



**The TAPESTRe framework: equalising an uneven global knowledge base to inform relevant, responsible and responsive evidence-based education policy and practice**

*O enquadramento TAPESTRe: equalizar uma base de conhecimentos global desigual para informar políticas e práticas educativas relevantes, responsáveis e reativas baseadas em evidências*

*El marco TAPESTRe: igualar una base de conocimiento global desigual para informar políticas y prácticas educativas relevantes, responsables y receptivas basadas en evidencia.*

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**Abstract:** The global knowledge base, which informs education policy and practice, is skewed – privileging evidence from the Global North and Eurocentric lenses. Consequently, education policy and practices in globally marginalised spaces (be it from the Global South, BRICS-nations or other postcolonial, low- and middle-income countries, emerging economy spaces) are not necessarily responsible or responsive – drawing on evidence irrelevant to specific socio-cultural and contextual resources and challenges. One reason put forward for the unevenness in the knowledge continuum is based on a view of limitations in the reporting of quality of studies from globally marginalised spaces. Metrics to evaluate the quality of research and thus merit for publication, also originates in the Global North. In this article the TAPESTRe framework is proposed as an instrument to plan for

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and evaluate the quality of studies from these underrepresented knowledge spaces – TAPESTRé: Transformative, emancipatory research; Agentic justice; Participatory approach; Emic place-sensitive; (geopolitical) Space; Trustworthiness criteria; Resilience outcomes. The TAPESTRé framework provides a complimentary framework to use as a quality appraisal tool to design, report and evaluate reporting on studies in underrepresented knowledge spaces as a means to mitigate the unequal, global evidence base which informs education policy and practice.

**Keywords:** Transformative, Emancipatory research; Agentic justice; Participatory research; MMAT; TIDieR.

**Resumo:** A base de conhecimento global, que informa políticas e práticas educacionais é enviesada - privilegiando evidências do Norte Global e lentes eurocêntricas. Consequentemente, as políticas e as práticas educativas em espaços globalmente marginalizados (seja do Sul Global, dos países BRICS ou de outros espaços pós-coloniais, de países de baixa e média renda e de economias emergentes) não são necessariamente responsáveis ao basear-se em evidências irrelevantes para recursos e desafios socioculturais e contextuais específicos. Uma das razões possíveis para o desnível no continuum do conhecimento baseia-se numa limitada comunicação da qualidade dos estudos provenientes de espaços globalmente marginalizados. As métricas para avaliar a qualidade da investigação e, por conseguinte, o mérito para publicação, também têm origem no Norte Global. Neste artigo, o quadro TAPESTRé é proposto como um instrumento para planejar e avaliar a qualidade dos estudos provenientes destes espaços de conhecimento sub-representados – TAPESTRé: esquisa transformadora e emancipatória; justiça do agente; investigação participativa; lugar êmico; espaço geopolítico; critérios de fiabilidade; resultados de resiliência. O quadro TAPESTRé fornece um instrumento conceitual de avaliação para planejar, relatar e avaliar a comunicação científica a partir de estudos qualitativos, em espaços de conhecimento sub-representados, como forma de equilibrar a base de evidências desiguais e global que informa políticas e práticas educacionais.

**Palavras-chave:** Pesquisa transformadora e emancipatória; Justiça do agente; Investigação participativa; MMAT; TIDieR.

**Resumen:** La base de conocimiento global, que informa la política y la práctica educativas, está sesgada, privilegiando la evidencia proveniente del Norte Global y de perspectivas eurocéntricas. En consecuencia, la política y las prácticas educativas en espacios globalmente marginados (ya sea del Sur Global, las naciones BRICS u otros países poscoloniales, de ingresos bajos y medios, espacios de economías emergentes) no son necesariamente responsables ni receptivas, y se basan en evidencia irrelevante para recursos y desafíos socioculturales y contextuales específicos. Una razón presentada para la desigualdad en el continuo de conocimiento se basa en una visión de las limitaciones en la presentación de informes sobre la calidad de los estudios de espacios globalmente marginados. Las métricas para evaluar la calidad de la investigación y, por lo tanto, el mérito para la publicación, también se originan en el Norte Global. En este artículo, se propone el marco TAPESTRé como un instrumento para planificar y evaluar la calidad de los estudios de estos espacios de conocimiento subrepresentados: TAPESTRé: investigación transformadora y emancipadora; justicia agente; investigación participativa; lugar émico; espacio geopolítico; criterios de confiabilidad; resultados de resiliencia. El marco TAPESTRé ofrece un marco complementario que se puede utilizar como herramienta de evaluación de la calidad para diseñar, informar y evaluar informes sobre estudios en espacios de conocimiento subrepresentados como un medio para mitigar la base de evidencia global desigual que informa las políticas y prácticas educativas.

**Palabras clave:** Investigación transformadora y emancipadora; Justicia agente; Investigación participativa; MMAT; TIDIER.

## Introduction

The 120-meter Keiskamma Tapestry, displayed in Constitution Hill South Africa, calls you to pay attention (SCHMAHMANN, 2016). The creation, one of many in the Keiskamma Art Project, was created by Eastern Cape women. The materials and techniques draw on examples of similar endeavours by ancient and modern artisans across the globe. It was crafted to document the 100-year British Frontier Wars in the region – the colonization history of Xhosa people in this province. The project tapestries are multi-layered and complex depictions of narratives on local communities conquering challenges. Tapestries are framed around isiXhosa

sayings, such as Umaf’ ivuka, nje ngenyanga’ (Dying and rising, as the moon does). The creations document, for example, the sorrow and rage of a lost generation of parents, with grandmothers taking on primary caregiver roles following the HIV&AIDS pandemic. They record the shock, floundering and ultimate reunification of people while navigating isolation and fear during COVID-19 restrictions. Other tapestries feature collective agency to ensure women’s rights, democracy and social justice. The collection of tapestries vividly showcases the value of socio-cultural resources, such as spirituality, hope, music and relationships, to absorb and adapt to chronic and acute disruption. The tapestry portrays the centrality of animal-, plant-, natural- and agricultural life as relevant, available resources that generations of Eastern Cape inhabitants have mobilised to transform difficult experiences into satisfying and remarkable lives.

The observation of a tapestry created in an egalitarian way and portraying authentic experiences is transformative. Each colour, thread, singular and collective image illuminates agentic justice – not to passively submit to and accept challenge and injustice, but to engage with, adapt to and confront adversity head-on. Participatory creation of a tapestry is the result of collaborating and co-creating a novel masterpiece reflective of unique socio-cultural and contextual experiences. The content and narrative of the tapestry is representative of insider understandings and opinions, of intergenerational values, beliefs and practices responsive to the challenges and resources of a given space. The identity, tensions and aspirations captured and conveyed in the tapestry is representative of the country-space in which it originates. The quality of method, materials and creators of the tapestry all contribute to the believability of the tapestry as a trustworthy rendition of a phenomenon. Further, the tapestry remains provocative when it showcases how, unpredictably, the creators convey evidence of how ‘a good life ending’ is possible despite constant and frightening challenges, generation after generation.

High-quality and unbiased evidence improves policy and practice decisions that enable positive education outcomes, and as rationale for decision-makers to source funding and distribute resources effectively and efficiently (EDDY-SPICER et al., 2016; SNILSTVEIT et al., 2016). However, certain global spaces (including the Global South, BRICS-nations or other postcolonial, emerging economy spaces) are underrepresented in the global knowledge base (GALPERIN et al., 2022) – limiting the range, representativeness and relevance of evidence from which scholars in marginalised geopolitical spaces may draw to inform policy. Consequently, education policy and practices in globally marginalised spaces are not

necessarily responsible or responsive – drawing on evidence irrelevant to specific socio-cultural and contextual resources and challenges.

Published evidence from the Global South, for example, continues to be marginalised as criteria to measure the quality of studies are often based on Global North universal and standardised approaches which do not consider the unique social and cultural contexts of the South (GALPERIN et al., 2022). As a result, research published in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are often deemed to be of low quality and are therefore excluded during reviews or less weight is assigned to them (KARURI et al., 2014; MULIMANI, 2019; MURUNGA et al., 2020). The latter highlights the profound need to address lenses used to measure the quality of intervention research in the Global South.

In this article we put forward the TAPESTRe (Transformative, emancipatory research; Agentic justice; Participatory approach; Emic, place-sensitive; (geopolitical) Space; Trustworthiness criteria, and Resilience outcome evidence) framework to plan and evaluate quality research from global spaces that continue to be excluded from mainstream, peer-reviewed publications. We argue that a complementary metric is required to determine the value of studies when the history, context and culture of knowledge generation is significantly different to that of a hegemonic Global North, eurocentric lens.

The motivation for crafting TAPESTRe follows from considering some questions: What knowledge may be brought to the foreground when the yardstick for quality research gives precedence to responsible and responsive science given contextual and cultural imperatives? How do scholars from contexts with lived experience of inequity and injustice approach research and assess the value of education research processes and evidence? What is responsive science when students arrive at school hungry; schools have sporadic electricity, poor sanitation and no clean water; and school-leavers are ill-equipped for employability given limited job opportunities and high unemployment? What is responsible science when structural disparity continues to prevent a majority of teachers and students and families to use their home-language to learn-, govern-, play- and develop curriculum? What are the research questions scholars ask in this context? Who are included in studies to generate knowledge on change that may not only transform structures, but also sustain transformation? Which methodologies craft spaces to share counter-narratives of intergenerational knowledge regarding equity and systemic change.

### **An uneven knowledge-playing field – towards cognitive justice**

It is ironic that emerging economy spaces (such as in the Global South and BRICS countries), which, arguably, have the most need for evidence to support development – given the extremeness of structural disparity and inequality – are the knowledge-spaces that continue to be underrepresented in global discourses. In this regard, a review by Eddy-Spicer et al. (2016) found a scarcity of high-quality primary studies in LMICs on low-stakes assessments. Similarly, when Petrosino et al. (2012) reviewed improving school enrolment in LMICs, they found the methodological reporting of primary studies to be weak, thus limiting the quality of their contributions and the accuracy of their results (EDDY-SPICER et al., 2016).

Metrics are used to ensure that only high-quality studies are published, or included in reviews, with studies evaluated as ‘low-quality’ often excluded (KRISTJANSSON et al., 2010; MASINO; NIÑO-ZARAZÚA, 2016). However, the metrics used to evaluate the quality of publishing studies, or of including publications in, say, systematic reviews, remain grounded in traditions of dominant Global North and Western epistemologies, agendas and practices of that which constitutes ‘quality’ in research. LMICs struggle to position the quality of their studies within the Global North created, and largely accepted, standards of quality in scientific research (KARURI et al., 2014; MURUNGA et al., 2020).

Established frameworks to assess quality of studies mostly exclude political, cultural and contextual diversity. In recent years, from a cognitive justice, and democratising research stance, there has been a shift towards decolonialising knowledge so that knowledge produced in under-represented knowledge spaces can contribute to global discussions on, for example, child development outcomes. Irrespective of the geographical positioning of knowledge generation it is often difficult for authors writing articles or reports to decide how to prepare their manuscripts for submission. The same holds true for both editors of journals and reviewers. They are often puzzled by how they should evaluate reports. It does not, for example, make sense to require that qualitative research (which is contextually bound) follow the same reporting style as quantitative research, or that mixed method research (with a multiplicity of traditions, methods, and goals) are reviewed in the same way as qualitative research (LEVITT et al., 2018).

### **Evaluating research quality through a Global North looking glass**

One reason put forward for the unevenness in the knowledge continuum, is based on a view of limitations in the reporting of quality of studies from globally marginalised spaces (be

it from the Global South, BRICS-nations or other postcolonial, emerging economy spaces). Metrics to evaluate the quality of research originates in the Global North. The quality of the included studies in reviews is usually assessed using standardised rating systems (KIM et al., 2020). These systems often evaluate factors such as study design, sample size and data collection methods (PETROSINO et al., 2012).

In this section we use the case of evaluating the quality of qualitative education publications in a systematic review to highlight two Global North-grounded rating systems which are often used worldwide to assess the quality of interventions. We describe the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (HONG et al., 2018), and the Template for Intervention Description and Replication (TIDieR) (HOFFMANN et al., 2014; WALSH et al., 2017). Whereas MMAT focuses on methodological quality, the TIDieR-checklist assists in the evaluation of the reporting quality of intervention studies.

As outlined in Table 1, MMAT indicates key areas to evaluate qualitative studies which may guide researchers to improve methodological reporting and evaluation of the quality of studies (HONG et al., 2018).

**Frame 1 – Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT)**

Criterion	Explanation
Evidence of precise, clear research questions.	Explicitly state the research question.
Does the qualitative approach meet the needs of the research question?	The problem and research question should be appropriate for the study's qualitative methodology. For instance, when using a grounded theory approach, the development of a theory should be addressed, and when using an ethnographic approach, human cultures and societies should be investigated.
Can qualitative data collection techniques be used to answer the research question?	Data gathering and data sources (like archives and documents used to respond to the research question). When assessing this criterion, consider whether the data collection methodology (such as interviews, focus groups, observations, or field notes) and the data format (such as audio recordings, video recordings, field diaries, and photos) are appropriate. Justifications must also be provided whenever data collection techniques are modified during the study.
Are conclusions drawn from the data accurate?	The data analysis method refer to the research questions. The research question and qualitative methodology influence different data analysis techniques (i.e. grounded theory frequently employs open, axial, and selective coding, and case studies frequently use within- and cross-case analysis).
Are the data sufficient to support the interpretation of the findings?	The interpretation of the results should be supported by the data collected. For instance, the quotes used to bolster the themes should be adequate.
Are the sources, collection, analysis, and interpretation of	Clear connections should exist between the data sources, collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Criterion	Explanation
qualitative data coherent?	

Source: Adapted from Hong, Gonzalez-Reyes and Pluye (2018).

The TIDieR checklist, intended for use across evaluative study designs, was developed to address poor reporting of intervention details in research (HOFFMANN et al., 2014; WALSH et al., 2017). The goal of the TIDieR checklist is to guide authors to provide sufficient detail when describing interventions so that others can easily replicate and understand the interventions (HOFFMANN et al., 2014). The 12-item checklist includes items such as a brief name, why, what (materials and procedures), who provided it, how, where, when, and how much (tailoring modifications), etc.

The TIDieR checklist also provides guidelines for fidelity and scalability. For fidelity, the checklist includes items such as tailoring, modifications, and how well (planned and actual), which are all related to fidelity (HOFFMANN et al., 2014). For scalability, the checklist includes items such as how much, tailoring, and modifications all related to scaling for researchers/readers/reviewers, etc., to understand if the intervention can be scaled up or down depending on the context of implementation (HOFFMANN et al., 2014).

The benefits of existing quality assessment frameworks used in research is obvious. However, whilst maintaining quality, Global North standards metrics such as MMAT and TIDieR also perpetuate cognitive injustice. The characteristics of geopolitical space and country-place of studies in Global South, postcolonial, LMIC, or BRICS and emerging economy contexts denote a high need for evidence that can inform interventions with social impact to address excruciating injustice, but in a playing field with a paucity of resources and funding. Given the alarming need for evidence that may support social transformation, together with the scarcity of research funding, it comes as no surprise that LMIC studies are evaluated as ‘low-quality’ with a focus on small-scale studies with single outcomes, and in the case of education intervention studies, largely absent of so-called gold standard methods or data regarding the feasibility of scaling up (XU et al., 2020; BARRY et al., 2017).

The exclusive use of Global North-generated quality measures position research – and arguably, researchers – from knowledge-marginalised spaces as ‘less-than’, needing to catch-up in order to measure up. An alternative approach is to question the exclusive use of one standard to measure quality by considering quality in relation to the space and place in which a study occurs. In the same way that the place and space in which a study occurs is relevant when

deciding if an intervention may be replicated elsewhere in the world (EBERSÖHN; 2015), place and space also matters to determine if the study was conducted in a quality manner.

In the next section we posit a complimentary framework as a yardstick to evaluate and report on quality of studies from knowledge-marginalised spaces.

## **The TAPERSTRe framework to plan and evaluate research in knowledge-marginalised spaces**

In this section we propose the TAPESTRe framework to plan for and report on research that signal high-quality evidence from Global South, postcolonial, LMIC, or BRICS and emerging economy contexts. Various researchers (EBERSÖHN, 2014, 2015, 2019) advocate for the use of Global South and Afrocentric lenses to generate knowledge and evaluate research quality, as a point of departure for knowledge that can inform sustainability.

The posited TAPESTRe framework developed over time from education and wellbeing research participation in Southern Africa (EBERSÖHN, 2014, 2015, 2019A; EBERSÖHN; OMIDIRE; MURPHY, 2022) – South Africa, Namibia, Swaziland and Lesotho. The TAPESTRe framework foregrounds studies that leverage diverse methodologies, local knowledge, social justice issues, engagement with local communities, quality research, and acknowledging Global South research capacity to determine quality in intervention research. The TAPESTRe framework provides guidance to plan, report and evaluate quality of research by drawing on knowledge from transformative, emancipatory research (FREIRE, 1970); social justice from an agentic justice lens (SEN, 1999); participatory approaches (CHAMBERS, 1997, 1998, 2014; SCHUBOTZ, 2020); emic perspectives (BEALS; KIDMAN; FUNAKI, 2020; MAZONDE; CARMICHAEL, 2020); geopolitical space (EBERSÖHN, 2015); trustworthiness criteria (SEALE, 1999); and resilience outcomes (LUTHAR; CICCETTI; BECKER, 2000; MASTEN, 2001; UNGAR, 2011). Table 2 presents the TAPESTRe framework with seven quality criteria and concomitant indicators to measure quality in research.

**Frame 2 – The TAPESTRe Framework**

<b>Conceptualisation of Research Purpose</b>	<b>Criterion Indicator</b>
<b>Transformative, Emancipatory Research (FREIRE, 1970; DENZIN, 2005)</b>	
Research purpose aims at deep, systemic change to promote social justice by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contributing to an inclusive and equitable research landscape;</li> <li>• engaging with marginalised communities; and</li> </ul>	Quality research indicated by evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outcomes that reflect systemic transformation and moves beyond surface-level changes;</li> <li>• challenging existing power structures, norms and systems;</li> </ul>



Conceptualisation of Research Purpose	Criterion Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognising diverse forms of knowledge and privilege marginalised voices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>engagement with root causes of inequality and social injustices; and</li> <li>strategically using knowledge for democratic values and action – science communication and transfer research.</li> </ul>
<b>Agentic Justice (SEN, 1999).</b>	
<p>Research purpose is to enable social justice from an agentic justice stance by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>privileging agency of marginalized individuals and communities to act in their own best interest;</li> <li>valuing the freedom people have to choose how they will use available resources to enable positive outcomes; and</li> <li>expanding opportunity structures by providing opportunities and resources that enable individuals to participate actively in economic, social and political spheres.</li> </ul>	<p>Quality research indicated by evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acknowledgement of available opportunity structures;</li> <li>respect for participant knowledge on how to act in ways that enable them to live a life they find valuable.</li> <li>expanded opportunity structures (pathways and resources that enable individuals to participate actively); and</li> <li>recognition of the freedom of people to choose how they will use available resources to enable positive outcomes, such as poverty reduction, improved health and education and greater gender equality.</li> </ul>
<b>Participatory Research (BERGOLD; THOMAS, 2012; BOUSSET, MACOMBE; TAVERNE, 2005; CHAMBERS, 2014, 1998, 1997; SCHUBOTZ, 2020; VAUGHN; JACQUEZ, 2020).</b>	
<p>Research purpose is to encourage active collaboration with end-users who may benefit from research by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>placing the unique social, cultural and contextual needs and resources of those targeted for research at the center; and</li> <li>co-producing knowledge, co-designing and co-implementing interventions.</li> </ul>	<p>Quality research indicated by evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>privileging systemic partnerships;</li> <li>methodological plans that acknowledge power imbalance and enable equal engagement opportunities;</li> <li>mechanisms for shared decision-making through consultation and consensus;</li> <li>opportunities for co-production;</li> <li>using collaboration; and</li> <li>establishing and nurturing communities-of-research practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Emic, Place-Sensitive Research (BEALS; KIDMAN; FUNAKI, 2020; MAZONDE; CARMICHAEL, 2020; EBERSÖHN, 2019; DEI, 2013).</b>	
<p>Research purpose is to enable epistemological justice by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>valuing how people in a particular place perceive their realities, values, beliefs and culture;</li> <li>foregrounding insider contextual and cultural perspectives; and</li> <li>including local knowledge systems (indigenous knowledge systems, place-based knowledge).</li> </ul>	<p>Quality research indicated by evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>measures that prevent reinforcing existing power inequalities by ensuring that marginalised voices are audible and amplified;</li> <li>intentional inclusion of systemic knowledge holders with insider views during knowledge creation; and</li> <li>methods that draw on diversity (linguistic, epistemological) as an asset to generate relevant evidence.</li> </ul>
<b>(Geopolitical) Space (FIKSEL, 2006; GAVENTA, 2006; EBERSÖHN, 2015).</b>	
<p>The research purpose foregrounds the need for coordinated, evidence-based response from interdependent world regions with equal voice and participation in global research agendas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acknowledging (from a sustainability science lens) that the gradients of global development and histories of colonialism culminated in global power and knowledge inequality; and</li> <li>foregrounding that the country- and region-space of a study matters for quality research.</li> </ul>	<p>Quality research indicated by evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>methodological decisions cognisant of space challenges and resources;</li> <li>researchers from marginalized knowledge-spaces positioned centrally in internationalised research on global challenges; and</li> <li>research strategies embedded in sustainability science agendas of ‘think global-act local’.</li> </ul>

Conceptualisation of Research Purpose	Criterion Indicator
<b>Trustworthiness Criteria (CYPRESS, 2017; GUBA; LINCOLN, 1994; LONG; JOHNSON, 2000; NOWELL; NORRIS; WHITE; MOULES, 2017; SEALE, 1999).</b>	
<p>The research purpose is to safeguard rigour, transparency, and ethical integrity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring confirmability, authenticity, credibility, dependability and transferability of the research process and findings;</li> <li>• using reliable and valid research methods;</li> <li>• systematic data collection and analysis; and</li> <li>• including diverse perspectives and voices.</li> </ul>	<p>Quality research indicated by methodological evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• auditing in terms of reflexivity;</li> <li>• triangulation exercises;</li> <li>• researcher acknowledgement of assumptions and beliefs;</li> <li>• recognising the shortcomings and limitations of the study's methods and their potential effects;</li> <li>• mutual understanding during member-checking discussions;</li> <li>• prolonged time on site;</li> <li>• data triangulation;</li> <li>• multiple investigators</li> <li>• persistent observation;</li> <li>• member checking;</li> <li>• search for negative instances to challenge emerging hypotheses; and</li> <li>• rich, detailed descriptions of context and sample.</li> </ul>
<b>Resilience Outcome Evidence (LUTHAR; CICCETTI; BECKER, 2000; MASTEN, 2001; UNGAR, 2011).</b>	
<p>The research purpose is to understand systemic pathways that enable unpredicted positive outcomes in challenged contexts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investigating constraints, enablers and conditions that promote unexpected positive outcomes (education, wellbeing, development) despite challenges.</li> </ul>	<p>Quality research indicated by evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generating evidence on emic conceptualisations of positive outcomes (education, wellbeing, health, economic, environment); and</li> <li>• using emic conceptualisations of positive outcomes as indicators in measurement.</li> </ul>

Source: Elaborated by Liesel Ebersohn

### Transformative, emancipatory research criterion

TAPESTRe foregrounds research which is transformative and emancipatory (FREIRE, 2005), surpassing superficial modifications by tackling foundational causes of inequality and social injustices. From a sustainability science perspective (MARCHESE et al., 2018), it is insufficient to generate knowledge on how to merely absorb injustice, or how to adapt to the unequal distribution of opportunities and resources. Research is required on how to transform away from institutional privilege and prejudice, by questioning existing power structures, norms and systems that continue propagating marginalisation and exclusion. By challenging oppressive systems, involving marginalised communities, and amplifying diverse forms of knowledge, emancipatory scholars aim to contribute to a more inclusive and fair research environment (DENZIN, 2005; FREEDMAN, 2006; FREIRE, 1970).

Emancipatory strategies can act as a trigger for change, effecting social, political and economic revolution by addressing power imbalances and disparities (DENZIN 2005; FREIRE, 1970). Transformative perspectives bring about deep-seated shifts in society by endorsing inclusive policies, champion societal transformation and cultivate critical awareness (FREIRE, 1970). Emancipatory practices involve grassroots activism, critical teaching, and community mobilising, energising individuals and communities for social transformation (FREEDMAN, 2006).

Emancipatory and transformative research align with tenets of knowledge democracy – the tactical use of knowledge for democratic principles and actions. The quality of the research is evaluated in terms of the extent to which evidence exceeds the boundaries of academia to enhance democracy and contribute to a more equitable and healthier world. Emancipatory and transformation researchers disseminate evidence to stakeholders, translating them into accessible forms such as visual illustrations, narratives and community-centric media.

### **Agentic justice**

TAPESTRe calls for agentic justice (SEN, 1999). The test of worthy evidence is the extent to which pathways of action mobilise existing capacity to enable transformation – rather than privileging actions of outsider involvement using outsider resources to empower supposedly powerless groups in need of aid.

Historically, postcolonial and emerging economy spaces have experienced marginalisation due to the lasting effects of colonialism and systemic disparity (SABNIS; NEWMAN, 2022). Social justice research agendas champion fairness, equality and quality (TAKEUCHI et al., 2018). Social justice research targets the redistribution of assets and representation to provide specific resources and support to disadvantaged or marginalised groups, considering their distinct needs and situations (ROBERTS; GREEN, 2013).

However, from an agentic justice lens on social justice, research agendas respect that individuals and communities living in marginalised spaces have the freedom to choose how they will act to use available resources in their own best interest (JERRARD, 2016). According to Sen (1999), agency embodies the capacity of individuals to act and make decisions that shape their lives and advance their well-being. It includes the capability to act and the freedom to choose among various alternatives.

## **Participatory research**

TAPESTRe appreciates participatory research (CHAMBERS, 2010). Participatory research questions the prevailing knowledge production systems, encourages inclusivity and gives voice to marginalised perspectives (BERGOLD; THOMAS, 2012; BOUSSET; MACOMBE; TAVERNE, 2005; VAUGHN; JACQUEZ, 2020). Participatory strategies move beyond traditional research methodologies, aimed at enabling systemic stakeholders to dispute power inequities and modify constraining social, economic and political structures (FREEDMAN, 2006; BOOG, 2003; DENZIN, 2005).

Participatory research is grounded in research strategies that intentionally include those for whom research benefits or gains are intended (teachers, students, families, school-community members, district officials, non-profit organisations, faith-based organisations, local businesses) in hands-on knowledge production – shaping research questions, co-deciding on methodology and co-interpreting results.

The aim is to actively solicit relevant viewpoints, perceptions and knowledge to ensure that the research affords opportunities to uncover alternative worldviews and mirrors their unique circumstances, language and priorities (GALPERIN et al., 2022; GIVEN, 2008; MAZONDE; CARMICHAEL, 2020). Engagement with end-users fosters a group effort to co-create understanding and devise solutions tailored to the intended community's specific social, cultural and situational needs (BOUSSET et al., 2005). This inclusive strategy leads to more thorough and nuanced understandings of intricate social issues and varied perspectives on relevant mechanisms of change; for example, pride and ownership in jointly generated evidence and efficacy to implement solutions in considered pathways to impact (KRETZMANN; MCKNIGHT, 1993),

Central to this mutual partnership is the objective of narrowing the divide between academic theories and real-world experiences, enabling a more democratic research process that emphasises the expertise and lived experiences of all participants (VAUGHN; JACQUEZ, 2020). Participatory approaches, driven by pluralism, oblige researchers to adopt a stance of 'learning from,' setting aside preconceived worldviews. This allows for a mutual exchange, where participants, as custodians of local understanding, are empowered to share their profound knowledge.

## **Emic, place-sensitive research**

TAPESTRe situates insider knowledge centre stage to advocate for pluralism: the inclusion of various viewpoints and knowledge systems in research and interventions. The richness and diversity of human experiences is recognised and different sources of knowledge (local wisdom, indigenous knowledge systems, experiential knowledge) are deliberately included in research (EBERSÖHN, 2019; MAZONDE; CARMICHAEL, 2020).

‘Place’ recognises that individuals and groups have their own unique ways of interpreting and comprehending their personal realities, values, beliefs and culture (GALPERIN et al., 2022; GIVEN, 2008), capturing intricate patterns and relationships rooted in lived, local experiences that resonate deeply with a region's language, culture and context. By including the actual and metaphorical socio-cultural language of a given place, research focuses on specific contexts and individual experiences and thus illuminates the unique triumphs, struggles and encounters of communities (ROBERTS; GREEN, 2013).

Whereas epistemological diversity involves accepting the existence of various epistemologies and ways of understanding and moving beyond traditional academic forms of knowledge, epistemological justice underscores the importance of involving marginalised communities and echoing their experiences. This extends beyond acknowledging diverse viewpoints, endorsing that knowledge is not exclusively derived through conventional Global North paradigms. Epistemological diversity acknowledges the legitimacy and worth of alternative knowledge systems, such as indigenous knowledge, which may provide valuable understandings and solutions to intricate problems (XU, 2020). Welcoming a variety of epistemologies allows researchers to harness the richness of cultural traditions, worldviews and ways of understanding often side-lined or disregarded in research conducted from a dominant Global North perspective.

## **Geopolitical space**

TAPESTRe acknowledges that the country and region space (GAVENTA, 2006) of a study matters for quality research in as much as geopolitical space denote power and knowledge inequality – a consequence of gradients of global development with histories of colonialism – as well as global challenges requiring coordinated evidence-based response from interdependent world regions.

The hegemony of Global Northern knowledge in the global knowledge-reservoir has historically excluded knowledge from the Global South, perpetuating inequality and bias against communities in spaces of marginalisation (MAZONDE; CARMICHEAL, 2020; HLALELE, 2012). As a result of post-colonial histories, and cultural or political disenfranchisement (DADOS; CONNELL, 2012; EBERSÖHN, 2014) knowledge-marginalised spaces vary greatly from those in the Global North. The certainty of experiencing global challenge, together with constant uncertainty, informs global research agendas – often from a sustainability science lens – with a hope to transform away from inequality (FIKSEL, 2006). Endeavours towards the decolonisation of knowledge aim to weave knowledge from previously disadvantaged areas into global conversations (GALPERIN et al., 2022).

The geopolitical space has characterised Global South, BRICS-nations and other postcolonial, LMICs, and emerging economy spaces being denoted as ‘developing’ toward a Global North-scripted ideal of being developed and experiencing a good life. However, irrespective of the geopolitical space of a country, sustainability science intentionally positions global-local knowledge (MILLER; et al., 2014) centrally in knowledge generation, requiring researchers to ‘think globally, act locally’ (FUJITA; CLARK; FREITAS, 2013) – as in the case of climate justice studies. Global and local researchers thus deliberate the ways in which geopolitical trends marginalise Global South researchers, research agendas, practices and resourcing. Considerations include studies that acknowledge and investigate marginalised resources (including language, culture, values, beliefs and practices) which may be mobilised as transformation mechanisms; setting research agendas that generate knowledge ‘good for’ the history, future civic aspirations and enabling practices of a postcolonial space; and contemplating how global partnership studies ensure equality in research decision-making, fieldwork and dissemination.

### **Trustworthiness criteria**

TAPESTRe draws on traditions of trustworthiness (CYPRESS, 2017; NOWELL, et al., 2017; SEAL, 1999; GUBA; LINCOLN, 1994; LONG; JOHNSON, 2000). As argued previously, researchers from knowledge-marginalised spaces often favour small-scale and qualitative research – given the nature of questions asked, the necessity to engage multiple perspectives and funding constraints. Consequently, there is merit in employing an existing qualitative research framework (CYPRESS, 2017; NOWELL et al., 2017; SEAL, 1999;

GUBA; LINCOLN, 1994; LONG; JOHNSON, 2000) to ensure research rigour. Methodological trustworthiness criteria link with other theoretical and methodological TAPESTRe criteria to ensure that findings derived from a study are credible, dependable, and transferable and hold potential for broader applicability and generalisability. The five trustworthiness criteria include confirmability (i.e. the degree to which other researchers can confirm research findings), authenticity (i.e. the degree that research accurately reflects the viewpoints and experiences of local stakeholders), credibility (i.e. the extent to which research is deemed trustworthy and reliable by other external researchers and stakeholders), transferability (i.e. whether research findings can be transferred and applied over different contexts), and dependability (i.e. the consistency of research findings over time (CRESWELL; CRESWELL, 2018; GUBA; LINCOLN, 1994; CYPRESS, 2017; NOWELL et al., 2017; LONG; JOHNSON, 2000).

### **Resilience outcome evidence**

In spaces with extreme needs to address injustice, TAPESTRe centres resilience outcomes (THERON, 2020; BERGER et al., 2018; EBERSÖHN, 2014) as a core research focus. In marginalised spaces it is a luxury for science to exclusively focus on the origin and nature of injustice, as well as the predicted negative education, health and wellbeing outcomes in this scenario. The urgency is to investigate how unpredicted positive education, health and wellbeing outcomes are made possible when resources are limited and need for evidence to ground change is high.

Resilience is more than simply an inherent characteristic – but rather as a process observable through individuals' daily responses to adversity (MASTEN, 2019). Resilience entails socio-ecological processes shaped by the interplay between individuals and their surrounding environment—including family, community, culture and broader socio-economic conditions (UNGAR, 2011; MASTEN, 2019) to promote positive growth and well-being in response to hardship (UNGAR, 2011). Resilience transcends merely rebounding from adversity—it implies pathways that are enabling: readjusting and advancing, leveraging personal strengths, buffers and systemic protective resources within the environment (EBERSÖHN, 2012).

Within the TAPESTRe framework, the emphasis when evaluating research is on foregrounding pathways that bolster unpredicted positive outcomes that may not have been

initially anticipated but have surfaced given insights derived from insider-perspectives, values, beliefs and practices.

## Discussion

Quality research acknowledges geopolitical differences that result from unequal development within different world-regions, as these influence the feasibility and effectiveness of evidence-based policy and practice (EBERSÖHN, 2015). Translating and culturally tailoring existing strategies and standardised measures for use in places of marginalisation may not be the preferred approach for evidence on how to be responsive to local challenges and make the most of local resources. The premise of this article is that TAPESTRe provides a framework to advance the prevalence of publications on quality education research from under-represented global spaces which may be used to inform policy development. Our contention is that TAPESTRe may have utility to support responsive and responsible policy development in the Global South, BRICS-nations or other postcolonial, LMIC, emerging economy spaces.

The proposition is that the use of TAPESTRe may add to research capacity to report on the high quality of studies from marginalised countries. Plausibly, TAPESTRe may similarly be used to evaluate the quality of research from knowledge-marginalised spaces for publication, and publications on quality education research from said spaces may increase. Policy makers may consequently have access to a broader occurrence of evidence which is representative of resources and solutions relevant to particular contextual and cultural realities.

Responsive science may be possible when researchers use TAPESTRe to inform their planning and reporting of studies or applying for funding. TAPESTRe would require that research agendas aim for social impact to address the injustices so prevalent in BRICS and Global South spaces. TAPESTRe-guided research would aim for extraordinary positive resilience outcomes and transformation to address the injustices ubiquitous in BRICS and Global South spaces. Quality research may focus on evidence for policy to inform student nutrition, stable energy supply to schools, and increasing the employability and entrepreneurship capacity of school leavers.

Similarly, responsible science may be likely when TAPESTRe informs quality frameworks for research in geopolitically marginalised spaces. Policy may draw on studies that leverage the wealth of available resources of emic socio-cultural knowledge to access relevant, good-fit solutions that have worked over time for citizens to live good lives despite unceasing



challenge. Implementation of evidence-based policy is enhanced when end-users are viewed as agentic and knowledgeable. Correspondingly, policy implementation may also benefit from TAPESTRe-informed research which valorises systemic participation to support buy-in and ownership into evidence-based policy.

## Conclusion

Education policy and practice depend on relevant and reliable evidence. However, education systems in Global South, BRICS-nations or other postcolonial, LMIC, emerging economy spaces often carry the imprint of Global North knowledge and practices, resulting in the further marginalisation of indigenous populations, as well as local knowledge systems and local perspectives (SAAVEDRA; PÉREZ, 2018). Quality research in knowledge-marginalised spaces need to include relevant quality evidence: local, intergenerational knowledge on how to effectively respond to contextual challenge of chronic disruption worsened by extreme inequality and structural disparity.

The TAPESTRe framework provides a complimentary framework to use as quality appraisal tool to plan, report and evaluate reporting on studies in underrepresented knowledge-spaces as a means to balance out the unequal, global evidence-base which informs education policy and practice. TAPESTRe aligns with a worldwide movement to do research that (i) addresses the power of misrepresentation (VISVANATHAN, 1997), and (ii) brings marginalised perspectives in research to the forefront in terms of space, groups of people, worldviews, language and emic perspectives.

The TAPESTRe framework is grounded in education research engagement in Southern Africa (EBERSÖHN, 2014, 2015, 2019; EBERSÖHN; OMIDIRE; MURPHY, 2022), culminating in a complimentary quality framework for studies from knowledge-marginalised spaces. The TAPESTRe framework resonates with a critique on the overreliance on Global North-centric philosophies (MURPHY; OGATA; SCHOUTE, 2023) and an entrenched valorisation of statistical significance as the hallmark of research validity. In challenging the monolithic epistemic justification rooted in post-positivistic traditions, the TAPESTRe framework endorses a broader conception of valued thinking. Like TAPESTRe, this critique and that of Collins (2000) advocates for the inclusion of historically marginalised voices and acknowledges the significance of subjective, transparent, situative and value-laden

methodologies. The TAPESTRe framework adds to this call for awareness and credibility of knowledge produced in collaboration with knowledge-marginalised communities.

TAPESTRe is put forth as a framework to assess the reporting quality of studies, however, the framework can also be used as (i) a proximal way of determining the quality of a study and (ii) a distal way of estimating the quality of an intervention itself.

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