

Application Journal Reflections

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ERES 800

Revised March 9 2019
Original April 9, 2018

Introduction

I have written this journal going back over my entries from this course. Although I wrote the entries on various topics, a few major focuses have stood out. These have included; my perspective as a teacher on research, Indigenous methodologies in Western academics, and engaging in group collaboration and projects. In this submission, I will discuss these three areas.

Perspectives on research by a teacher

As a teacher I have always been skeptical of research in education. This has partially been due to my own critical nature but also due to some contradictory research that I have come across during my professional experience and my graduate studies. Thus I have found by taking this course that I now believe that I am more adept (but by no means an expert) at reading and interpreting research.

In a couple of my entries I wrote that often I find that policy makers and government officials have made claims that their policies are backed by research. Often those in opposition to the decision being made will mention different research that is contradictory. The concern that I have here is that everyone seems to be finding research that justifies their own political beliefs or stems from some financial or philosophical decision. It rarely seems that unbiased multiple perspectives are presented. A similar example would be an elementary school that has designated certain “best practices” which would be certain teaching methods or products that have been given this designation. When I asked a teacher from this school, they told me that they were told that these methods and products were shown by research to be the best way to teach a specific topic. They were never given a copy of this research themselves, they were really

just told that this is what they should be doing in their classrooms. I would ask myself, "if these were truly best practices, why is it that not all schools are using them?".

Upon completing the readings and engaging my peers in discussion, I have come to the belief that it is important for teachers to have an understanding of different research designs and a basic idea for how to evaluate research. McMillan and Schumacher(2010) outline the basics of different research designs through pages 26-44. With the potential of contradictory research being used to influence educational policies, I believe that it is important for a teacher to have a fundamental understanding of research so that they can better understand and evaluate what may be coming their way.

In addition to this I believe that it is also important for teachers to have an understanding of design validity when it comes to research studies, especially quantitative ones. McMillan and Schumacher again outline this on pages 104-117. I don't think that a teacher would need to be an expert in this area, but it would be important to know enough to identify a study that has potential problems from one that has been executed to a high standard. Thus a teacher would be able to again be more competent evaluating educational methods and policies.

Indigenous methodologies

A significant portion of this course was spent looking at Margaret Kovach's book *Indigenous Methodologies* (2009). This was a new area for me. As a non-Indigenous person, I found that many of the ideas in the text resonated, and that they brought forward considerations regarding research that I was not aware of previously. In my application journal as well as on the course discussion boards, I have indicated that I believe that it is important to tread cautiously as a non-Indigenous person when discussing or engaging in research regarding Indigenous peoples and/or methodologies, and that it is important to engage in critical self

reflection when considering Western academia and the plight that the Indigenous people have faced through the history of Canada.

What has solidified my perspective here are points that Kovach discusses such as on page 28 where she discusses how colonial relationships manifests themselves through institutional centres, Western-based policies, and Western-based practices that govern research. On page 77 Kovach writes “In the colonization of Indigenous people, science was used to support an ideological and racist justification”. Furthermore, on page 38 Kovach asks the question “How can a non-Indigenous researcher participate?” which is later explored further in chapter 9. To me, these have been important points to reflect on and think about as I have taken this course as they have helped me develop a new perspective on the cultural impacts of research.

What this all means to me, is that my ideas regarding this subject are still in a state of flux and transition. Prior to this course, I believed that it would be appropriate for an outside researcher to engage in research of an external population, but now I am not so sure. Kovach’s writing has put into perspective the history of Western academia exploiting, subjugating, and discriminating against Indigenous people and knowledge. Going forward, I think that it is important within Western research and institutions to consider that research relating to Indigenous populations and knowledge requires an Indigenous voice and perspective and that Western educational institutions and policies need to consider the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and the historical discrimination and racism towards them.

Online group collaboration

The final area that I will discuss in this application journal is on online group collaboration. In my entries I wrote about my experience working with different groups in this

course. It has been a long time since I have had to complete group projects in post secondary courses and I was never really a fan of them to begin with. It is a strange experience to be in a group with people whom you do not really know and who live very far away. I found that the different personalities and work styles clashed at times and that there were many questions that came to mind such as: Is this person not doing enough? Is this person doing too much? How do I make sure that I am not doing too much or too little? How do I approach revising someone else's work? How do I advocate for making a significant change to something that someone else has done?

These were all new experiences for me, and although they were difficult to tackle at first, I feel more confident moving forward into this type of group work in the future. I have also found that group work has been beneficial as a personal learning experience, as I have learned much from reading others work, revising others work, and having others make suggestions on my own work. It feels as if this requires a type of mental flexibility or reflexivity while putting personal feeling aside, but the end result is worthwhile as I believe that it helps grow the personal knowledge and skills of the individual. I can see now why many studies and articles have multiple authors, and it seems to me that effective group collaboration can produce some powerful results.

References

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press.

McMillan, J. H. & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry (7th Edition)*. Edinburgh Gate, UK: Pearson.