

September 2024 | Version 2

Training on Religions and Development Research Course

Module 2:
Doing Research

Session 1:
Introduction to Research – What is
(good) research, and why do we
need it?



Joint Learning Initiative
on Faith & Local Communities

Homework (pre-session)



Essential reading

(everyone is required to read this)

- **Essential reading 1:** Eggert, J. P. (2019): 5 reasons why we need research in the humanitarian sector. Blog of the Humanitarian Academy for Development. <https://had-int.org/5-reasons-why-we-need-research-in-the-development-humanitarian-sector/>.
- **Essential reading 2:** O'Donnell, J. (2012): What is research? <https://researchwhisperer.org/2012/09/18/what-is-research/>
- **Essential reading 3:** Decoloniality Europe (2013): Charter of decolonial research ethics. <https://decolonialityeurope.wixsite.com/decoloniality/charter-of-decolonial-research-ethics>



Optional readings I

(advanced readings)



Focus on Kenya

- Elder, B. C. and Odoyo, K. O. (2018), "Multiple methodologies: Using community-based participatory research and decolonizing methodologies in Kenya," International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 31:4, pp. 293-311. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09518398.2017.1422290>
- Lairumbi, G. M., Molyneux, S., Snow, R. W., Marsh, K., Peshu, N. and English, M. (2008), "Promoting the social value of research in Kenya: Examining the practical aspects of collaborative partnerships using an ethical framework," Social science & medicine, 67:5, pp. 734-747. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953608000877>



Focus on Malawi

- Ansell, N., Mwathunga, E., Hajdu, F., Robson, E., Hlabana, T., van Blerk, L. and Hemsteede, R. (2023), "Ethical Principles, Social Harm and the Economic Relations of Research: Negotiating Ethics Committee Requirements and Community Expectations in Ethnographic Research in Rural Malawi," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 29:6, pp. 725-736. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004221124631>
- Kamlongera, M. I., and Katenga-Kaunda, M. W. (2023), "Researchers' reflections on ethics of care as decolonial research practice: understanding Indigenous knowledge communication systems to navigate moments of ethical tension in rural Malawi," *Research Ethics*, 19:3, pp. 312-324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17470161231169484>



Focus on South Africa

- Hlabangane, N. (2018), "Can a methodology subvert the logics of its principal? Decolonial meditations." *Perspectives on Science*, 26:6, pp. 658-693. <https://direct.mit.edu/posc/article/26/6/658/15414/Can-a-Methodology-Subvert-the-Logics-of-its>
- Keikelame, M. J. and Swartz, L. (2019), "Decolonising research methodologies: lessons from a qualitative research project, Cape Town, South Africa," *Global health action*, 12:1, 1561175. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/16549716.2018.1561175>.



Focus on Sri Lanka

- Canagarajah, S., Odeniyi, V. and Lazar, G. (2023), "Strategizing Decolonial Subversion: A Dialogue," *Decolonial Subversions*, pp. 97-110. https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/20757/1/8_Canagarajah_27_FLNAL.pdf



Focus on the Philippines

- Castillo, F. A. (2024), "The Conflicted Decolonial Scholar" in *Thinking with the South*, pp. 113-128. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/87822/1/9783110780567.pdf#page=124>
- Castillo, R. C. A., Rubis, J. and Pattathu, A. G. (2023), "Critical Research Ethics as Decolonial Praxis: A comment and responses," *International Quarterly for Asian Studies*, 54:1, pp. 21-37. <https://hasp.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/iqas/article/view/21746>



Optional readings II

(easy readings)

- City University Hong Kong (n.d.): What is research ethics?
<https://libguides.library.cityu.edu.hk/researchmethods/ethics>
- Institute of Employment Research (n.d.): Research from a practitioner perspective.
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/ngrf/effectiveguidance/research/practitioner_perspective/
- Purdue University (n.d.): What is research?
[https://www.purdue.edu/science/careers/find_internship_research/getting_ started_with_research/what_is_research.html](https://www.purdue.edu/science/careers/find_internship_research/getting_started_with_research/what_is_research.html)
- University of Sussex (n.d.): Decolonialisation and anti-racism: Decolonial research practices. <https://guides.lib.sussex.ac.uk/c.php?g=692062&p=4959234>
- Wellcome Trust (n.d.): Ensuring your research is ethical: A guide for Extended Project Qualification students.
https://wellcome.org/sites/default/files/wtp057673_0.pdf

Engaging with the readings

(1 hour)

This part of the session aims to engage with the readings that the students did as part of their homework in more detail. It aims to give the students a chance to discuss the readings, share their reflections, and consolidate their understanding of the texts.

1. **Introduction (5 min)**: The instructor explains to students that this is the first session of module 2, which looks at evidence literacy and research skills, and that evidence literacy and research skills are all about understanding how research works and maybe even doing research oneself. The idea behind this module is to enable learners to move from passive consumers of research to people who are able to actively engage with research, question whether it is good research, and decide if (and how) it is going to be useful for their work.
2. **Group work (25 min)**: The instructor divides students into three groups. Each group works on a different topic.
 - Group 1: why is research useful for practitioners (essential reading 1)
 - Group 2: what is research and what is not (essential reading 2)
 - Group 3: what is ethical research and why is it important (essential reading 3)

Before the group work starts, the instructor explains to students that they should discuss the text together and then prepare a poster that (1) summarises the key points and then (2) adds the students' critical analysis of the text: What do they agree with? What do they disagree with? Is there anything missing in the text? Posters should be written in legible script so that others can easily read them in the next step of the exercise.

3. **Gallery walk (5 min)**: All students walk from poster to poster together, looking at each poster for a few minutes, asking clarifying questions, making notes about key points for their own record. Instructor explains to students that this part of the exercise is all about taking information in and asking clarifying questions, but not discussion – this comes later.
4. **Big group discussions (15 min)**: The instructor leads a discussion in the big group about the readings and students' summaries and analysis of them on the posters. Prompting questions for the discussion could include:

- Was there anything in particular that you noticed on the posters, anything you found interesting?
- Did you think the summaries on the posters were accurate? Was there anything you think was missing?
- Did you agree with the other groups' critical analyses of the readings? Was there anything you would like to add?

5. **Individual reflection (10 min)**: The instructor encourages students to individually reflect on their learning from reading the texts and their engagement with the texts in class. Students should write down their reflections (this can be in the form of bullet points or full sentences): What are the key takeaways for them from the lesson? What questions do they still have? What aspects would they like to know more about, and where could they find out about it?

Contextualising the learning

(1 hour)

The aim of this part of the session is for students to apply what they learned from the readings and the first part of the session to their local contexts. It encourages them to think critically about the extent to which the debates from the readings are relevant to their everyday lives, studies, or work.

1. **Break (5 min)**
2. **Introduction (5 min)**: The instructor will explain that, as we have seen in the readings and discussion of the readings, research has many potential benefits, but there is often also hesitancy, even resistance, amongst non-researchers. We will, therefore, now look at some of the possible barriers that we can encounter when wanting to implement research into our work as practitioners or faith leaders. The instructor asks the group what could be some of the reasons why people may not be happy to integrate research into their work. Students share some ideas (e.g. there is not enough money, research is not seen as useful etc.). The instructor explains to students that they will be able to explore this in more detail in the next exercise. The instructor asks students to form groups based on similar experiences, e.g. people who work in similar contexts or on similar topics. If there are students with no prior work experience, they can join any of the groups based on interest/where they would like to work one day. Groups should comprise 3-5 people.
3. **Small group work - discussion (20 min)**: Students discuss possible barriers to the inclusion of research in their work and how these could possibly be overcome.
4. **Big group discussion (25 min)**: The instructor leads a discussion in the big group. They start by asking one of the groups to share findings from their discussion, then ask others to contribute to it. Prompts for the discussion could include the following: Did the different groups discuss the same factors? Are there differences between various organisations, groups of people, communities, and parts of the country? Are there any people who may be interested in research? How can they be won over? How can alliances be built? If money is an issue, where could funding possibly come from? If time is an issue, are there any ways this can be overcome? How can effective strategies advocating for research or communicating the benefits of research be built? How can we ensure that research is ethical?
5. **Partner work - reflection (5 min)**: Instructor encourages students to reflect in groups of two on the learning from this exercise. Was there anything new that came up in the discussions? Do they think this approach would work for the context they work/live in?

Creative task

(1 hour)

The third part of the session is aimed at engaging with the content covered in parts 1 and 2 of the session in a creative manner. This part of the session acknowledges the fact that there are different types of learners. It also aims to expose students to creative and arts-based forms of learning and teaching.

1. **Break (5 min)**
2. **Small group work - introduction (5 min)**: The instructor explains to students that they will prepare a role play that involves different groups trying to convince the bishop to integrate research into the work of the diocese. The bishop is known to be sceptical of research. The instructor asks one student to volunteer to be the bishop and the other students to choose a group they would like to play (this could be different members/organisations in the diocese, based on geography or areas they may work on, such as a women's group, or an interfaith committee, an Indigenous rights organisation etc. pp.). Groups should comprise 3-5 students.
3. **Small group work - role play preparation (15 min)**: Each group gets to prepare the arguments they would like to present to the bishop and work out their strategy of trying to convince them.
4. **Small group work - role play (10 min)**: The instructor sets the scene by explaining that we are at the bishop's office now. The bishop is aware that there are increasing demands to develop more research and evidence-based approaches into the work of the diocese, but the bishop is sceptical. They explain that we are now here at the bishop's office to see if any of the lobby groups that have asked to see the bishop will be successful in convincing them of the value of and need for research. Each group makes their case. The instructor intervenes as necessary, e.g. by asking the bishop to respond, encouraging the other groups to react, raising any issues the groups or the bishop fail to mention etc.
5. **Big group discussion (25 min)**: The instructor leads a discussion on the role plays in the big group, covering questions such as:

- **Warm-up**

- Which group was your favourite, and why?
- Which individual player was your favourite, and why?
- Who did you agree with the most?

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Linking the role play to students' experiences in their communities

Who reminded you of people you know from your work/community?

Would your bishop, or any of the decision-makers in your community be convinced by anyone in the role plays?

Would you like to invite any of the people from the role-play to speak about the importance of research in your community? Why/why not?

Using research to strengthen global links

Do you think research can help faith communities or practitioners build links with global partners, strengthen transnational networks, or develop their profile beyond local or national contexts? If yes, how so; if not, why not?

What are the advantages/opportunities of using research to build transnational links?

What are the challenges/barriers?

