

CONSTRUCTION OF A MULTIMETHODOLOGY FOR USE IN COLLABORATIVE MODEL ACTUALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Multiple stakeholder engagement and collaboration is an area of great complexity and difficulty. Crossing paradigms and disciplines involves the engagement and understanding of multiple worldviews by all parties involved. This is difficult at best with the full cooperation of the stakeholders involved and is further exacerbated by financial structures, divergent objectives, power relations, and institutional biases within and between organizations. It is, however, posited that collaborative efforts of this magnitude and range are necessary to fully employ the undergirding ethic of Sustainable Development (SD). The SD ethic also implies an intergenerational consideration that the author suggests is best introduced through a collaboratively derived statement of ethic used to mediate all decisions put forth for employment.

This paper explores the assembly of a multimethodology constructed through the combination of widely held methodologies with peculiar strengths in a complementary manner. Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and a Collective Statement of Ethics (CSE) are assembled in a partitioned manner that allows each to maintain its core strengths while feeding the next iteration with what is argued a higher quality input. The ontological, epistemological and axiological implication of the multimethodology are examined and illustrated along with a review of the literature regarding the implications of such a methodology. It is deemed that the ontological variance is not significant and that the minor epistemological and axiological differences are within reasonable tolerances considering the multimethodological protocol employed and successful precedent use of similar methodologies.

The introduction of the CSE is suggested as a means to encourage a sense of fairness and to buffer power relations. It is proposed that the creation of the CSE will empower those who might in other circumstances have had a less than equitable voice in participatory environments. A secondary intent of the CSE is to open up the opportunity for the collaborative to introduce ecocentric, intergenerational and humanistic perspectives, inter alia, into the root definitions and conceptual models output actualized by the collaborative. Finally, the author explores the possibilities in the literature that might support a claim of change of behavior based on the sensitization of actors to repetition of standard ethics information or documents such as a CSE.

AI has been selected, based on its underpinnings in positive psychology, to overcome a perceived conceptual weakness in SSM relating to a focus on problems as opposed to strengths in the development of future creating scenarios. SSM has been selected as it,

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arguably, has at its core a more conventional process of deployment methodology. The two methodologies combined prove compatible and complementary in theory.

The context in which the methodology will be employed is also discussed as is the purpose of the multimethodology. Although, technique is not detailed in light of the stage of development of the methodology at this time, it is suggested that further steps include the development and subsequent deployment of the multimethodology, in a workshop offering, to the market. These suggested future activities follow conclusions that support the assembly of the methodology. The multimethodology partitions in a technically acceptable manner and the literature supports the use of similar multimethodology in practice.

Keywords: Multiparadigmatic multimethodology; Soft Systems Methodology; Appreciative Inquiry; Sustainable Development; Ethics

Introduction

This paper is the result of a quest for a methodology with which to actualize a model that the author has been involved with for some time. The title of the model is the “Academic – Corporate on Campus Sustainability Collaborative” (ACCSC) (Cook & Khare, 2011). As one might surmise the nature of this model is the collaborative effort of cross campus, cross community, multiple stakeholder participation in projects that involve interdisciplinary activities including experiential learning, carbon reduction / elimination, infrastructure renewal and community economic stimulation. The exploration of the ACCSC model, supported by a reasonable theoretical underpinning and secondary research, suggests a feasible manifestation. The qualities of the relations between the elements - the way the elements interact with each other - are generally of a positive nature leading to a conclusion of support for the ACCSC (Cook & Khare, 2011). It is posited that the relations of the ACCSC model elements will typify a collaboration constructed with the underlying intent of Sustainable Development (SD)(“Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future - A/42/427 Annex - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements,” n d). It is hoped that the end result of the successful operation of the model will allow its stakeholders the opportunity of operating within an organization informed by the theories inherent within the concepts underpinning SD.

Mingers (1997) defines the essence of a multimethodology as a combination of “more than one methodology, or part thereof, possibly from different paradigms, within a single intervention” (p. 491). This paper describes a multimethodology that takes advantage of the superior qualities of extant organizational development methodology and simultaneously quells criticism of some aspects of the same methodologies when used in their native form. The multimethodology in this case is constructed with an integral Collective Statement of Ethics (CSE). The CSE is included in an effort to aid in managing power and politics dynamics and allow for a group derived heuristic to ensure

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the multiparadigmatic compliance (i.e. econocentric, ecocentric, sociocentric) necessary within the ethic implied by SD.

Multimethodologies are constructed in a number of ways, one of which is described as “partitioning” and involves the combination of parts of two or more methodologies (Mingers, 1997). The multimethodology described is one that is produced through the partitioning of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) (Checkland, 1999) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The stages of SSM associated by function with a “problem” based development of a “rich picture” of the situation at hand - namely stage one and two (Checkland, 1999) - are replaced with the Discovery and Dream stages of AI (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Cooperrider, 2010). It is posited that the participants in the multimethodology develop a CSE previous to the formulation of the Discovery and Dream stages now partitioned into the multimethodology.

A theoretical foundation explaining the underpinning justification of this manoeuvre and the underlying ethical reasoning is presented. In an effort to employ what Checkland & Holwell (1998) refer to as “recoverability” in the derivation of the multimethodology and the actual and eventual research, the paper covers the context, method and purpose of the research and explores the underpinning ontology, epistemology and axiology of the associated native methodologies and the derived multimethodology. The paper concludes with a positive endorsement of the multimethodology supported by the research within and the suggestion that the multimethodology be employed in the field.

Theoretical Foundation

Midgley (2007) states, that, in the establishment of a framework for evaluation of participative methodology the three necessary aspects to evaluate an inquiry are method, purpose and context. In keeping with this concept the theoretical foundation presented here begins with an evaluation of the context and the purpose associated with the multimethodology.

Context

Choice of methodology can be influenced by many factors not the least of which is context. Midgley (2007) suggests a lengthy list of aspects that establish complexity within a context that are or may be contributory to a failed research. Among these are: the complexity of the issue being addressed and the relations between stakeholders, a low level of commitment by key decision makers, participants having inadequate skills and abilities, operational issues preventing the implementation of ideas, a lack of strategic thinking beyond the exercise at hand, scarcity of resources, all of which are anticipated to be available in the context in which this model will be deployed.

The *general* context within which this methodology will be employed is, as Jackson & Keys (1984) suggest, of a “complex systemic – pluralist” type. This is one in which there are multiple decision makers who do not necessarily have agreement between themselves

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on a common set of goals and make decisions which are in accordance with different objectives. The *specific* context in which it is proposed that the multimethodology be employed is best described by the construct description of the ACCSC. Briefly, the construct is composed of elements typically found on Higher Education campuses in Canada. Stakeholders include; Students, Academics, Administrators, Operators, Government and Industry. These are structurally coupled to an environment comprised of varying influences categorized; Socio-Political, Demographic, Economic, Environmental, Political, and Technological. The relations and interrelations of these elements, superimposed on and structurally coupled (Zeleny, 1997) with this type of environment, provide the observer and participants with a situation which is complex.

Purpose

Employment of a multimethodology or any methodology in this particular context is primarily inspired by the desire to orchestrate multiple stakeholders toward the generation of a consensual vision. In order for the ACCSC model to manifest it requires the collaboration of multiple stakeholders in a complex interrelation. The overarching concept of SD implies the homogenization of multiple worldviews, manifest in visions and actions, which are informed by multiple paradigms and by an intergenerational ethic (Jacobs, 1991). The implication of such a purpose, in the previously described context, has associated influence on the choice of methodology (Midgley, 2007).

Different methods lend themselves to different purposes and in this case the context and purpose call for a methodology that is capable of the embodiment of multiple worldviews in the construction of a future vision. It also begs the inclusion of multiple worldviews in the evaluation of the current situation. Without this embodiment it is unlikely that a vision would emerge, in this environment and with this structure, which would have a high probability of success. Methods such as those applied in “Classical Organization Research” can be best applied to contexts that display characteristics of a mechanical – unity type (Jackson & Keys, 1984, p.477). Problems of this type are those which are of a linear nature and involve decision makers who possess a single goal set (Jackson & Keys, 1984).

Thus, one becomes aware of the tight interrelation between context, purpose and method. The context influences the selection of the methodology as does the purpose. If the purpose of the intervention is one that arrives at a single solution to a mechanistic issue then it is not necessary to embody multiple worldviews in the methodology. However, that is not the anticipated situation.

Multimethodology

Technique will not be discussed for the sake of brevity and to be entirely reflective of the evolutionary stage of the project. Multimethodology has been considered for a number of reasons. As Mingers (1997) suggests the four main reasons to select multimethodology are: the advantage that multiparadigmatic pluralism in perspective affords modern

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complex problems, the strength of using specific “pieces” of methods to deal with specific phases of the intervention, the fact that there is precedent use of this type of approach and postmodern perspectives tend toward the support of pluralism in methodology. It is prudent to mention that Mingers (1997) also suggests the combination of methodologies, even when they are similar, in hopes of a better result.

Perhaps the basis of the multimethodology modelled within the pages of this paper is best described by the often quoted Lewin statement “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (Lewin, 1951). Mingers (2003) in a paper designed to defend the use of multiparadigmatic multimethodology reminds that theory is in and of itself developed for use by the practitioner and as such, regardless of methodology should be focused on this end. The author reinforces his view that paradigms are constructs of human thought and that holding one to be an indelible representation of a “real” is to limit what may exist to our current knowledge. According to Mingers (2003) the limit of the fallacy does not end here but may be extended to the “anthropic fallacy” that considers the only “being” to be the human “being” (p. 1303).

This said, multiparadigmatic multimethodology is not without criticism. Both functionalists and post-modernists hold differing and critical views of theoretical pluralism. Some functionalists view the departure from a single paradigm perspective as an unwise departure from the dominance of prolific research into specific theory. Pfeffer (1995) makes quite clear the objection to pluralism and the perceived difficulty caused in selection of competing theory leading to disciplinary fragmentation and eventual degradation in the effective generation of new knowledge. While some post-modernists view the “grand narrative” aspect of the process as a building of totalizing non-pluralistic accounts, neglecting the marginalized theoretical account, neglecting the localized account in favour of the universal account, lacking a critical approach to dominance and power of “popular” theories and undervaluing the contextual and situational nature of knowledge (Deetz, 1996).

There are three additional general criticisms of multiparadigmatic observation; paradigm incommensurability, cultural resistance between paradigms and individual cognitive capability to move between paradigms (Mingers, 1997). Of these, paradigm incommensurability is the most widely analyzed and debated in the literature (Bowers, 2010; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; M. W. Lewis & Kelemen, 2002; Marianne W. Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Midgley, 2010; J Mingers, 1997; J. Mingers, 2003; Harwood, 2011; Kotiadis & Mingers, 2006; Mingers, 2005; Zhu, 2010). The primary debate is one that holds that, ontological and epistemological consistency cannot be made between the interpretivist and positivist positions. The objective / subjective positions have intrinsic irreconcilable differences that make multiparadigmatic methodology impossible. Defence of multiparadigmatic methodology converges on the social theory of Habermas (Mingers, 1997). This argument explains that the three areas of all knowledge that serve human interests – technical, practical and emancipatory - can be seen reflected in the three general paradigms of inquiry – hard, soft and critical - respectively (Mingers, 1997).

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Additional arguments include those which hold that objective and subjective ontological positions are fundamentally flawed. Briefly, the argument states that the two positions are inseparable due to the interrelationship of meaning and structure. Structuration explicates how positivist, interpretivist and emancipatory positions are bracketed aspects of social phenomenon as a whole (Weaver & Gioia, 1994). This theory is similar to the Midgley (2010) thesis that suggests a systems view to knowledge and knowledge generating systems. The author argues that the object / subject dualism may be side stepped if one considers an alternative process / content dualism. The premise stated is one that considers that; knowledge is not universal but exists in a particular context and, therefore, the differing ontological and epistemological positions are merely artificial boundaries created by observers to aid in analysis and observation (Midgley, 2010). The author maintains that this theory grants analytical primacy above ontological primacy (Midgley, 2010).

The cultural aspects of multimethodology that need to be overcome are those which are centred on the individual agent's ability to slip between different paradigms. The value, moral and belief systems of the individual involved with the multiparadigmatic methodology, dependant on how engrained, must likely be altered or ignored to manage a change in paradigm outlook. Mingers (1997) suggests that this can be a serious issue that must be addressed by the agent administering the intervention. This suggests the consideration of a vehicle such as a CSE to act as a mediating agent and moral common ground for participants.

The cognitive inconsistency occurs when one asks the qualitative practitioner or scientist to think in terms of a quantitative paradigm or vice versa. Although, it is doubtful as Mingers (1997) suggests that any individual be incapable because of personality preference to manage a shift such as this, it is probable that there may be some difficulty. Another cognitive issue that Mingers (1997) mentions is that of the requirement for action or movement to take place in the process of learning before the agent fully understands the concept. This implies that the practitioner be practiced and experienced before she is cognitively secure in switching between paradigms (Mingers, 1997).

Although, there are philosophical positions which pose impediments to the wholesale adoption of multiparadigmatic multimethodology, these are, arguably, not insurmountable. Regardless of the metaphysical impediments multimethodology has been used effectively in many situations (Munro & Mingers, 2002). Many different methods have been used in a number of different ways to extend or complement each other's strengths. Cady & Caster (2000) use the combination of Action Research (AR) and Appreciative Inquiry in a manner that uses both methods in parallel. The acronym for the methodology is DIET (Diagnose, Intervene, Evaluate, and Transfer) and employs the positive and "problem" oriented methods in a "balanced" approach multimethodology (p. 83). Other methodologies use two or more methods in series. This combined method uses parts of different methods in a linear / series manner and is referred to as partitioning. This is the type of model that is explored in this paper.

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Native Methodologies

The multimethodology constructed herein is a combination of SSM and AI and is further augmented through the use of a CSE. The native forms of these methodologies are explored next to allow the reader an understanding of the general structure, ontology, epistemology and axiologies of each. This is provided to assist in the evaluation and justification of their partitioning into a multimethodology in the next section.

Soft Systems Methodology

SSM at its basis is a collection of theories, a framework, compiled and embodied in a methodology applied to an area of concern (Checkland, 1999). As such it does not deviate from most modes of research. One characteristic of SSM that does separate it from other forms of inquiry, yet is peculiar to most AR methodologies, is that during the course of the investigation it is probable for framework, methodology and even area of concern to change or be modified (Checkland & Holwell, 1998). As in most AR instances the researcher is involved as both a participant and researcher simultaneously and must exercise care in how the situation is manipulated by this participant / observer status. SSM is the most thoroughly documented and discussed methodological example of soft systems thinking (Flood, 2010) and as such is a well-tested form of AR.

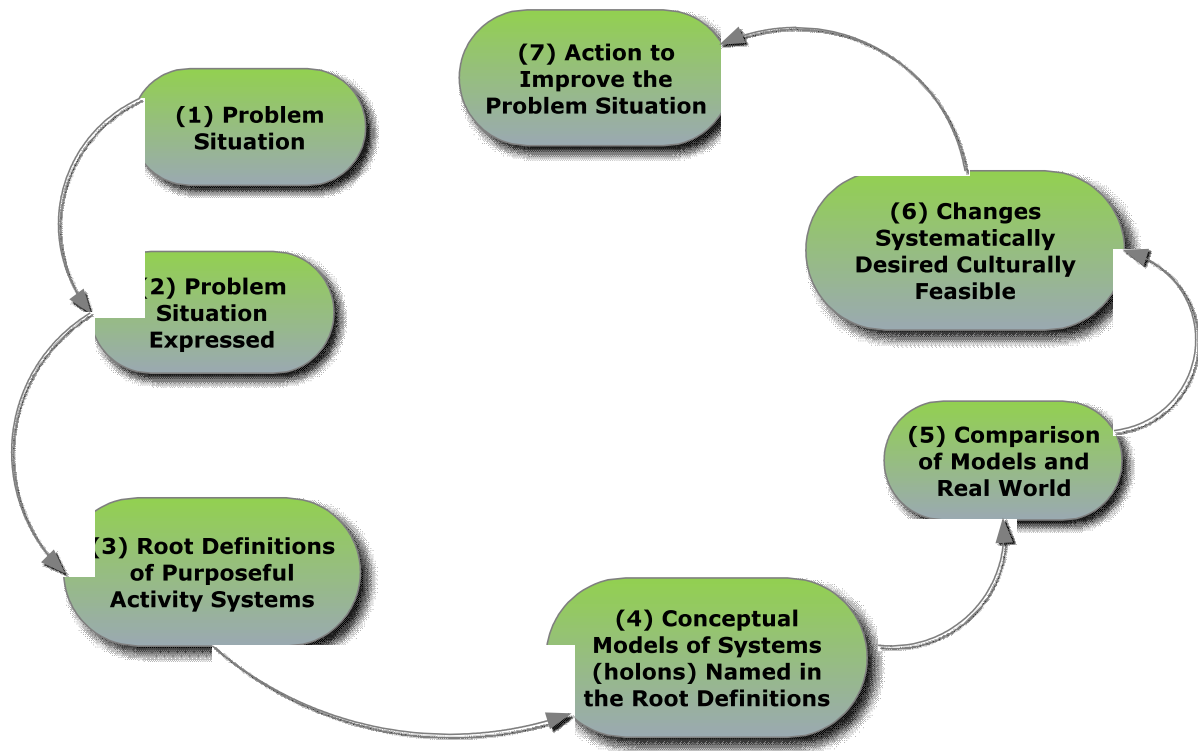


Figure 1 The Traditional SSM Model as outlined in (Checkland & Scholes, 1993)

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Ontology

Ontologically speaking Checkland (1999) places SSM on the “subjective” side of the subject / object axis of the now famous typology constructed by Burrell and Morgan (pp. 280). He warns that this should not be placed too far left (toward the subjective end of the dichotomy) as the methodology will eventually yield “common structurings which characterize the social collectivities” of the organization involved (Checkland, 1999, p.281). Checkland (1999) continues to explain that the analyst has freedom to select the systems that are in effect within the situation and as such may decide on the degree of radical or incremental change incorporated in the model. The degree to which this manifests will determine the degree to which the model will occupy space in the Burrell and Morgan Subjective Radical Humanist quadrant. The placement will be mediated by the situation and the degree of cultural feasibility incorporated in the proposed changes arrived at by the subject group (Checkland, 1999).

Epistemology

The epistemology of SSM consists of the underlying concepts of system theory and systems thinking. The modeling includes the development of rich pictures, root definitions, conceptual models and logical relations (Checkland, 1999) Please see Figure 1 for a graphic representation.

Axiology

Information necessary to this methodology includes “hard” and “soft” information regarding the structure, processes, climate and most importantly the worldviews of the actors of the organization in question. The information is gleaned through interviews and group workshops where concepts, language and logic are recorded and compiled by the facilitator. This is a participative methodology in the true sense of AR and its knowledge is made use of by the actors of the organization and the facilitator / analyst. The primary purpose of the methodology is to learn about and improve perceived “problem” situations in the organization through the development of multi-stakeholder perspective and agreement (Mingers, 2003).

Appreciative Inquiry

Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) in their seminal work introducing Appreciative Inquiry (AI) argue strongly that for many reasons the practice of AR is dying or is predominantly benign. The authors claim that AR is currently in a condition where the “action” aspect of the research has taken primacy over the “theory” element of the methodology. They continue with an argument that proposes AR be revitalized as “a truly significant generative science of administration” if considered in the “socio-rational” realm of human affairs (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 130).

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AI is a method of inquiry that is not unlike AR in many respects and draws on the work of Kurt Lewin (Lewin & Lewin, 1948) as does AR. The process involves the assembly of past and current experiences, derived from interviews, that are positive or “strengths” based in nature. Subsequent to this phase is the development of “themes” leading to a positive core mapping process during the “discovery” phase of the inquiry (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Cooperrider, 2010, pp.143). This is not unlike the “rich pictures” Checkland & Scholes (1993) suggest in SSM. The methodology follows by having participants focus on these themes and collectively produce a vision. Next, the methodology instructs the participants to design the future that they have envisioned. Whitney et al. (2010) suggest at this point that an organizational design method be used to guide participants in the design of the model that will enable the vision. The final stage in an AI is the destiny stage which amounts to the implementation of the model and a plan to celebrate its conception and implementation (Whitney et al., 2010). For a pictographic representation of the process please refer to Figure 2.

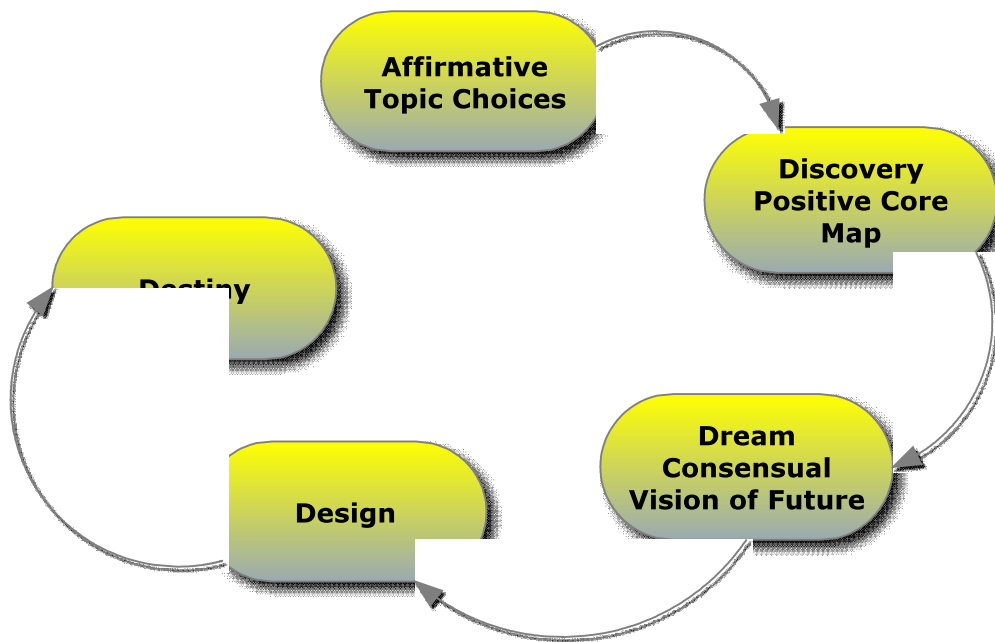


Figure 2 AI Model as outlined in (Whitney et al., 2010)

Ontology

AI is based on “Sociorationalism” (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, pp.131) which is a metatheoretical form of science that suggests that reality is recreated perpetually in real-time. The contention is that social phenomenon is not permanent and that it is led by cognitive heuristics. If forced one would surmise that the methodology would be placed in the Subjective – Radical Change quadrant of the Burrell & Morgan (1985) typology

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diagram. The authors argue that human organization is not “preprogramed or stimulus bound in any direct physical or biological way” and that this recognition negates the logical positivist foundation of social science (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, pp. 132), thus, the claim of orientation using the Burrell & Morgan typology. Although it does not condone Solipsism; Sociorationalism suggests that social knowledge resides in the human collective of interactive activities where it is created, maintained and put to use (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Epistemology

The constructivist reality implied by Sociorationalism is modeled through the use of strengths based interviews compiled into “Affirmative Topic Choices” (ATC) (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Cooperrider, 2010, pp.127). These ATC’s are compiled through a process beginning with interviews from which themes are developed and eventual topic areas are established. The methodology continues with additional interviews, dissemination of positive anecdotes, meaning making and the development of a “Positive Core Map” (PCM) as drawn in Figure 3 (Whitney et al., 2010, pp.165). The PCM becomes the basis for a group designed Opportunity Map and eventually a “Values Based Organizational design” (Whitney et al., 2010, pp.198).

Axiology

The information collected during the course of the methodology is of a “strengths based” nature and is generally comprised of positive descriptions of process, structure, culture and operational strengths both historical and current. Future visions are established by the group or organization based on positive models derived by the group. The primary purpose of the methodology is to provide a means for organization development.

Collective Statement of Ethics

The Brundtland Report is clear in its message regarding the universal human condition, food security, poverty, education, population growth, health, etc. and how all of these categories must be addressed in order to realize a sustainable future (“Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE -1987: Brundtland Report,” 1987). The ideas that underpin the concept of SD are such that they bring into question the values, morals and norms that are prevalent in contemporary Western Society. From this perspective, then, the subject area of SD can be seen as an ethical one. The objects of value in this case are the currently thriving populous, generations of unborn humans and the environment in which they do and will thrive (Newton, 2003).

The model that is the subject of the multimethodology is one that is based, in part, on the SD ethic described. The ACCSC model is one that intends, through its implementation, to span stakeholders, reduce carbon production and produce results that benefit not only economically but socially and environmentally. The research carried out during the assembly and exploration of the ACCSC model produced evidence of a multistakeholder

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desire to pursue creation and involvement in organizations that embodied the ethic of SD. It is proposed, then, that the multimethodology incorporates, as part of its structure, a “statement of ethics” (Ison, 2010, pp.106) and that this statement be collectively derived and as such be labeled a CSE. This integration is suggested for several reasons including; the introduction and repetition of a SD ethic for the involved stakeholders, to provide the stakeholders with a touchstone document that facilitates the desired weighting be applied to the profitability / responsibility duality inherent in contemporary organizations (Spitzeck, 2011) and to facilitate the introduction of ecocentric and humanistic themes as mediating devices for decisions and construct development. The introduction of a CSE in no way implies that on their own the methodologies are unethical but that they have perhaps been derived from a different or less specific ethic.

Research carried out by Cano & Sams (2011) suggests that college students who are “sensitized” to the concepts of ethics on a regular basis appear to elevate themselves on the ladder of Cognitive Moral Reasoning (CMR) (pp.9). The students who are exposed to reinforcement of the importance of ethical behavior, weekly, are prone to internalize a cognitive dissonance and change their cognition to resolve the dissonance; i.e. tell the truth. Although, the research undertaken by Cano & Sams (2011) cannot be generalized at this time for various reasons it is posited that it does support, however weakly, the integration of an ethical statement in the actualization framework. The purpose of which is the reinforcement of and behavioural change related to the exposure of this type of information.

SD, at its essence, implies a paradigm which considers the environment and the social or humanistic virtues as well as those related to profit (Hawken, Lovins, & Lovins, 2000). While it is not intended to suggest that the ACCSC be instituted with no consideration toward profit it is intended, through the inclusion of the CSE, that a mediating effect be more readily enacted that would bias equally economic, environmental and humanistic domains. The CSE is one instrument designed to curb what is suspected to be the inevitable gravitation of a model such as the ACCSC toward imbalance in the contemporary profitability / responsibility organizational duality. Primacy awarded to profit at the cost of responsibility is in opposition to the implication of human dignity and minimal environmental impact inherent in the ethic of SD. Spitzeck (2011) suggests that a humanistic management ethic be one that enables managers to speak in the same terms about moral issues as they do about profit. This is a main impetus for the inclusion of an ethical instrument and as will be illustrated later satisfies a specific dimensionality / activity (Mingers, 1997) deficit identified in both AI and SSM.

Although, it is not probable that the CSE will eliminate the power and domination that might be present in some interventions, I assert that it will have a buffering effect in the case of most. Situations where there is at least some appeal to a desirable future and some amicable ground between groups should benefit from this effect. Situations such as those described by Jackson & Keys (1984) in which a genuine consensus is impeded by intergroup relations because of extraordinary power and domination situations are not liable to be effected. Consideration of these situations is beyond the scope of this paper.

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Multimethodological Framework

Both of the methodologies selected for partitioning into a multimethodology in this case have proven effective in previous use (Checkland & Scholes, 1993; Whitney et al., 2010). The multimethodological approach has been selected in an effort to overcome purported weaknesses peculiar to each methodology and in so doing produce a methodology more suitable to the context and purpose at hand.

SSM since its inception in the 1970's has come under various criticism regardless of its successful use (Mingers, 2000). In general as a form of AR it is subjected to the criticisms most commonly applied to this type of methodology. A primary concern with SSM and with AR in general lies in their "problem" focus. The argument held by critics of the methodologies in this realm suggests that the negative connotation of the problem orientation leads the methodology to dwell outside of the positive aspect of the organization and in so doing promotes ineffective results (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Houghton & Ledington, 2007; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000; Ludema, Wilmot, & Srivastva, 1997). The identification of problems tends to lead the participants toward the realm of crisis as opposed to toward the realm of organizational development and system improvement (Checkland, 1999). Although this is a central criticism others have found AR to be deficient in many other ways (Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Hammersley, 2004; Hodgkinson, 1957; Coughlan & Coughlan, 2002). There has also been criticism of SSM's ability to deal with power and politics in an organization and an inability to deal effectively with operationalization of recommendations (Mingers, 2000)

AI on the other hand has been criticized for, among other things, just the opposite. Critics of AI maintain that the concentration on positive aspects of the organization may take focus away from challenges, poor behavior or performance issues that may be of concern to stakeholders (Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Fitzgerald, Murrell, & Newman, 2001; Pratt, 2002). The methodology may force the alienation of those who have legitimate concerns and are unable to articulate them in a positive manner or those who are experiencing difficult interpersonal situations (Grant & Humphries, 2006; Egan & Lancaster, 2005). There is also a concern in the literature that AI is a "shadow" process or ignores this phenomenon (Boje, 2010; Bushe, 2010; Fitzgerald, Oliver, & Hoxsey, 2010)

Given the preceding criticisms it is posited that the two methodologies be partitioned in a manner that does not compromise the strengths of either nor embellish the perceived weaknesses. In addition to partitioning of the two methodologies the intervention will start with the construction of a CSE. The CSE is employed in an effort to level out power oriented inequities, allow the structural instrumentation of an emancipatory vehicle for those wishing to voice opinions that may run counter to the status quo and to instill, at its essence, a sense of the multiparadigmatic requirements embodied in the concept of SD.

The matrix presented in Figure 3 depicts, although not comprehensively, the multidimensionality (personal, social, material) aspects and the different types of activities related and inherent in the different methodologies discussed in this paper. The

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blocks containing color depict a presence of this dimension / activity within the native methodology and the grey blocks depict an absence of this particular dimension / activity. Although, not a methodology per se the CSE has been added to the matrix to illustrate the social dimensions / activities that the CSE will address.

Both AI and SSM are primarily oriented toward the personal dimension / activity matrix elements and yet one of the greatest criticisms of SSM is its “problem / solution” orientation. Therefore an enhancement of the Mingers (1997) matrix has been made to illustrate the “strengths based” aspects of AI that have replaced the “problem / solution” orientation of SSM.

As can be seen in Figure 5 below, it is suggested that the compilation of the CSE be the first step of this proposed multimethodology. Both methodologies on a standalone basis are prone to criticism that resides in the domain of power; AI in its avoidance of the punitive aspects of stakeholders and SSM in its focus toward only the punitive side of organizations. The aim of the development of the CSE is to attempt an emancipatory effect that enforces amicable and participatory behavior in a ubiquitous manner. Collectively developed and mutually enforced it is the intent that the CSE will provide a safe haven for those who might feel the effects of power and politics within the group, it will allow for a constitutive “voice of authority” in the case of conflict over radical or critical opinions and perspectives and allow room for sociocentric and ecocentric paradigms to take a position of equality in the decision making and vision production activity of the organization.

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	Soft Systems Methodology	Appreciative Inquiry	Collective Statement of Ethics	Multimethodology
Appreciation of social practices, power relations (problem oriented)				Collective Statement of Ethics
Appreciation of social practices, power relations (strengths based)				Appreciative Inquiry
Analysis of distortions, conflicts, interests				Collective Statement of Ethics
Assessment of ways of altering existing structures				Collective Statement of Ethics
Action to generate empowerment and enlightenment				Collective Statement of Ethics
Appreciation of individual beliefs, meanings, emotions (problem based)				Not used
Appreciation of individual beliefs, meanings, emotions (strengths based)				Appreciative Inquiry
Analysis of differing perceptions and personal rationality				Appreciative Inquiry
Assessment of alternative conceptualizations and constructions				Soft Systems Methodology
Action to generate accommodation and consensus				Soft Systems Methodology
Appreciation of physical circumstances				Soft Systems Methodology
Analysis of underlying causal structure				Soft Systems Methodology
Assessment of alternative physical and structural arrangements				Soft Systems Methodology
Action to select and implement best alternatives				Soft Systems Methodology

Figure 3 Methodologies mapping framework as outlined in (Mingers, 1997)

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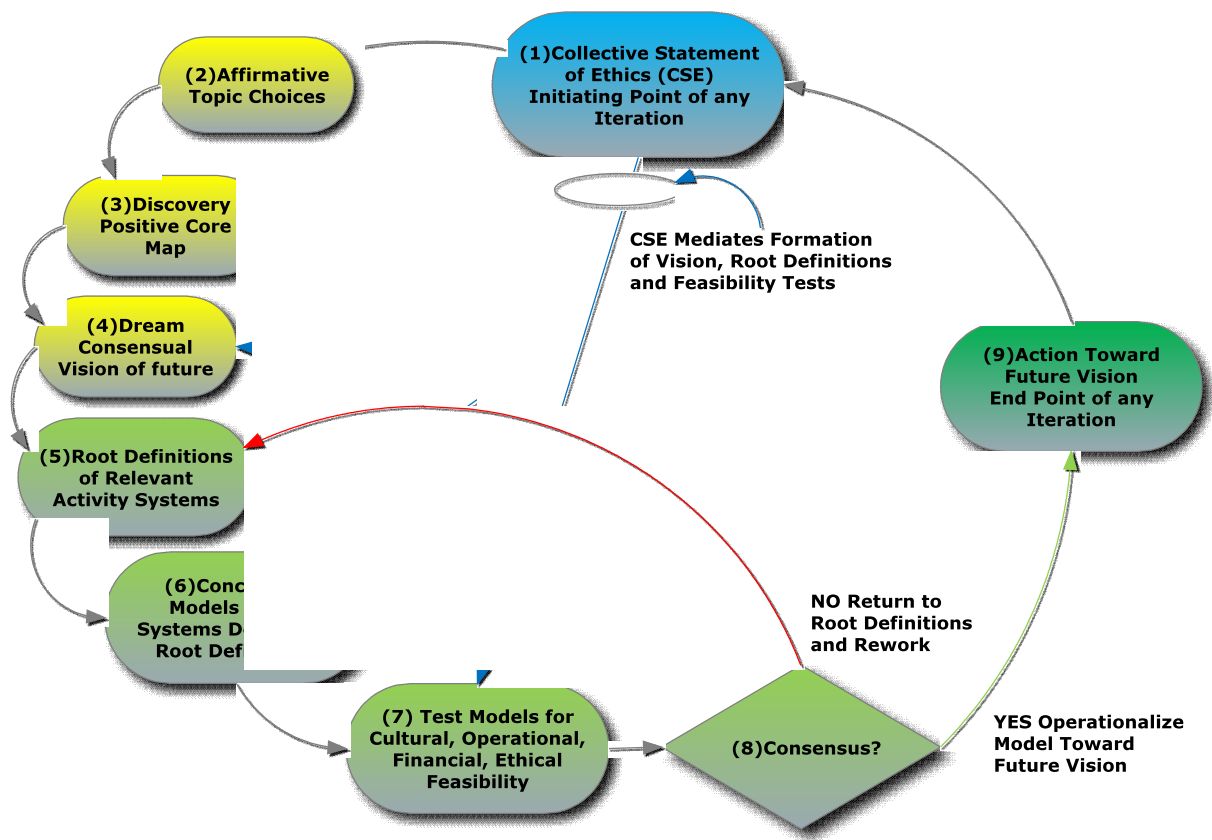


Figure 4 SSM AI CES Multimethodology Model

The ACCSC is an organizational model that implies collaboration (Sawyer, 2007) and recursive learning (Argyris & Schön, 1996) at its core. In keeping with this polyphonic governing aspect it is argued that the CSE be a living document. The CSE should be emergent from the conversation and practices of the stakeholders involved. Ison (2010) suggests that any statement of ethics not be a code of ethics per se but instead be “an emergent language game” and as such not be a predefined tome but a recursive, growing, document to be referred to at each engagement of the stakeholders (pp. 106). This said, Ison (2010) carries on suggesting that the document may be initiated with some general rules of language, participation, fairness and engagement as a starting point.

Once established the CSE will be used to inform and mediate decisions made throughout the processes determined by the structure of the multimethodology. The multimethodology comprises of the SSM methodology and the AI methodology partitioned together. This partitioning is suggested to take place at the “front end” of the SSM methodology where the “rich pictures” of the existing situation are established. The multimethodology process will thus begin, as with any AI methodological process, by establishing Affirmative Topic Choices (ATC). The topics are set up by the group that will participate in the workshop and are very broadly stated and tend to be related to

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change agendas (Whitney et al., 2010). For example, a change agenda might be stated as “better customer service” and its related ATC might be one or all of; going above and beyond, delighting the customer, service recovery, etc.

Once established the ATC’s lead to the “Discovery” phase of the AI process. In this process a series of interviews of all participants usually conducted by participants are used to collect positive stories regarding past and current successes, strengths and practices. Central themes are extracted from the data collected from the interviews and subsequent discussions that further expand on the positive aspects of the organization. The group then collectively “build” a “Positive Core Map” (PCM), that, either through picture, diagram or chart depicts the culmination of all of the strengths of the organization (Whitney et al., 2010, p.165).

Next the group engage in dialogue inspired to create a vision of an ideal future. This vision is informed by the PCM and draws on these attributes to produce a consensual vision of the future. This stage of the process is known as the “Dream” stage and is an opportunity for participants to produce immodest proposals of the future that they wish to see for the organization (Whitney et al., 2010, p.177).

The process thus far will have yielded a PCM and a consensual vision of the future. These two foundational constructs are what will be used from this process as an input or reference to the SSM process steps that will be engaged next.

SSM in its native form as suggested by Checkland (1999) is a seven step process beginning with the establishment of the issues at hand that the organization wishes to tackle or improve. The methodology continues with the establishment of a “rich picture” which is a group determined graphic representation of the current situation of the organization and its environment. It is suggested that these two steps in the traditional SSM process be eliminated and replaced by the previously stated AI steps. The determination of the Root Definitions (RD) (Checkland, 1999) of the human activity systems, which are a formatted set of verbalizations of extant system design, will follow, through the use of the PCM and the positive future vision from the AI process. This methodological switch is done to ensure that the positive aspects of AI are directly injected into the SSM process thus eliminating the “problem” orientation of the SSM.

The previously described transition is the key point in the partitioning of the two methodologies. The reader should note that the RD’s will be informed still by the CSE (see Figure 5). Checkland (1999) uses the German term *Weltanschauung* to describe, that which is held as a meaningful model of reality, by an individual or a collective. There is no direct translation of the word into English, however, it might best be described as “world view”. The *Weltanschauung* component of the; Customer, Activity, Transformation, *Weltanschauung*, Ownership, and Environmental (CATWOE) aspects of the well-structured RD’s (Checkland, 1999) will be the main point of embodiment of the CSE. The CSE will be used to inform decisions and attitudes throughout the process,

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however, the injection of its influence at this point will set up the models that will be operationalized later in the process with an appropriate ethical influence.

The SSM continues with the derivation of Conceptual Models (CM) which is the action or verb form of the RD's. The conceptual models are used as a check of the fit of the model proposed to achieve the consensual future vision. SSM allows for iteration at this point in the event that the CM's do not fit with the cultural or extant systems to the approval of the organization involved. The RD's at this point may be reworked and redefined and then a new set of CM's may be derived that fit better with the cultural and systemic reality as deemed by the organizational members involved (Checkland & Scholes, 1993).

The next step in the SSM and subsequently in the proposed multimethodology is to transfer the satisfactory model and employ it into action. This intervention phase can be seen to be the beginning of an overall iterative process that will begin after a prearranged settling time to evaluate whether or not the model has been effective in achieving the vision. Although this is likely to be dictated to by a great degree by the number of stakeholders involved which is likely to be reflective of the size of the Higher Education Facility in population it is proposed that this first iteration will likely take three to six months. The process at this time will repeat until the members of the organization are satisfied that the goals have been achieved and the new systems are operating in a quasi equilibrrious state. Measurement of the success of this methodology will be dependent on the fulfilment of the conceptual models designed and implemented to realize the future vision developed by the stakeholders. For example, if the stakeholders value a future with the elimination of internal combustion powered vehicles in use on campus the measurement would be the absence of said vehicle types. The same logic would extend to supply stream packaging, water management, energy use, etc. Reduction or elimination in use is an ideal metric for the commodities thus delivered. Attitude and behaviour change or goal achievement would require investigation by means of longitudinal interview or questionnaire application.

Conclusion

This paper illustrates the construction of a multimethodology for use in the actualization of an ACCSC model. The construction of the multimethodology includes the exploration of the individual ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies of the native methodologies and explores the construction of a CSE to aid in the mediation process of social forces found in organizations. The development of the multimethodology follows a process of partitioning SSM and AI into a multimethodology which embodies the strengths of both methodologies while sidestepping some the perceived weaknesses of each, as well.

While some multimethodologies may arguably have difficulty in their management of the object / subject duality that is inherent in their structure, the partitioned subject multimethodology of this paper does not appear to be threatened by this conflict. Both native methodologies are in the subjective half of Burrell and Morgan's quadrant

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typology and as such a major source of incommensurability has been avoided. Given this consistency, the author posits that epistemological and axiological differences are easily overcome through the proper choice of partitioning point and method.

The addition of a CSE to the multimethodology is also a novel approach that appears to satisfy some of the social dimensionality / activity deficits inherent in the native methodologies. Although, it will be contingent on collective support and compliance enforced within the collaboration it appears, *prima facie*, to also be an effective method for the introduction of a SD ethic at the core of the organization.

I propose that this multimethodology is a means through which actualization of collaborative models such as the ACCSC be carried out. The value of the construction of the multimethodology is the theoretical and methodological justification provided. The ultimate test for any methodology or multimethodology is, of course, in the field. It is my intention to employ this framework in the field and compile observations and data that might be interpreted and submitted for the purposes of theory building. The multimethodology is set such that observations of the organizational dynamics and changes in behavior and attitude might be tested as a result of its implementation. As with any intervention and especially those which are grounded and of an AR type the theory that emerges will be of interest to those who are curious with regard to the introduction of vehicles such as CSE's and in the results of partitioning SSM with AI with respect to effectively managing multiple stakeholder collaborations, *inter alia*.

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