

CRITICAL REVIEW OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH METHODS FOR RESEARCH WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO RESTORE SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF COASTAL HEALTH

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Abstract:

This paper describes the research methods utilised in cross-cultural collaborative research to enhance the sustainability of coastal ecosystems and their services in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Manaaki Taha Moana (MTM) programme is purposely designed to utilise both Western science and kaupapa Maori research methodologies and ‘ways of knowing’, and to develop processes whereby knowledge from both ‘worlds’ can be shared, built upon, and embraced in the goal of restoring the health of coastal ecosystems and in so doing to improve the associated wellbeing of the local communities. As such, it takes a holistic approach and considers the social, cultural, economic and ecological factors associated with ‘coastal health’. This integrated approach is fundamental to the way that the local Maori people consider their interactions with the environment, and thus their approach to research.

The paper reviews ‘sustainability science’ and ‘integration science’, and critically analyses the predominantly participatory action research methods utilised during the first phase of MTM. These methods included the use of hui/workshops with local communities, hikoi (the research team walking and camping upon the land alongside people from diverse groups from the local community, to share knowledge and build understanding about the degradation of coastal resources, and to prioritise future research needs), mediated modelling, collaborative learning with tertiary students to design practical architectural design solutions for coastal problems with local indigenous communities, and collaborative field work with local community members to assess the health of coastal resources using both ‘western science’ and ‘cultural health’ indicators’ of ‘coastal health’..

Recommendations and suggestions for future coastal research that can empower and build capacity for local communities, including indigenous peoples, to positively engage in effective integrated coastal management and restoration, including the use of adaptive management techniques.

Keywords:

integration science, sustainability science, participatory research methods, indigenous communities, coastal restoration research