Re-Thinking Ethical Issues in Academic Research: Perspectives from Zimbabwe

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Abstract
Ethical issues in academic research have not been revisited from time to time by the Zimbabwean society thus ethics has been given less prominence in this country. As a result, there is very little effort put to formalise guidelines on how research is supposed to be conducted by researchers in the various tertiary institutions and research organisations. This paper therefore seeks to refresh discussions and debate on ethical principles and guidelines that are relevant to academic researchers in Zimbabwe, Africa and beyond. The objective is to promote and protect rights of participants and to sensitise and encourage researchers to respect participants' rights and needs. Ideas in this paper should help to make ethics an integral part of the planning and methodology of research. The paper concludes by making recommendations for an ethical framework based on moral principles relevant to the people of Zimbabwe and also encourages educational institutions to come up with Institutional Research Review Boards (IRRB) so as to regulate academic research planning and methodology.

Keywords: ethics, research, consent, ethical principles, confidentiality.

Introduction
From time to time society revisits the rules applied to research with human subjects and the implementation of guiding ethical principles. The need for reassessment may arise from challenges presented by novel scientific advances or revelations of abuse (Gutmann & Wagner, 2011). With the introduction of any new technology, there exist both new potential opportunities and new unforeseen ethical pitfalls. For example, a cellphone is much like a telephone but it creates new situations and possibilities that need to be considered hence as a society we must adjust accordingly (Grimes, Fleischman & Jaeger, 2009). Research entails working with people with a range of special needs particularly in the more personalised areas of qualitative research thus demanding sensitivity and an increased awareness of the great vulnerability of many of these research participants. The effects, short or long term that
Research may have on the emotional well being of participants must always be at the forefront of our consciousness as scholars struggle to make the day-to-day decisions that guide both qualitative and quantitative researchers in the field.

Zimbabwe is an African country that has experienced a steady growth of research in both social and natural sciences and this research is being carried out on a wide range of topics and issues including those that have the potential to seriously invade the privacy and security of individuals (Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe, 2004). Methodologies employed for such research have also expanded in range and depth and there is considerable increase in the types and numbers of individuals and institutions undertaking such research and those sponsoring and funding it. On the contrary, this majestic rise in research activities is not matched to ethics, because ethical issues in academic research are given less prominence in this country and efforts to formalise guidelines on how research is supposed to be conducted appear to be minimal. The objective of writing this paper is to promote observance of ethics, ethical values and ethical self-regulations during research thus the aim of the paper is to sensitise and encourage researchers and organisations to respect participant’s rights and needs. The paper also seeks to inform all researchers of the need to be continually aware of how research can impact on participants and of respecting at all times the wishes of those people who allow us to share their views of the world. The best interests of the participants rather than the best interests of our research must always be the guiding principle. Ideas in this paper therefore shall help to make ethics an integral part of the planning and methodology of research particularly in Zimbabwe.

A Brief Historical Background

History has repeatedly demonstrated that horrible atrocities can occur without proper ethical guidelines and enforcement. The most distressing ones are the Guatemala and the Tuskegee Syphilis studies carried out by American researchers in the 20th century. In an effort to avoid a repeat of such atrocities in future, President Barack Obama, on 24 November 2010 set up a Presidential Commission to conduct a thorough review of current regulations and international standards to assess whether they adequately protect human subjects in federally supported scientific studies, no matter where they occur. The President had this to say about abuse of human subjects in research;

Recently we discovered that the US Public Health Service conducted research on sexually transmitted diseases in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948 involving the intentional infection of vulnerable human populations. The research was clearly unethical… (Gutmann & Wagner, 2011: 6).

Mr Obama established this commission with a view to get assurance that current rules for research participants protect people from harm or unethical treatment, domestically as well as internationally. In a related incident again in America, President Clinton of the United States of America on May 16, 1997 apologized to the survivors and families of hundreds of men in Alabama who were used in a research project to study the progression of untreated syphilis. These men were mainly villagers from Macon County of Alabama who were very poor African Americans and had very few resources available to them (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005). In 1932, when physicians and researchers involved with United States Public Health Services offered them free medical care, they believed they had found treatment for what they had been told was ‘bad blood’. Instead, they were enrolled in an
observational research study without their knowledge or consent. In exchange for their participation the men received free medical examination (primarily to provide data for the study), transportation and hot meals on the days of their examination. Over and above these ‘benefits’, they were also given US$50.00 pocket money.

Even though some rudimentary remedies for syphilis were available in the early years of the study, they were not offered to these men so that the study of the natural history of the untreated disease would not be jeopardised. The study of untreated syphilis in the male Negro did not end until 1972 that is, forty years after it had begun. Even twenty years after penicillin had been discovered as an effective treatment for syphilis, the research subjects were denied treatment.

In yet another similar incident, on September 17, 1997, 18 year-old Jesse Gelsinger died after being injected with a genetically crippled virus while participating in a gene therapy trial at the University of Pennsylvania (Winter, 2003). Less than two years later, a healthy 24-year-old volunteer named Ellen Roche was asphyxiated after inhaling a test chemical during a clinical trial on asthma drugs at John’s Hopkins University. In the aftermath of these deaths, Gelsinger’s family sued the University of Pennsylvania and the U.S. office of Human Research Protections put an immediate halt to all federally funded research on humans at facilities at John’s Hopkins.

During World War 2, the Nazi regime also committed a significant number of horrifying human medical experiments on prisoners of war and concentration camp inmates (Proctor, 1988; Weindling, 2005). These experiments included infecting non-voluntary ‘participants’ with malaria, freezing them for frostbite research, performing pressurization experiments with high altitudes, exposing their bodies to various industrial materials and introducing them to various deathly gases, bacterium, viruses and poisons (Spitz, 2005). These experiments were often carried out in sadistic manner with no concern for scientific principles and the participants’ ultimate well being. Many survivors suffered severe pain and experienced horrible deaths in large numbers with little to negligible gain for their unwilling sacrifices (Weindling, 2005).

In Britain, a pathologist, Dr, Dick van Velsen systematically ‘harvested’ for seven years, organs from dead children in an unnecessary illegal and unethical way (Thomas, 2001). Rather than being used for medical research, much of the tissue was stockpiled. Tabloids in Britain had different pet names for the accused pathologist, Dr Dick van Velsen. The Daily Mirror for example, called him ‘The Baby Butcher’ and The Daily Express called him ‘Monster’. Furthermore, in Britain, according to Thomas (ibid), the international papers reported that children’s hospitals throughout Britain routinely stripped organs from dead babies often without their parents’ consent. It is this professional arrogance and unforgivable high-handedness that would lead to revulsion toward legitimate research procedures.

In Zimbabwe, the ghost of the McGown case continues to haunt the country’s civil society, several years after the anesthetist Dr Richard McGown, used an epidural caudal injection of morphine adrenaline and lignotox for post-operative pain relief (MOTO, 1996). As a result of the doctor’s irregular methods of treatment, several people died. Daniel Tinashe Zengeni (Zimbabwean) collapsed and suffered severe brain damage after epidural caudal morphine
and lignocaine were used for circumcision on 21 November 1985; Tsitsi Chidodo (Zimbabwean) died in January 1987 following a procedure to fill tooth cavities; Kalpesh Magindas (of Indian parents) died in July 1988 following a circumcision in which epidural morphine and lignocaine were used as pain relief; Lavender Kaminwa (Kenyan) died in August 1990 a few hours after an appendix operation in which epidural caudal morphine and lignocaine were used for pain relief. Rose Apinhe Osazuwa, Irene Papatheocharus and many others died a few hours after epidural morphine and lignocaine had been used for pain relief (ibid). In this medical experiment by a renowned medical practitioner, children and black women seemed to have been the particular targets of the alleged clinical trials. Dr McGown had been conducting medical experiments on unsuspecting and unwitting human participants.

These examples are clear testimonies that demonstrate ethical misconduct in human research. All the given examples symbolise the abuse of vulnerable people by both American and British researchers (Love, Thomson & Royal, 1999). Similar incidents have also occurred in Zimbabwe, as shown in the above-mentioned McGown case, hence the need to have a code of conduct for use by Zimbabwean researchers because DuPlooy (1995) argues that it is important for researchers to know and understand what is regarded as proper and improper in communities they operate in.

Defining Ethics
When most people think of ethics or morals, they think of rules for distinguishing between right and wrong (Magwa & Magwa, 2015). The most common way of defining ethics is to refer to it as norms of conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Moral is a term used to refer to principles of right and wrong behaviour (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Ethics thus, is a system or a set of rules or standards governing the conduct of researchers carrying out investigations. Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995) opine that ethics has to do with respect for human rights since it involves considerations such as fairness honesty, respect for the integrity and dignity of the individual and confidentiality of certain information. Ethical considerations and practices are therefore concerned with the personal behaviour of the researcher. Collins et al (2000:107) also define ethics as that which is morally justifiable and has a lot to do with human rights. It is a code of professional conduct that should guide researchers as they engage in research. Research is a discipline that needs to be governed by the code of conduct thus ethics in one way or the other impacts on all forms of research. Ethical issues arise in both types of research thus Denscombe cited in Grix (2010) sums up the role of ethics in research saying that at a practical level it deals with what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. People’s actions are considered right or wrong basing on their intentions and whether the consequences of their actions are good or bad.

Justification of Ethics in Research
Most academic institutions in Zimbabwe do not have comprehensive ethical guidelines for researchers pursuing higher degrees which can be used by all our students. This is unlike institutions elsewhere e.g. South Africa or even here in Zimbabwe for example, medical research by the Medical Council in particular, where the issue of ethics is given the highest priority. The Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (MRCZ), which is the National Ethics Committee (NEC), was established in 1974 in terms of the Research Act of 1959. The aim was to provide health researchers and institutions in which health research is conducted, with
independent ethical advice on research. The MRCZ is composed of scientists, patient representatives and community representatives. The Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare supports it and it is independent in its reflection, advice and decisions (MRCZ, 2004). The MRCZ functions similarly to an Institutional Review Board in USA and it is particularly concerned with research that addresses issues that are of relevance to Zimbabwe. Some of its objectives are:

- To provide ethical guidance and advice on research programs undertaken within Zimbabwe.
- To provide as requested ethical guidelines for Zimbabwe medical researchers.
- To provide guidance, advice and decision in the form of approval/disapproval to specific research protocols intended to be conducted in Zimbabwe by all stakeholders.

Unlike research carried out at universities offering programs in natural sciences, most of the research that are conducted in most institutions with our students, the research activities are conducted with the participation of human beings or have an impact on society and environment. Therefore, it is essential that researchers particularly higher degrees students understand ethical issues and the impact of their activities on society (Gibson, Allen & Sturman, 2001). Human beings unlike matter have feelings and fears hence the need for researchers to create special relationships with participants. Human subjects in research are indispensable and their cooperation in an investigation is of paramount importance. Researchers therefore need to treat them respectfully and ethically.

It is important that researchers maintain the dignity and welfare of participants. Respondents in any research process need to be assured of the protection of their rights, failure to which they may feel exposed to risks, physical injury, psychological discomfort, victimisation or loss of privacy. It is when the later happens that participants may withdraw or withhold research relevant information. Ethical standards require that researchers do not put participants in a situation where they might be harmed, whether physical or psychological. Harm can be embarrassment, anger, irritation, and emotional stress, loss of self-esteem, exacerbation of stress or damage to personal dignity. This realisation demands that every researcher should at all costs make the protection and promotion of participants’ rights intrinsic and a priority at every stage of the research process.

Ethical guidelines in academic research

Denzin and Lincoln (1984) assert that research creates a special relationship between researchers and their human subjects, thus it is very important that the protection and promotion of the rights of participants should be kept intrinsic at every stage of the research process. This can only be achieved by adhering to certain regulations of research that are commonly known as research ethical principles or guidelines. Ethical principles should be for the promotion of human welfare, for the enhancement of dignity, potential and uniqueness of each individual and thus to service the society. If participants are to be seen as indispensable and worthy partners in research, certain codes of conduct should be made pertinent at every stage of the research process, to ensure that the participants’ rights are protected and promoted. O’ Sullivan & Russell (1995) postulate that the protection and promotion of human rights in research hinges mainly on the notion of informed consent, guaranteed
confidentiality and privacy only to mention but a few. The ethical framework for social science researchers in Zimbabwe should rest on the pillars discussed below.

**Relationship with participants**

Participants should be seen as indispensable and worthy partners in research, hence any research project that is undertaken should not adversely affect the physical, the social or the psychological well being of the participants (Jesani & Barai, 2004). Social science researchers should avoid placing participants in situations where they might be risks that may cause harm. Harm in this context can be both physical and psychological. It can be embarrassment, anger, irritation, emotional stress, loss of self-esteem or damage to personal dignity.

Selection of those who will take part in the research should be fair. Easy accessibility of the participants alone does not constitute a fair criterion for their selection or inclusion in research. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that no particular group or groups should be unfairly excluded from research, as that could well exclude them from the social understanding of their situation and can also unfairly exclude them from direct or indirect benefits of research. The principle of justice assumes that people are equal before the law. Justice refers to the ethical obligation to treat each person in accordance with what is morally right and proper, to give each person what is due to him or her. Differences in distribution of the burdens and benefits are justifiable only if they are based on morally relevant distinctions between persons. The researcher should be concerned with the well being of the participants irrespective of race, gender or ethnicity.

Welfel (1998) argues that the rights of participants cannot be divorced from the research process and the key to protecting human participants is to maximise possible benefits and minimise possible harms. At all times, risks and benefits are to be distributed fairly and without bias. The author goes on to explain in detail how the rights of research participants were ignored in some research studies conducted in the USA in the 1940s when cancer cells were injected into participants during the Tuskegee experiments. Such acts of misconduct should be avoided as they reduce the human dignity and they violate the respect that should be given to human life.

Participants must have the right to choose whether or not they want to be part of the research and they have the right to change their decision or withdraw at any stage of the research process without assigning any reason. The risks and benefits of the research to the prospective participants must be fully considered. If research is likely to lead to unnecessary physical harm or mental distress, then it should not be undertaken. The investigator must protect the participants from physical and mental discomfort, harm and danger that may arise from such procedures (Borg & Gall, 1974). If risks of such consequences exist the investigator informs the participant of that fact.

**Informed consent**

The researcher should always obtain the individual’s consent before gathering data on them (DuPlooy, 1995; Ary et al, 1979; Borg & Gall, 1974). Informed consent, according to O’Sullivian & Russell (1995), is the cornerstone of ethical research procedure because each participant must be informed of the purpose of the research and risks that may be incurred if
he/she takes part in the research project. Essentially this means that prospective research participants must be fully informed about procedures and risks involved in research and must give their consent to participate. This means a brief description of the purpose of the research, duration and a statement of any risks or discomfort associated with participation. Dooley (2003) says participants; or respondents should know the elements for the subject matter and be allowed to make a good decision. O’ Sullivan & Russell (1995:222) further note that “informed consent implies identifying the ratio of risks to benefits” The client should be allowed to choose to participate or not to after being given all the relevant information about the risks or harm that could arise if they participate in the research.

Voluntary participation of individuals or communities is necessary for research. However, it should be noted that ‘a greater risk to participants also means the greater the need for informed consent’. Consent for participation in research is voluntary and informed only if it is given without any direct coercion and inducement and is based on adequate briefing given to the participants about the details of the project. The briefing should be given both verbally and in writing, in a manner and language that the participants know and understand. Informing the individual respondent must not be simply a ritual recitation of the contents of a written document. Rather, the investigator must convey the information whether orally or in writing in language that suits the individual’s level of understanding. The investigator must bear in mind that the prospective research participant’s ability to understand the information necessary to give informed consent depends on that individual’s maturity, intelligence, education and belief system. The verbal or written briefing of the participants should include the following details:

(i) **Purpose of research:** The goal of the research should be presented in simple local language.

(ii) **Identity of the researchers:** Name and address of researchers(s) and the institution(s) they represent.

(iii) Identity of others associated with the research: Name(s) and address of funder(s) or sponsor(s) if any.

(iv) **Why selected:** Reasons or method for selecting the particular locality, community and any other setting, individuals or groups within that community for participation, in the study.

(v) **Harms and benefits:** The possible, anticipated and potential benefits or harms of research and their participation.

(vi) **Future use of information:** The use of the information or data obtained should be made known to participants.

(vii) **Right not to participate:** the participants should be informed that they are free to object to and refuse to allow the use of data gathering devices such as camera, or tape recorder. They have the right to decline participation outright without penalty or undesirable consequences (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1993).

In the case of research that involves children below the age of fourteen years, informed consent should be sought from the parents/guardians as well as the children themselves. If the parents/guardians consent to participate and the children decline to do so, the rights of the children should be respected.
Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

The right whether to remain anonymous or to be identified lies with the participant. Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality are the inherent rights of all participants (Ary et al, 1979). These become more important in research that deals with sensitive or personal issues and information. Appropriate methods should be devised to ensure privacy at the time of data collection and the obligation to maintain privacy, anonymity and confidentiality extends to the entire research team, other researchers in the institution, the administrative staff and all those not directly associated with the research that may possibly have access to the information. Researchers should maintain appropriate anonymity and confidentiality of information in creating, storing, accessing transferring and dispersing of records under their control, whether these are written, automated or in any other medium (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Once research data have been collected, the researcher should make certain that no one has access to the data except him and possibly a few co-investigators.

Whenever possible, the names of participants should be removed from data collection instruments and are placed by a code (Jesani & Barai, 2004). The confidentiality of the individual must be further protected by not using the names of individuals in any publications that result from the research project. It is generally agreed among social scientists that participants should be given assurances of confidentiality by the researcher and that these assurances should be rigidly adhered to. There is evidence that an absolute assurance of confidentiality increases the number of participants willing to cooperate in research. This is especially true when sensitive topics such as sexual intercourse or marijuana use are involved. To secure confidentiality the researcher should ask participants to furnish information anonymously. This strategy virtually eliminates the possibility that an individual can be linked to these responses.

Relationship among researchers

Principal researchers are responsible for the ethical conduct of research by all juniors, assistants, students and trainees. At the same time juniors, assistants, students and trainees have an equal responsibility for ethical conduct and observance of ethical guidelines. Principal researchers have a responsibility to provide proper training and guidance regarding all aspects of research, including ethical conduct (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). On the other hand, research assistants have a right to receive good training and guidance.

The principal researchers should delegate to the juniors only those responsibilities that they are reasonably capable of performing on the basis of their education, training or experience. No researcher should impose views, or try to seek personal sexual or economic gain from anybody including other researchers junior, assistants, trainees and students (Jesani & Barai, 2004). Principal researchers should desist from coercing other researchers especially juniors into serving as research participants or using them as sources of cheap labor. Members of the research team should be co-operative, responsive, honest and respectful about the interest, opinion, views, capability and work of other researchers, including the so-called juniors and assistants. While working in the teams on a research project, at the outset, all members of the team have a right to know and document all aspects of research including ownership of the data (ibid). Students who are participating in a research project should have the right to opt out of a research project without having to face adverse consequences.
Following channels: Researchers and institutions

When working with institutions such as a school, hospital or university, it is very important to follow appropriate channels of authority (Winter, 2003). If the researcher plans to use participants from more than one school for example, it is generally necessary first to obtain approval from the Provincial Education Director (P.E.D) in the case of Zimbabwe’s education system. After obtaining such approval, the researcher should visit each school concerned and present his/her idea to the head of the school. The interest and cooperation of all persons concerned with the research is necessary if it is to be carried through to a successful conclusion.

After the Provincial Education Director and the School Head have been briefed about the purpose of the research and the procedures to be followed, it usually will be necessary for the researcher to meet with teachers in the schools and obtain their consent and cooperation. It may also be desirable that parents be informed about the nature of the study and given an opportunity to express their opinions. This may often be done by having the researcher present his/her plans at School Development Association (SDA) meetings in the schools involved. It is usually necessary for the researcher to prepare a letter explaining the purpose of the study (ibid). This letter should be sent home to parents of all children who will participate as respondents and should provide space where the parent may sign to signify approval of the child’s participation in the research.

According to Jesani & Barai (2004), it is not only necessary to establish good working relationships before starting your research, but it is equally important to maintain these relationships during the whole period of the research. A researcher who is regarded as a friend and colleague has a much easier task than one who is regarded as an outsider with unknown motives.

Rights and responsibilities of researchers

Institutions should create and maintain an environment with good support systems that enable researchers to follow ethical guidelines. Institutions have also an additional responsibility to take appropriate and adequate steps for protection against pressures inimical to the observance of ethical guidelines for research. Researchers have a right to refrain from undertaking or continue undertaking any research that contravenes ethical guidelines, violates the integrity of research or compromises their autonomy in research, including design, methodology, analysis, and interpretation of findings and publication (O’Sullivan & Russel, 1995). If they feel that their rights are being violated or that the study is unethical, they should make all possible efforts at making corrections and if remedial measures fail they should exercise their right to terminate the study or to opt out of it.

Academics should undertake only such research that according to their understanding will be useful to society (Jesani & Barai, 2004). They also have a right as well as responsibility to make all necessary efforts to bring the research and its findings to the public domain in an appropriate manner. Researchers should ensure that there is honesty and transparency at an early stage of research as there are indispensable for good and ethical research. There should not be fabrication, plagiarism or other unethical practices at any stage of the research and the researchers should ensure that the findings of the research are reported accurately and
truthfully. All parties involved in research and dissemination of its findings should inculcate and practice sensitivity and respect for culture and other aspects of the group or community studied. Researchers must ensure respect, protection and promotion of rights of participations. The criteria used to select participants should also be fair besides being scientific. They (Researchers) should always report the progress of their work and submit a copy of the final report or results of research to funders or sponsors. A sponsor has also a right to get a copy of the ethical guidelines for research followed by the researchers and institutions.

**Reporting and publishing research findings**

Research remains incomplete until one has written the report. Even the most brilliant well-designed and conducted research is useless unless it is effectively communicated to others (Chikoko & Mhloyi, 1995). Reporting of research and its results is the right as well as the duty of every researcher and institution that conducted the study. Research results should be reported irrespective of whether they support or contradict the expected outcomes (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Best & Khan, 1993; Borg & Gal, 1974). Researchers should disclose in their publications, the source(s) of funding unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. The findings should also explain the methodology used, as well as how, in actual practice the ethical guidelines were followed, ethical dilemmas encountered and how they were resolved (Jesani & Barai, 2004).

Researchers should avoid dissemination of the results of research before they are peer-reviewed or published in appropriate journals. When such results are disseminated through the popular media, extra care should be taken to ensure that even those media persons not specifically trained in social science research are able to comprehend the limitations and implications of research results. Journalists and the media that publish these research results have a responsibility to do so truthfully and honestly. When researchers publish a report or any other documents based on research, they should make adequate efforts to ensure easy availability and accessibility to the document.

The following guidelines should be followed when giving credit to authorship while reporting the research in any form:

- Authorship and its sequence in case of more than one author should be based on the quantum of contribution made in terms of ideas, conceptualization, actual performance of the research, analysis and writing of the report. Authorship and its sequence should not be based on the status of the individual in the institution or elsewhere.
- All other individuals not satisfying the criteria for authorship but whose contribution made the conduct and completion of research or publication possible should be properly acknowledged.
- A student should be listed as principal or first author on any multiple authored publications that substantially derives from the students’ dissertation or thesis.
- Appropriate credits should be given where data or information from other studies or publications is quoted or otherwise included (Page, 1998).
Before accepting the research based articles for publication, editors have the right and duty to ensure that such material is duly reviewed by referees deemed by the publication committee to have the relevant expertise and knowledge in the particular field (ibid). Publishing research data should be done in a form, which is in consonance with the interest and rights of the participants. Researchers and the institution where the research is conducted, have a joint right over the ownership of all raw data. Along with this right, they are fully responsible for ensuring that when such data including those that identify participants are shared with other researchers, all necessary measures are taken and followed to maintain confidentiality. As far as possible, researchers and institutions should ensure that relevant summary findings of the research are taken back to the research participants in a form and manner that they can understand.

Referees and editorial staff should be aware of the editorial policy including the need for articles to adhere to prescribed ethical norms. Contributors should be informed that the material submitted for publication should not be fabricated, falsified or plagiarised. When we use words and ideas of other people and present them as if they were our own, we are committing the crime of plagiarism (Duplooy, 1995). If any doubt were raised about the ethical statutory or ethical conduct of the study on which the said material is based, editors would take appropriate corrective steps. It should be noted by all researchers that honesty and ethical conduct in writing research reports involves providing all the facts without distortion or misrepresentation.

Conclusion
The guidelines and principles presented in this paper should help to produce an ethical framework with principles of research that are relevant to academic research in Zimbabwe. A framework of ethics should be arrived at on the basis of the context of the situation and the guidelines should be seen as approximate standards informing the choice of action in a concrete situation. The ideas presented in this paper therefore should be seen as an endeavor to share, discuss and provide assistance to new and old academic researchers conducting research in various parts of the country. The ethical principles and guidelines do not by themselves resolve all ethical problems and dilemmas which may face researchers, hence for each dilemma and conflict they face, researchers are advised that the resolution of the dilemma may best be arrived at in concrete relation to the context and circumstances. We must always remember the importance of ethical guidelines and principles in human subject based research because history has shown us the dangerous consequences that befall us if we fail to live up to basic ethical practices and standards. Therefore, as new technologies are introduced into our society, so is the need to re-evaluate ethical practices to match the changes introduced by technology to match those historical ideals.

Recommendations
In light of the above, we would like to recommend the following:

- That the Zimbabwean government should vigorously inspect all academic institutions for their compliance with regulations regarding the ethical and responsible treatment of individuals participating in research. Colleges and universities in Zimbabwe have been funding research activities by members of staff but the Research Boards that approve these applications for research funding seem to concentrate on financial matters at the expense of the human factor in academic research. Thus universities,
colleges of education and other educational institutions in this country should establish Institutional Research Review Boards (IRRBs) that shall review all research plans involving the use of human beings as participants in virtually any manner. These Boards are expected to review and approve all research proposals involving human participants i.e. research that entails interviewing or interacting with human beings. The Review Boards should help to put in place national research guidelines to be used by all researchers in Zimbabwe.

- All research carried out in Zimbabwe should be reviewed and approved initially by an IRRB. For a proposal to be approved, the IRRB must determine that each of the following items below is satisfied:
  - Physical and psychological risks to subjects are minimised.
  - Selection of subjects is equitable.
  - Informed consent should always be obtained before conducting research that involves participation of human beings.
- Those who sponsor or engage in human subjects’ research have an ethical obligation to protect those who volunteer as research subjects hence the government should institute policies that compel treatment or compensation for treatment for injuries suffered by research subjects.
- Finally, the Zimbabwe government should establish a National Commission for the Protection of Human Rights in Research (NCPHRR) to govern the conduct of research that involves human participants. All academic institutions conducting research should agree to apply these regulations to all of their research protocols regardless of the funding sources for each particular study.

The recommendations stated above should provide guidance to academic researchers in Zimbabwe, Africa and the rest of the world.

References


