in LIS” and that this and other “legacy forms of information seeking, policies and practices” such as cataloguing and classification used in the organisation of knowledge for discovery and findability purposes, “may exclude valuable epistemological systems” and harm other ways of knowing in the process. The LIS field needs the “use of critical practices” (Patin et al., 2021: 632) to “better promote alternative ways of knowing and resisting legacy forms of colonization and epistemicide [devaluing alternative knowledge systems]” (Sebastian, Youngman & Patin, 2022: 80) for transformative advancement of the field, which in turn creates the epistemological space for the application of decoloniality in LIS research methodology.

Dick (1999: 305; 310), in a scholarly piece on the “general neglect of epistemology as a topic of professional and methodological concern” in LIS, observed that the Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC - a knowledge classification tool used globally to organise collections in libraries), in its final form, was a response to “social rather than epistemological problems”. Dick elaborates that the “original construction of DDC cannot be divorced from its late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American cultural and intellectual contexts generally dominated by a pragmatist epistemology that advocated its adoption because it worked”. This aligns with Sebastian, Youngman and Patin’s (2022: 72-73) assertion, mentioned earlier, that the LIS field continues to align with western canonical norms. Despite many revisions, DDC, an iconic symbol of LIS scholarship, is still embedded in American cultural and intellectual norms and traditions and continues to be used in localities around the globe where other modes of knowing and constructing social reality abound. This calls for a decolonial approach to research methodology in the LIS field for the ontological and epistemological centering of other knowledge systems and ways of knowing, with a different set of philosophical assumptions, in the research domain of classification of knowledge for its organisation and discoverability in non-western parts of the world.

Jimenez, Vannini and Cox (2023: 226), reflecting on LIS through a global north lens, acknowledge the “privileging of written knowledge over other forms of knowing, particularly oral knowledge”. Colonial contexts which many parts of the global south were historically subjected to, often involved the destruction of local or indigenous knowledge (increasingly being referred to in the literature as ‘epistemicide’ (Patin et al., 2020) – destroying the epistemology or ways of knowing of a knowledge system). The very notion of a library, Jimenez, Vannini and Cox claim, is “strongly connected to a privileging of certain ways of knowing” which historically manifested in Eurocentric knowledge traditions and the colonial replication of such libraries (in content as well as in architectural design) in the global south and culminated in the subjugation of local knowledge systems. Today this also manifests in the scholarly publishing industry which, because of capacity (research, authorship, editing, refereeing, publishing, etc.) concentration and large-scale funding availability in the global north, particularly the US, has eventuated in global north commercial publishers controlling scholarly publishing content as well as knowledge discovery systems; thus giving global north knowledge producers “colossal power to control what is published and so reproduce their own knowledge ... material published outside this system, such as ... in Africa or Latin America, is rendered virtually invisible and unobtainable”. And thus, the ontological and epistemological subjugation of global south knowledge systems and ways of knowing is perpetuated. However, this, at the same time, provides fertile ground for decolonisation of LIS research for the disruption of this perpetuation of dominant ways of knowing and for the privileging of other ways of knowing. It also reinforces the hermeneutical notion (implicit in the research problem which this essay responds to) of considering *what* (knowledge) is produced before *how* (scholarly communication) scholarship is shared.

However, Jimenez, Vannini and Cox (2023: 227) also acknowledge that while libraries tend to privilege written knowledge and other western ways of knowing “much work has been done ... in North America, Australia and New Zealand ... [where there are indigenous communities] through indigenous librarianship to think about the appropriate ways to repatriate indigenous knowledge and cultural creations, or collect, describe, and preserve them, generally through the active involvement of the communities themselves”. Such repatriation of indigenous knowledge in library collections in different parts of the world may be supported by the transformative role of recognition of other ways of knowing in the implementation of decolonisation in LIS research methodology. Further, librarians, by virtue of a fundamental principle of their discipline to make information discoverable and accessible, have naturally been strong champions of the open access movement seeking to disrupt the stranglehold of commercial publishers on the knowledge production and scholarly communication process and its concomitant western biases, including research quality measures using inequitable metrics. Here again, the contributing role of other ways of knowing in challenging colonial legacy infrastructure in the publishing and scholarly

communication domain is critical for hermeneutic engagement with the constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that frame the philosophical assumptions that produce socially responsive and impactful LIS research. As already mentioned, such hermeneutic engagement of ways of knowing in the research process is necessary to challenge the subordination of the knowledge and cultures of communities outside of the hegemonic global north. If left unchallenged in LIS research, and by other opportunities for decolonisation, such knowledge hegemony “gets translated into publications, which mostly benefits research that is connected to the already dominant discourse and systematically excludes different perspectives” (Jimenez, Vannini & Cox, 2023: 234).

In recognising other ways of knowing in research for the production of socially inclusive knowledge, the matter of cultural complexity needs consideration. Indigenous views on information, for example, might not necessarily align with western information norms and conventions. In this context, Williamson, Johanson and Byrne (2018: 550) explain that the “Māori view of archives recognises a spiritual dimension” and that “Māori cultural memory is active and evolving”. Hence information related worldviews are likely to be diverse among different indigenous communities as well as within an indigenous community – “it cannot be assumed that what is appropriate in one setting can simply be applied to another ... In every instance, issues and culturally appropriate approaches will have to be identified and developed in partnership with the communities involved” (Williamson et al., 2018: 550) – the latter point, when conducting community research, is also emphasised by Māori indigene scholars Lilley (2018) and Smith (1999; 2021), both cited earlier in this essay. Ball and Lar-Son (2021: 205; 208), in reflecting on “teaching indigenous LIS” in the Canadian context, also emphasise the need for respectful consideration of unique ways of knowing of indigenous peoples, by making reference to government recognition of “matters that are internal to their communities, integral to their unique cultures, identities, traditions, languages, and institutions, and with respect to their special relationship to their land and their resources”. Such rich and complex cultural diversity from yet another part of the world (and there are many more) serve to demonstrate the transformative ability of ‘other ways of knowing’ in the decolonisation of research methodology, but with due consideration for the “sovereignty, [and] the principle that people should determine who has access to information produced about, by and for their community” (Ball & Lar-Son, 2021: 208-209). The African context, too, offers an exemplar of the transformative potential of alternative ways of knowing or constructing realities in decolonising LIS research. Moahi (2020: 251) epistemologically rationalises that

To understand African reality, one must engage with African culture and ways of knowing and the knowledge of Africa. This means that concepts and theories must be understood from an African perspective, and of course, researchers must be immersed in the African culture to be able to understand it and ask

appropriate questions. It also calls for the research participants to be active collaborators in all aspects of the research.

Deviating from western norms and traditions in research with the incorporation of local knowledge and narratives into the research process as well as active participation by members of the local community, encourages ownership of the outcomes of the research and a community aspiration to work towards sustainability of any interventions resulting from the research. Moahi (2020: 256) argues for a decolonial deviation from the traditional literature review in research and claims that for an African way of knowing and being, “stories, songs, sayings, and folklore”, and not necessarily published journal articles, should be “a source of literature informing research studies”. The collective construction of reality in African research premised on the African philosophy of ‘Ubuntu’ (that emphasises community rather than individuals), prioritises a relational research positionality for purposes of ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically transforming the research process and its philosophical assumptions to align with African realities (including recognition of diversity among African realities); as well as axiological value and ethical imperatives involving respect for community participants, reciprocity in terms of benefits for the community from the outcomes of the research as well as accountability to the researched community.

As with the preceding sub-section, this sub-section too reflected on the transformative potential of, this time, ‘other ways of knowing’ for decolonisation of LIS research, again drawing scenarios from the LIS sector in different global locations and reflecting on this in the context of the philosophical constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that inform the research process. Here too, such hermeneutical reflection is intentioned to inform LIS curriculum and pedagogy towards being inclusive of not just transformative scholarly communication but also transformative and decolonised knowledge production in anticipation of appropriate dissemination of scholarship output.

While the exemplars from the LIS sector as well as global locations are intentionally few but selective, they are instructive in that they serve the purpose of demonstrating how alternative ways of knowing or constructing reality can be used for transformative LIS knowledge production and subsequent communication of scholarship output.

Conclusion and recommendation

This essay began with the objective of unpacking the concepts of ‘lived experiences’ and ‘other ways of knowing’ to better understand their role in transformative LIS knowledge production for purposes of LIS curriculum realignment. This was in response to the focus of this section of the edited volume to critically engage the place of scholarly communication in LIS curricula towards growing the next generation of scholarly communication leaders. At the outset it was mentioned that this essay deviates somewhat from the focus on how scholars share their output with their academic and other communities (that is, the process of scholarly communication) and instead focuses on the scholarly output itself and how this should embrace the decolonisation concepts of ‘lived experiences’ and ‘other ways of knowing’ to produce socially responsive and impactful scholarly output in anticipation of equitable scholarly communication – both aspects are necessary for the advancement of social justice through the nuancing of LIS pedagogy with embedding across the curriculum the transformative role of ‘lived experiences’ and ‘other ways of knowing’ in knowledge generation and its equitable dissemination, as outlined in the research problem identified at the beginning of this essay. It is recommended that the unpacking, in this essay, of the transformative potential of ‘lived experiences’ and ‘other ways of knowing’ in a context of real-world scenarios from the LIS sector in different global locations as well as a hermeneutical reflection of the philosophical constructs of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that inform the philosophical assumptions which guide socially responsive and impactful research, be considered in LIS curriculum design and development for purposes of preparing the next generation of LIS professional practitioners, educators and researchers deeply committed to both transformative knowledge production as well as equitable scholarly communication of knowledge output – thus reiterating the note on which this essay began: *what* knowledge is produced is as important, if not perhaps more important, than *how* it is communicated to the wider world; and offering an important heuristic lens for advancing social justice through LIS curriculum realignment.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge the Humanities Faculty, University of Cape Town for its funding support of this research.

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