

## **Participatory Action Research, 13 September 2017**

### **Edu-Lead**

### **Education Leadership**

#### **ACADEMICAL DISCUSSIONS: ELAD**

Prof Jan Heystek; Dr Aaron Nhlapo; Arrie Van Wyk; CP Van der Vyver; Jan Khumalo; Mark Bosch; Sipho Kwatubana

The discussion was led by Dr Kwatubana who started off by indicating the reason why she chose PAR (Participatory Action Research) as a topic of debate. Her reason was based on her experience when she was compiling her project proposal and through her supervision of two PhD students who also intend to make use of PAR.

She mentioned several unique aspects of PAR, including: collaboration/partnership; Development of critical consciousness; transparency; respect for people, their knowledge and their contribution to the research project and others.

She elaborated on how PAR challenges the other dominant research norms, in that in the latter researchers come as “experts” bringing technical solutions. She went further to say that this is a tourist approach, as researchers go to the sites, collect data and leave without contributing in any way to the welfare of the respondents in their research or that of the site for that matter. People participating in that kind of research are passive entities whose capacities are severely reduced.

PAR challenges the inequality of power that exists, there is a shift in power from researchers to the people and all researchers must have consensus about actions and processes. She mentioned that the voices of the marginalized are adequately represented in PAR.

She further spoke about the cyclic method of PAR, the participatory data collection methods that are used and the problems encountered by researchers with regards to ethics applications when using PAR. In her conclusion she indicated her awareness of the amount of responsibility she has as a principal researcher of her project where she will be using PAR. Her greatest fear is whether she will be able to better the lives of

the co-researchers as she would like to avoid to contribute to their classification and discrimination.

After her presentation the mood was set for discussions. Prof Heystek pointed out that the ethical part about the research approach can be very difficult; Dr v d Vyver wondered if it touches on the pragmatic side of the research as well? Dr Kwatubana however did not include pragmatism as part of her research study seeing that she has included critical and emancipatory theory but for the literature part she made use of organisational learning theory thus she was already making use of 3 theories and did not want to overload on theories.

Prof Heystek pointed out the fact that ethical clearance has gotten stricter over the years and that his biggest concern for this project will be the time about the process for this project. But with Dr Kwatubana's enthusiasm and determination she will be excellent in it. When you do participative research it takes a specific type of person to do this kind of research. You go in and leave a sustainable impact. Dr Kwatubana elaborated on the point that when they narrate the stories they also evaluate them just there so that the problem can be highlighted to compile and finalize the research analysis. When the interviews are not clear, they would then ask questions and analyse the data however the findings come back to the research team and then from the findings it is possible to compare and combine. Prioritising these problems.

This led to a provoking thought by Dr van Wyk on when do you formulate the question? Because when you start you don't actually have a problem yet? Dr Kwatubana then cleared the answer by stating that they will not be making use of the tourist approach seeing that they first have to build a relationship with all members and stakeholders.

This was a very insightful morning seeing that the researchers could find gaps, fill them and encourage a study making use of participatory action research approach.

Article used:

Brydon-Miller, M & Maguire, P. 2009. Participatory action research: contributions to the development of practitioner inquiry in education, *Educational action research*, 17(1), 79-93, DOI: 10.1080/09650790802667469