

Aboriginal Participation in Higher Education at a Regional University Campus

AIATSIS National Indigenous Research Conference

July 2019

Presenter: Lyn Farrell

Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Research Questions
- Research Framework
- Conceptual Framework
- Significance
- Action Research Process
- Method
- Data Analysis
- Actions



Introduction

Abstract

- This presentation outlines research that explores Aboriginal participation in higher education through gaining Aboriginal perspectives on engagement strategies, both pedagogical and administrative.
- The aim is to identify and explore factors that can have a positive effect on Aboriginal participation and involvement in a regional university campus environment.

Introduction

Abstract

- Policy, Place and People are three areas that emerged for examination, from initial yarning sessions with Aboriginal colleagues
- By adopting an action research approach, it is hoped that the research process will be a catalyst for change at the regional campus.

Research Framework

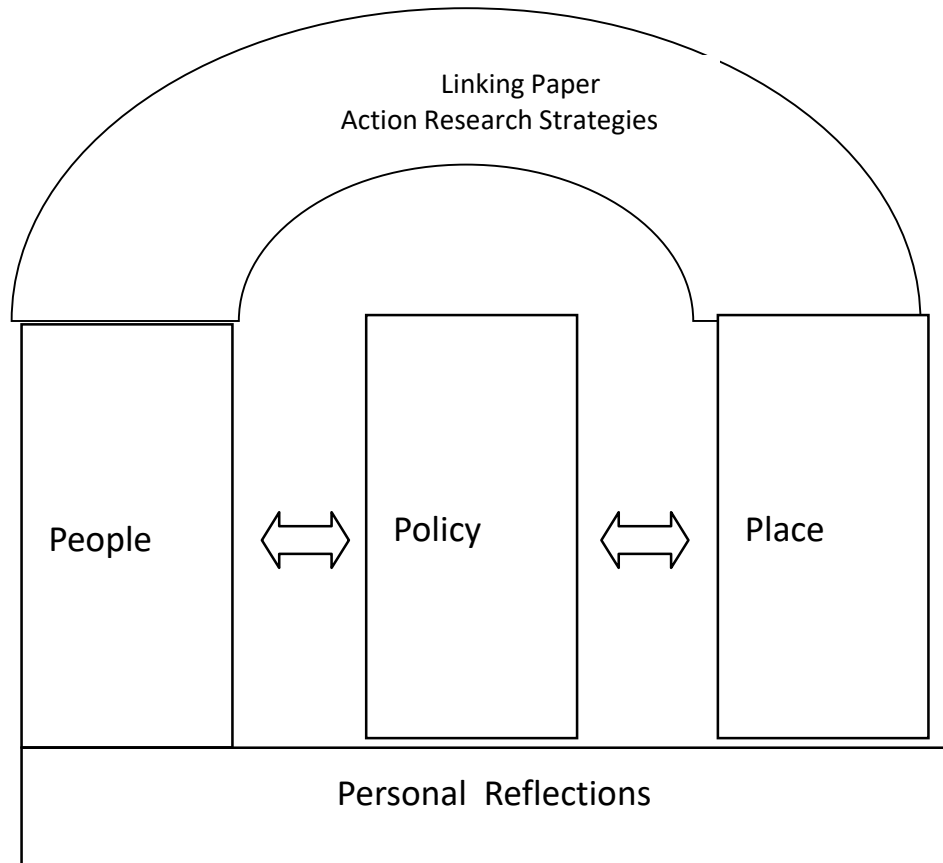


Figure 1. Diagrammatical representation of research design adapted from Maxwell and Kupczyk-Romanczuk temple

Research Questions

Overarching Research Question

- What strategies can be effective in enhancing the experience of Aboriginal students in a regional higher education campus?

Portfolio 1 - POLICY

Research Questions

- What are some of the ways in which government policies over the last 40 years have impacted on individual Aboriginal people's involvement and participation in higher education?
- What education practices resulted from these policies and how were they experienced by individuals?
- What can we take from that experience to inform current practice at a regional university campus?

Portfolio 2 - PEOPLE

Research Questions

- What is the experience of local Aboriginal people with respect to their involvement and participation in higher education opportunities offered through the regional university campus?
- What impact does family have on Aboriginal student's educational experience?
- What role do interpersonal relationships, in the learning environment, play in Aboriginal student's educational experience?

Portfolio 3 - PLACE

Research Questions

- What is the experience of local Aboriginal people with respect to their sense of belonging, comfort and cultural safety at the regional university campus?

Literature Review Policy

- Literature review provides an overview of the changes in policy over four decades and identifies the link between government policy change and broader changes in the political and social milieu
- Policies developed by Australian governments towards Aboriginal participation in higher education parallel broader government policies towards Aboriginal people

Conceptual Framework

- Social constructivist theoretical framework
- Participatory methodological approach
- Policy viewed through the lens of lived experience

Significance

- Aboriginal perspectives on ‘What works’ and implementation of strategies
- Strategies that work to increase participation at one University campus, may provide a model for other universities.

Action Research Process

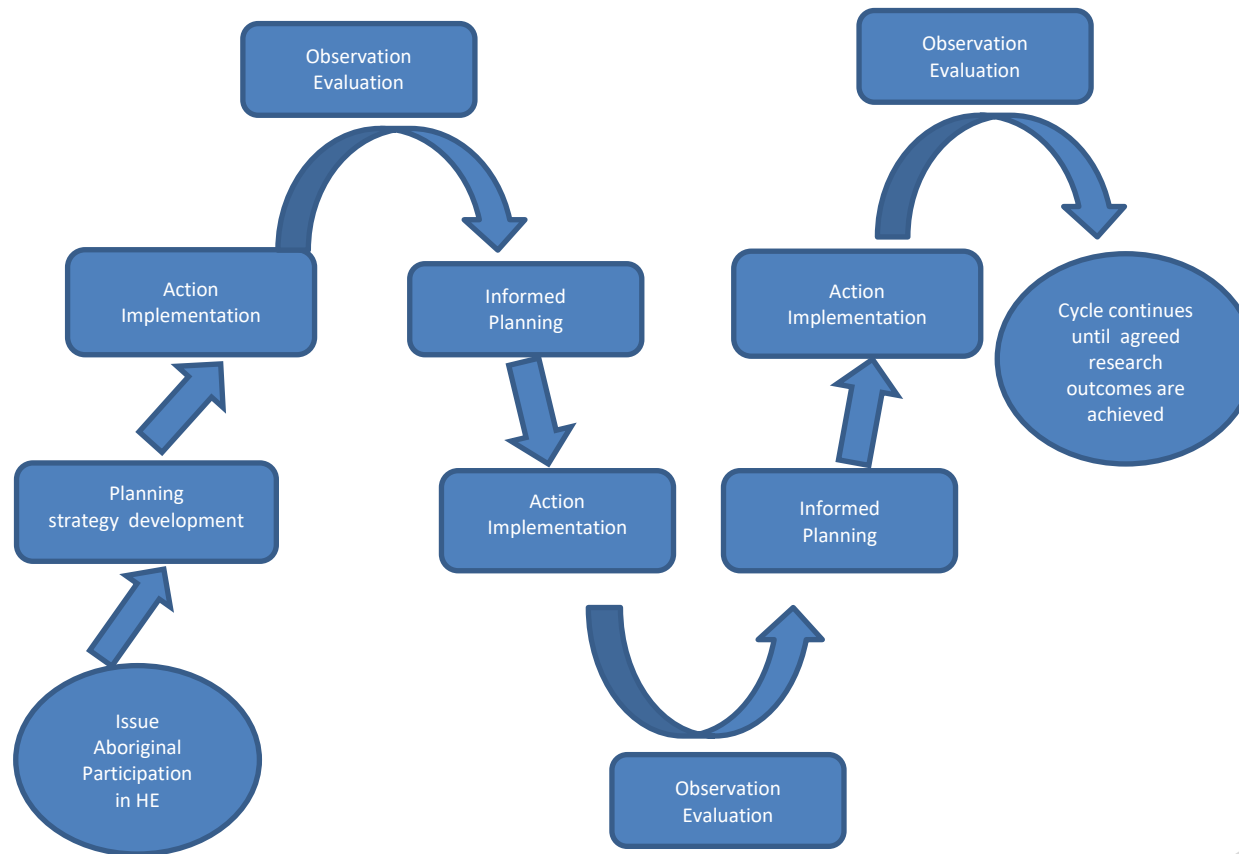
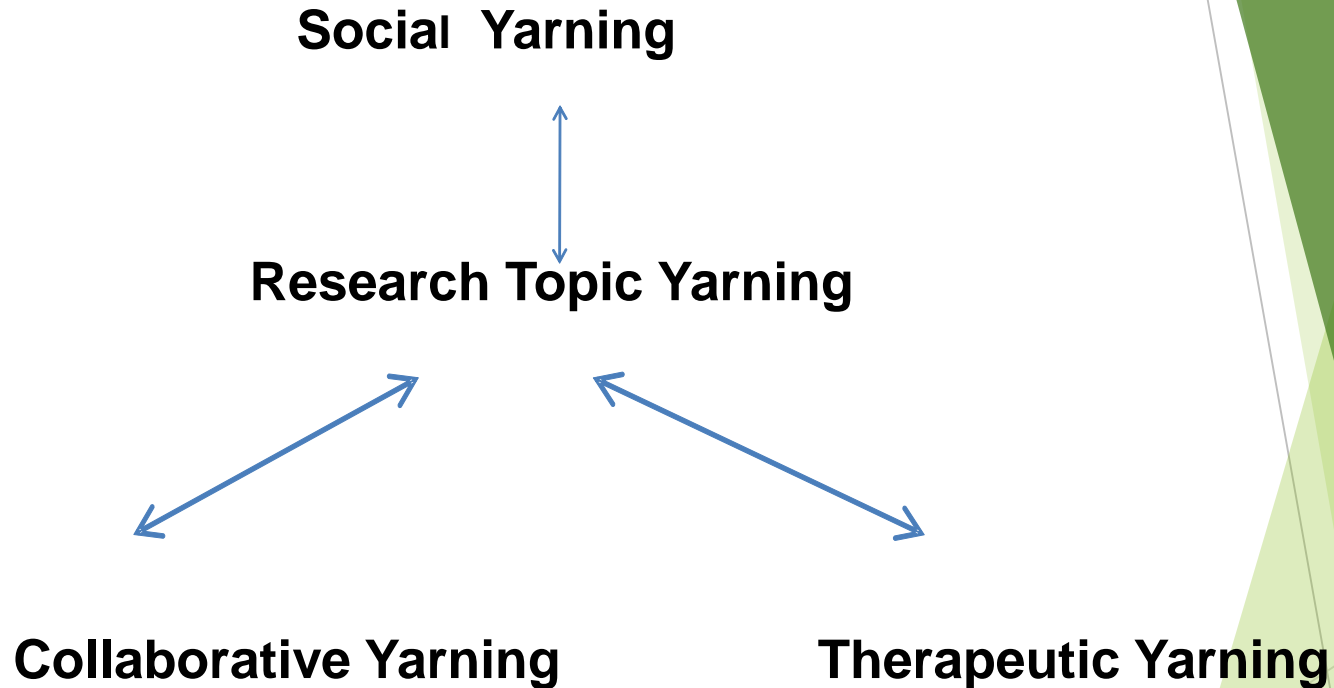


Figure 2; Action research process adapted from Walter (2009 p.23)

Method - Yarning



The Yarning research process

(reproduced from Bessarab and Ng'anda 2010, p.40)

Decolonising Research

- As a non-Aboriginal researcher concerned to explore Indigenous students' experiences of higher education, I looked to be guided by Indigenous researchers to develop protocols and principles for my research that provide for a respectful and culturally appropriate approach to the research.
- I seek guidance in ontological and epistemological approaches as well as methodology and ethics. Non-indigenous researchers who have struggled with these same issues can also inform my efforts to develop principles for my research.

Ethics

- Participants in control of the research
- Informed consent that is checked throughout the process
- Editing rights
- Confidentiality - in a regional context at a regional campus
- Inside action researcher - challenge
- Advisory Group

Research Principles

- Consultation with the Aboriginal people at each stage and about all aspects of the research
- The Aboriginal voice and experience is given predominance in the research
- Reflective practice that acknowledges, interrogates, accommodates for, and records the impact of the researcher's worldview on the research
- Research which serves the interests of Aboriginal people
- Participatory methodology that places control of the data collection process and ownership of the data with the research participants
- Respect for Aboriginal cultural heritage and practice in particular the relationship of the research participants to place and people

Data - Analysis

- Yarning - rich but 'messy' data (Bessarab 2010)
- Themes and patterns
- Analysis - checked with participants
- Care with decontextualizing - breaking up the story (Kovach 2010)

Topics

- Aboriginal Studies
- Aboriginal Knowledge
- Educational Experience
- Traineeships/Employment
- Teaching Delivery Approaches
- Tutorial Assistance Program
- Indigenous Education Units

Strategies

- Recruitment of Aboriginal Cohorts
- Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations
- Cultural competence for staff and students
- Cultural units before placement
- Block study opportunities
- Upholding values of reconciliation and Aboriginal sovereignty within the University campus

Action Research

- Cultural awareness for Non-Aboriginal students at Orientation
- Working with employers to provide educational pathways