

REFLECTIONS ON METHODS: Advanced Methods Lab (Session 1)

Date: 22.06.2022

Participants:

Prof. T. **Kaime** (TK) | Prof. U. **Okeja** (UO) | Dr. S. **Debele** (SD) | Dr. R.B. **Frempong** (RF) | Dr. M.M. **Okorie** (MO) | G. **Mauluka** (GM) | I. **Zundel** (IZ) | L. **Anyango** (LA) | N. **Otieno** (NO)

Common research methods

The meeting unveiled the diversity of research expertise in the project. The project team highlighted that apart from using mixed methods, qualitative, quantitative, doctrinal and conventional research methods such as interviews and focus group discussions, the team has expertise in using geospatial data analysis, as well as a philosophical approach to rationality and ordinary language analysis.

It was further shared by the seasoned researchers that the choice of the methods used has worked in their previous research exercises as well as publishing careers. The choices have been informed by life experiences and a continuous reflection to find out what works. For instance, TK pointed out that his legal training in black letter law helped him to understand the law. However, his reflection on how black letter law addresses lived realities, raised questions that could not be answered by using such methods. Such a reflection changed his trajectory to start engaging with social legal research methods. Similar reflections were shared by UO whose training in Philosophy and concluding a set of premises prompted his drive to question how complicated everyday problems and realities can be addressed through such a method.

SD started by indicating that she is caught in a dilemma between her former research methods as a religious and historical scholar and the current use of anthropological methods to make meaning. Her religious studies inform what she does in understanding the process of minoritized not only from the sexual orientation perspective. The constant dilemma comes because the different fields of study employ different research methods. It is therefore almost always a question of speculative methods that help her answer some of the research questions that she has. MO shared his work in using geospatial research methods while striving to make meaning on why the use of laws does not work in certain parts of Nigeria.

On the other hand, The PhD candidates shared that they have mainly been using doctrinal research methods where social legal, as well as comparative research methods, dominate. It was further shared that a mixed-methods approach and use of art and theatre in active research has been used in understanding social problems from the communities in the areas of women and children's rights as well as land rights.

Current projects

During the meeting, RF shared that he is currently working on regression to analyze child labour cases in Malawi using secondary statistical data. However, this research diverts from the common narrative that poverty is the main push factor of child labour. It further questions the contribution of individual factors rather than the household-specific variables that explain incidents of child labour.

Furthermore, SD shared that she is working on problematizing the disconnection of the LGBTQI communities and their involvement in political processes in Sudan, Morocco and Ethiopia. This study looks at the influence of history and the marginalization of sexual minorities. In her study, she is using archival publication exploration and speculative approaches.

New methods

It is obvious from a wide range of responses given that the participants would like to explore new ways of doing research. From the result displayed above, social legal research methods followed by the use of art as research methods are what the participants would like to indulge

What innovative research methods are planning to use in future?



in. however, the results are broad and widespread to ascertain the main and immediate one. This calls for another poll and scoping exercise to find out and rank the methods that will be explored further. The same will also inform the sequencing of the research methods based on the different stages that the upcoming researchers are currently exploring in their research endeavours.

Grey areas in methods

Given the nature of research experiences and research fields that a majority of the participants are involved in, it has been found that a majority would like to engage with qualitative research methods. This is not rather surprising as most of the participants indicated that they are not so good with numbers and graphs as well as the use of the KOBO platform. It will therefore be recommended that the next AML build on the findings from this poll to formulate tailor-made training that addresses such capacity gaps or interests.

Recommendations and ways forward

- Carry out similar polls for some of the participants who left the meeting due to commitments to inform content and focus of the next AML.
- Work out modalities to make AML a recurring activity that is constantly building on reflections