Abstract

This research takes a qualitative approach using socially constructed knowledge claims and advocacy-participatory knowledge claims as the methodological framework for accommodating the Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies (Creswell, 2003, pp. 6-8). Socially constructed knowledge claims acknowledge that individuals understand the world through subjective experiences. The resulting complexity of views, rather than narrowing of views, is desirable in making meaning by the researcher. Participants shared interactions, historical and cultural norms, as well as the specific contexts in which people live and work are taken into consideration by the researcher. Advocacy-participatory knowledge claims inform the research design because the structured laws and theories of post-positivism do “not fit marginalized individuals or groups or did not adequately address issues of social justice” (Silverman, 2005, p. 9). The work of emancipatory theorists such as Habermas and Freire initiated advocacy-participatory research approaches, which integrate an action agenda for reform that considers politics and political agendas and may change the lives of participants (Silverman, 2005).

In general, theories are used to understand phenomena and arrange concepts within a framework that can facilitate a greater understanding of the relationships among the concepts (Silverman, 2005). In this research, I am drawing on Indigenous knowledge and theory, critical theory, and emancipatory theory to assist in discussion of the research. Indigenous knowledge and theory has been studied in academic literature for several decades and is accepted as an important foundation for working with Aboriginal Peoples because it contextualizes cultural worldviews (Wilson S., 2008; Peat, 2005; Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009).

Representatives of participating Aboriginal PSE places of learning will complete the national SEPN survey on-line and participate in a personal interview. Use of the survey and interview requires a mixed method approach to include quantitative and qualitative data. Since the national SEPN survey was not designed specifically for Aboriginal PSE places of learning, the supplementary interview, with questions appropriate to inclusion of cultural knowledge and my research questions, will be used to augment responses.

Results

The results of this research will be used to construct a manuscript style dissertation.

Methodology & Methods

This research is designed to determine the status of sustainability practices and drivers in select Aboriginal post-secondary education places of learning and identify how their capacity for engagement in culturally relevant community-based conservation and environmental decision-making may be advanced through a national sustainability network. The relationship between sustainability and Indigenous knowledges comprises an important part of the research.

1. Interview educators at select Aboriginal post-secondary places of learning about their sustainability practices and policies, community-based conservation practices, and involvement with national and international decision-making processes on environmental issues;

2. Produce three publishable manuscripts based on research data collected including manuscripts on:
   - existing sustainability policies and practices in Aboriginal post-secondary education places of learning;
   - linkages of Aboriginal institutional sustainability practices with community-based conservation and national and international decision-making on environmental issues (examining how practices align with legal and policy instruments such as Aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada, international human rights, and environmental standards); and
   - components of a new model that could build local capacity to engage in networking on environment and sustainability issues.

3. Contribute research findings to the larger Sustainability and Education Policy Network (SEPN) study being conducted on the practice-policy gap of sustainability education and its linkages to larger Canadian environmental issues.

References


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Traditional protocols, principles of behaviour, languages, spiritual beliefs, kinship, and relationships with non-human life-forms are based on demonstrating how Aboriginal Peoples understand their reliance on the natural world.

(Michell, 2006; Reland, 1998; Tester & Irniq, 2008)

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Traditional belief systems are not artifacts of the past, but comprise the foundation of decision-making in everyday life, including social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

- Yvonne Vizina