

Chapter 10

Shaping Policy and Practice in South Africa's Heritage Institutions Through Expert Opinion: A Delphi Method Study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to ascertain whether the Delphi process can be effectively implemented to examine the extent to which policy and best practice pertaining to indigenous interests held in networked environments can address contestations regarding ownership. The chapter provides an overview of the Delphi research technique especially its design and administration. It also examines the possible bottlenecks which can undermine the proper application of the Delphi technique especially to indigenous knowledge research within the field of library and information science. Paying proper attention to these bottlenecks should ensure successful application of the method. The chapter concludes that the Delphi method can be a valid and reliable research technique in this field. The method has evolved as experience with it has accumulated, and its application to new areas of study continues to gain momentum.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In order to achieve the stated purposes of an indigenous knowledge (IK) related study, researchers in the field of library and information science (LIS) need to pay particular attention to reporting on the methods employed in the study than sometimes has been the case. This chapter proposes that the Delphi technique can be an efficient, transparent, and reliable method of reviewing complex issues in a specialised field of study such as IK. This methodology may be ideal for various peer reviewed processes within the field of LIS, particularly where there is limited access to local experts. The chapter is based on a Delphi

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method study which examined the contestation of indigenous cultural rights pertaining to IK currently held in heritage institutions in South Africa. The South Africa Music Archive Project (SAMAP) was used as a case study.

The SAMAP initiative was conceived in order to respond to the absence of a coherent approach to promote indigenous music genres in post-apartheid South Africa. The project's objective was to network with different indigenous music collectors and donors in the country in order "to gather, preserve and make accessible through electronic services, South African indigenous music in digital form for research, teaching and learning" purposes (Chisa, 2012, p. 2). In that sense, the project endeavoured to facilitate the engagement of academic research with other systems of knowledge with a view to expanding research capacity in the field of IK in the country. The project was implemented within the context of an interdisciplinary National Research Foundation (NRF) initiative on indigenous knowledge systems. SAMAP created partnerships with the School of Music at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and other relevant heritage institutions such as the Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA) in order to achieve this goal (Chisa, 2012).

SAMAP also collaborated with various indigenous music collectors, indigenous music publishers and independent music labels whose materials had been identified for digitisation purposes. The aim was to "collect, protect, promote and produce South African ... indigenous music that could previously not be heard within the mainstream record and broadcast industries" as the music was deemed "politically sensitive and subversive" during the apartheid era (Chisa, 2012, p. 2). The SAMAP project, therefore, would digitise and restore indigenous music from these "hidden years" as a resource for the future. Digitisation refers to the ability to capture, store, retrieve, display, process and disseminate records electronically using a variety of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Chisa & Ngulube, 2017). Within the field of LIS, digitisation is seen as an extremely essential means to ensure the survival and sustainability of indigenous related material.

In this chapter, indigenous music will refer to music and lyrics, instrumental pieces and indigenous rhythms and songs created primarily by indigenous South Africans or based on the 'intellectual cultural property' of indigenous South Africans (Chisa & Ngulube, 2017). Indigenous music is an important means of expressing indigenous heritage. Indigenous heritage is enshrined in indigenous cultural and intellectual rights. However, under the existing IPRs regime, these rights are not always protected. This is why the use of indigenous cultural protocols such as customary law ought to be explored when digitising different aspects of IK (Lebaka, 2018).

The literature shows that although digitisation of IK is ideal for sharing, exchanging, researching and preserving indigenous cultures, it also creates numerous opportunities for illicit access to and abuse of indigenous material housed in various heritage institutions across the continent (Burtis, 2010; Chisa & Ngulube, 2017). The chapter, therefore, seeks to ascertain whether the Delphi process can be an efficient, transparent and reliable method to examine consensus or any emerging patterns regarding policy and protocol formulation with respect to access, ownership, preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage material at SAMAP.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The intersection of IK, digitisation and IPRs in heritage institutions in Africa is still a complicated legal minefield (Chisa & Hoskins, 2015). There are numerous opinions regarding what the problems may be,

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