

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE: A NATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF KNOWING

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BOOK REVIEW

This article is a review of the work by Semali, Ladislaus M., Kincheloe, Joe L. (Eds). *What is Indigenous Knowledge: Voices from the Academy*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2002. (first published by Falmer Press, New York, 1999), ISBN: 0-203-90680-2 (Master e-book ISBN), 0-203-90758-2 (Adobe eReader Format), 0-8153-3452-4 (Print Edition), 381 pages (incl. Bibliography and Appendices), Price \$ 140.90 (Amazon.com).

Key words: Indigenous Knowledge, Ethnomethodology, Indigenous Management

INTRODUCTION

This book introduces readers with a fundamental concept of Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Unlike other similar books which are describing the anthropological perspective on the subjects, this book provides better understanding about what Indigenous Knowledge is all about. This book elaborates not only evolutionary concept of Indigenous Knowledge which are introduced by many authors and centers of Indigenous Knowledge around the globe, but also a different approach which avoid the use of binary perspectives on Indigenous Knowledge which always confronted with Modern Knowledge. Starting with the introduction of IK by the editors, the book deconstructs the understanding about Indigenous Knowledge which has been known as a traditional way of seeing this which are contested with the modern one. It examines the social, cultural and political issues that surround indigeneity and its seventeen chapters focus on the beneficial aspects of Indigenous Knowledge in the academy. This brings a different way with its earlier book on the subject: *The Cultural Dimension of Development: Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, edited by Warren, Slikkerveer & Brokensha (1995), which were documented about forty cases in Sub-Saharan Africa, Mediterranean Area and South-East Asia, that shown the importance of incorporating Indigenous Knowledge in Development at the communities

DISCUSSION

The structure of the book is quite systematic, covering various topics regarding Indigenous Knowledge and its contexts, although focuses mainly on the issue of education. Consists of seventeen chapters, starting from the fundamental meaning of Indigenous Knowledge and its evolutionary concept, including its network with Center for Indigenous Knowledge around the globe. The book then discusses various topics from schooling (chapter 2 to 5, 11, 13 to 15), research (chapter 6), ecological issues (chapter 7), ethnomathematics (chapter 8), even to the socio-political perspective on Indigenous Knowledge (chapter 16).

This book attempts to shows that Indigenous Knowledge should be accommodated in a scientific paradigm as IK brings a native way of knowing in a given locality. While (modern) scientific perspective has been identified as a positivistic way of knowing things, IK reflects the dynamic interpretive way in which local people of an area have come to understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and how they organize that folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives (p.3). This should in line with the modern scientific concept of development, for instance, which aims to enhance (human) well-being (Todaro & Smith, 2005; White 2010).

The ways of Indigenous People in conceptualizing and acting in the environment are expressions of how to invest the world with meaning and self-fulfillment which provide alternatives to the dominant consumptive values of Western societies (Mauro & Hardison 2000).

The strength of this book is its critical view to the mainstream scientific perspective in which positivistic approach in science has been taken place. It tries to argue that IK has a scientific foundation to be accommodated as science as it has been influenced and implemented in various aspects in the society. Its critical view on modern scientific approach is similar to the view by Marsden in *Indigenous Management*. In the context of development -which is mainly influenced by modern scientific paradigm-, Marsden (1994) criticizes developmentalist as follows:

“ The arrogance with which policy makers and planners assumed that they were writing on a *tabula rasa* as they intervened in the Thirld World in the name of development, is being replaced by a reflexive understanding of the partiality of their own knowledge and a heightened appreciation of the value of other ways of perceiving the development task “

CONCLUSION

The book provides basic understanding about Indigenous Knowledge: Definition, Concept as well as its practices in particularly, education sectors.

Although the book has its foundation in criticizing modern scientific approach by bringing the perspective of Indigenous Knowledge, it has scope limitation in terms of its application. For this matter, additional readings *i.e. Participating in Development: Approaches in Indigenous Knowledge* by Silitoe, Bicker & Pottier (2002) or the recent one, *Indigenous Community-Managed Development* by Slikkerveer, Baourakis & Saefullah (2019) would be good complementary to the book in proposing approaches by Indigenous Knowledge

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