Integrating Indigenous Knowledge cultures from the Global South with other forms of evidence

MWEMEZEI J RWIZA
Nyerere Knowledge for Change (K4C) Hub
The Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (NM-AIST), Arusha, Tanzania.

03-Oct-2023
Bridging knowledge cultures (BKC)

• The Nyerere Knowledge for Change (K4C) Hub is part of the Global K4C Consortium led by the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education.

• **Hub objective**: to build community-based participatory research capacity to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on SDG4-6 and SDG13.
• Societies/communities are increasingly questioning **the role of university education in addressing the people’s day-to-day challenges**.

• Universities and research institutions in sub-Saharan Africa still struggle when it comes to university-community linkages – **building equitable partnerships**.
Bridging knowledge cultures (BKC)

- Our Hub received a small grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC, Canada) for the Bridging Knowledge Cultures project.
We worked with the Nduruma Maasai community to learn about how they used indigenous knowledge to conserve a water canal for livestock watering and irrigation.
Bridging Knowledge Cultures: Developing an understanding of traditional Maasai water practices and technologies in the Nyerere Knowledge for Change Hub

Mwemezi J. Rwiza¹, Haikael Martin¹ and Ahmadi Kipacha¹,

¹The Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (NM-AIST), Arusha, Tanzania

Keywords
• Maasai communities; indigenous knowledge; knowledge cultures; higher learning education; decolonisation of knowledge; knowledge democracy; community-based research; participatory methods
A summary of what we learned in the BKC project
For sustainable university-community partnerships, our university needs to develop community-based curricula that have a large proportion of hands-on activities. As research by Bodorkós and Pataki (2009) indicates, for universities to sustainably work with communities, a possible methodology would be conducting participatory action research. This, they argue, would facilitate bottom-up sustainable planning and development in socio-economically disadvantaged rural communities. To this end, our University plans to work with communities on common research topics to address a community problem/s.

1) Training that is actively and personally involved.
Community knowledge, handed down over generations, is not antagonistic to expert knowledge. The production, use, validation, and dissemination of community knowledge may revitalize university-community linkages by promoting local participation in higher education initiatives to counter the power asymmetries that usually hinder engagement with communities (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza 2018). Social responsibility in higher learning requires academic and research institutions to open up to society’s real problems, narrowing the expert-community power inequalities that exist (Bodorkós & Pataki 2009).

2) Practice a locally relevant pedagogy to strengthen university-community linkages
The Maasai communities have been changing their water management practices to respond to socio-political and socio-economic changes. The canal started as a private property and later, as the circumstances changed, ownership of the water canal became communal. Unlike the general perception by some scholars, the indigenous knowledge systems are not always conservative and static. Instead of criticizing the communities for not being progressive, universities in the Global South need to work collaboratively with these communities as they grapple with changing environments, including climate change (Mapfumo et al. 2013). For the African university space, this would mean that we visit communities when writing research projects, to co-generate project concept notes and write proposals that address the community problems.

3) Engaged research projects should be co-designed with the community.


Thank you