

**PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN PROGRAMME FORMULATION WITH A YOUTH GROUP**

by

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## SUMMARY

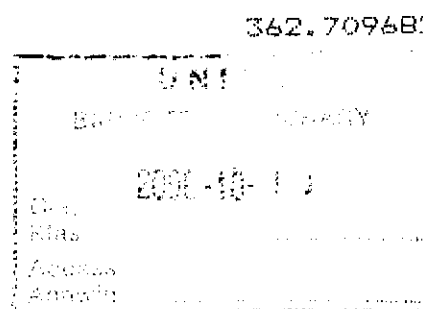
The theme that emerged was that youth are willing, ready and capable of overcoming their helplessness. Through guidance, support and encouragement the participants were able to reflect on their activities and came up with a plan of action to address their needs and concerns.

The inquiry was aimed at formulating a programme but this was not achieved. The short-term objectives that the youth were engaged in allowed the young people to critically analyze their situation. During the process, the youth discovered their strengths and weaknesses. The participants were able to come up with critical areas for their own developmental growth.

Participatory research brought the youth and adults in the church closer to each other. The youth learned to identify their needs, plan, agree on methods and intervention and evaluate the participatory research process. I have become confident in working with the youth and my attitude towards them has changed.

### KEY CONCEPTS:

Youth, Participatory Research, Development Process, Programme, Plan of action, Participation, and Self-knowledge.



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# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1.1 Introduction

The study investigated the process of participation in formulating a programme, by a youth group in the Dutch Reformed Church in Seshego, Northern Province in South Africa. The group took action in the community project that I facilitated. The reflection of the action was based on the themes of the community development process as it unfolded. This chapter looks into the following sections:

- The initiating concern
- Objectives and questions for the research
- Literature review
- Why we used participatory research
- Methodology
- What I offer as a facilitator
- Stakeholders
- Processing and recording of data
- Limitations of the research
- Findings
- Conclusions

### 1.2 The initiating concern

The participatory research group consisted of seventeen youths from the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider Afrika, in Seshego Zone 1. There was constant nagging from the adults within the church that the youths were not active with regard to church activities, of singing, scripture reading, fund-raising, celebrations of Mother's, Father's and Youth Days. The constant nagging further



diminished the self-esteem of the youths, that is, the more the parents' nagged, the less the youths participated in church activities.

Before the participatory research, the group met twice on Fridays and Saturday afternoons for one hour thirty minutes, in order to discuss topics of concern within the wider community. These topics included violence within the community, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and suicide. It seemed that the activity of discussing topics of interest did not make the youth understand what it was that they could do to gain approval and respect from their parents.

I as researcher got involved with the group in May 1996, after giving a talk on Mother's Day on "communication within the family". The youth group requested the researcher to help with clarifications and give talks during the youth's weekly meetings.

The procedure that the group used in discussing topics of interest was to select one of the youth to lead the discussions. The chosen leader had to play two roles, that of information giver as well as the director of the whole process.

My observation before embarking on the inquiry with the group were:

- Poor communication, that is interruptions while talking, not listening to each other and lack of respect.
- Poor preparations for the topics to be discussed, resulting in little or no growth after the discussions. This was due to the fact that preparations were left to the leader alone. The others did not see it as their responsibility to prepare as well.
- No action was taken in terms of tackling the problems identified during the discussions.

- The group's coming together served a socializing purpose as a way of getting them off the streets.
- The participants were aware of their shortcomings but did not understand how they could overcome them. I saw this awareness as a positive aspect that needed to be harnessed and nurtured, to produce positive outcomes for themselves and for their community. It was because of this realization that I put forward a formal request, by getting permission from the Minister, in order to involve the youth in a community project.

### **1.3 Objectives and questions for the research**

The purpose of the study was descriptive because the researcher had to report about the issues that had already occurred. The following were the study's objectives:

- To assist participants to identify their needs and come up with action plans.
- To contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding participatory research.

This study looks at the following questions:

- (i) What was it that the group needed in order to actively participate in church activities?
- (ii) Did participation within a community project improve the interaction between the youth group and the adults?

### **1.4 Literature review**

I reviewed literature on participatory approaches and participation as a process that allowed the group to put themselves at the centre of development so that in the end they could become self-reliant and do things for themselves, maintaining self-confidence and making independent decisions, as well as literature on power

issues among those engaged in the research. According to De Koning and Martin (1996:82) power, empowerment and participation are central to the process.

I also looked into the literature so that the youth would learn how to critically analyze their situation in order to come up with solutions to their needs and problems, and change their self-concept, motivation and behaviour in relation to others, (Rogers 1951; and Freire 1994). I also reviewed literature on adolescence as a developmental stage by Letsebe 1988 and van Delft 1997).

I also reviewed literature on youth and the church with specific reference to the views of young people about the church and suggestions on how the church can change its role within the contemporary society (Kimathi 1998; and Smith 1998).

I looked into the definition of youth, the two types of youth generations as explained by Smith (1998) and the National Youth Policy of South Africa. Lastly I looked into literature on the church's mission by Kritzinger (1988).

## **1.5 Why we used participatory research**

I chose participatory research because I was oriented towards person-centred development and participatory research approaches in my studies. Theories such as Brown and Tandon (1988), Swanepoel (1992), Burkey (1993), Freire (1994) and Collins (1999) had an influence on my approach to social issues. Burkey (1993: 36) indicates that "participation is an essential part of human growth, that is the development of self-confidence, pride, initiative, creativity and responsibility". This shows the potential nature of man to overcome his helplessness given the chance to take charge of his situation.

I chose participatory research because it helps the participants to critically analyze their situation. It enables the group to intervene and come up with solutions to their needs and problems and change their self-concept, motivation and behaviour in relations to others (Freire 1994). I chose participatory research because it allows people to own the process in a collective manner and the

participants are empowered by the achievements of the study. The process increases their awareness in terms of realizing their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the activities with which they are involved.

My experience in participatory research is limited. The little that I have is largely due to my studies and lively discussions that we have held in classes (1996-1999) and during my involvement with the supervision of under graduate students in community development at the University of South Africa.

I concur with participatory research theorists, that people need to actively participate in matters that concern them in order to develop and grow. They need to be able to embrace error, learn to be effective, efficient and to expand (Korten 1980 & Freire 1994).

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994: 73) also calls for youth development to be in such a way that it fosters an enabling environment for the youth to realize their full potential and to participate fully in the society and their future. The programmes that are designed must address youth alienation and unemployment.

The National Youth Policy (1997: 5) also provides a foundation for a mechanism for youth participation in socioeconomic development whilst recognizing that young people should be protagonists of their own development and not only merely recipients of state support.

The advantages of using participatory research cannot be over emphasized – for example the process allows the research group to be involved in decision-making, it allows the participants to have a say about their conditions, and it leads participants to become self-aware, which is a prerequisite for conscious change. Lastly it gives equal status to the researcher and to the researched.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The participatory research group consisted of eighteen youths that regularly attended the bi-weekly youth meetings. I met with the group only on Fridays.

In getting to know the community, I mainly wanted to clear the pathway in order to facilitate engagement (Henderson & Thomas 1992: 40). The communication skills such as empathy, questioning, probing, paraphrasing and group work as a method guided my facilitation in discussing the group's concerns. (Egan 1994; Toseland & Rivas 1984). Rogers' (1951), person-centred approach assisted me in laying a foundation in allowing the participants to open up as well as taking charge of their situation.

The tools and techniques that I used were story telling, warm-up exercises found in community theatre for example "the puppet", brainstorming, as well as venn-diagramming in order to get the group's family and educational background, their likes and dislikes. Written and verbal self-reports played a significant role in the collection and analysis of data.

## **1.7 What I had to offer as a researcher**

My orientation to participatory approaches equipped me with the following:

- Community development theory and person-centred approaches with specific reference to Rogers (1951), Swanepoel (1991), Freire (1994), Henderson & Thomas (1992), and Korten (1994).
- Hlumelo theatre presented by Grobler (1996) at Unisa, equipped me with warm-up exercises that I used as ice-breakers.
- An orientation to traditional research methods laid a foundation for me to have an understanding about the conventional participatory research approaches.
- And lively discussions held with fellow classmates and lecturers, in reflecting on the community project, boosted and enhanced my knowledge and understanding of both participatory and person-centred approaches.

## 1.8 Stakeholders

Clark (1972: 20) identifies components of action research as having three task - masters namely:

- (i) The sponsor in this instance was the church and adult congregants who gave feedback indirectly in relation to the performance of the group. Parents' comments served as an external evaluative tool. The elders and the Minister of the Church were seen as gatekeepers, thus I had to approach them to get permission in undertaking the research with the youth group, which they readily gave.
- (ii) The behavioural science practitioner, in this instance the researcher, was a co-learner and not an expert.
- (iii) The scientific community included the co-researchers, the participatory research youth group.

## 1.9 Processing and recording data

The research group and the researcher used the following to collect data:

- During brainstorming, ideas were written on flip charts, which became an important source of reference for the following sessions.
- Venn-diagramming was scheduled to be used for the prioritization of needs but it was never used because members did not see the need to rank order their identified needs. The participants preferred to plan and implement short-term objectives as they moved along.
- The secretary of the research group took minutes and at the same time, I kept notes for process reports.
- Self-reporting was done verbally and in written form.

- Adults within the church served as external evaluators with their verbal and non-verbal behaviour.
- Audio recording was done in the beginning of the sessions but later it was discarded.
- The camera was used to take pictures during the needs assessment meeting.
- I had the responsibility of coming up with the final report after getting feedback from the group.

### **1.10 Limitations of the research**

- The pace at which the group and I wanted the project to unfold differed. Thus I had to engage in a longer negotiating process which was aggravated by holidays, impatience on the part of the youth as well as absenteeism.
- The method of recording was subjective, according to the views of the participants especially the self-reports. Important information may have been left out, unintentionally as well as intentionally.
- Findings of the study cannot be generalized to the broader youth community because of its participatory nature, they are only relevant to this group.

### **1.11 Findings**

Even though the study could not be replicated, knowledge gained will be important for the participatory approaches. The participatory group was able to identify their needs in the following areas of development: socialization, spiritual, recreation and environment as well as health and welfare related issues, to set up objectives for the meetings, and to implement some of the action plans they have formulated.

The involvement of the youth group in the participatory process made participants discover and know themselves and each other. The participants became more cohesive and their interaction with adults in the church improved, the youth became confident to participate actively in the church as well as in issues that concern young people.

## **1.12 Conclusion**

The conclusion of the research added more knowledge to the participatory theory, in terms of youth participation within a church set-up. People in authority agreed to the empowerment of the youth. The youth also now have an understanding of what it was that contributed to their passivity within the church, and positive steps the group took to overcome their shortcomings and empower themselves.

The layout of the of the dissertation will be as follows:

Chapter 1 contained the background information about the participatory research that was undertaken. Chapter 2 will review the literature on participatory approaches, definition of youth, youth and the church as well as the National Youth Policy. Chapter 3 will outline the participatory research process as it unfolds and lastly Chapter 4 will give the evaluation of the process indicating whether objectives set in the beginning were achieved as well as finding answers to the research questions.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The following definition about the literature review was indicated during a class discussion and it was summarised and formulated as follows:

To add new information to existing knowledge, and to find out what is not known in order to link up with what is already known. It describes the differences and similarities between the proposed investigation and research findings of similar studies. It supports and interacts with the conceptual framework by introducing and defining key terms that are the subject of the study.

The literature study was divided into the following sub-sections namely:

- Participatory research (PR)
  - Definition of PR
  - Definition of participation
  - Characteristics of PR methodologies
  - Principles and processes of participatory research
  - Participatory learning
  - Power as an issue in PR process
- Youth
  - Definition of young person or “youth”
  - Adolescence as a stage
  - Characteristics of the youth policy
  - Values and principles for youth development
  - Types of youth generations
  - The youth and church in transition
  - Mission of the church
- Community development process
- Group work skills useful in PR
- Researcher's theoretical framework

## **2.2 Participatory research**

The section will cover definitions and description of terms related to PR as seen by different writers. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995: 1667) indicate that research strategies, which emphasize participatory approaches, are gaining greater respectability and attention within the mainstream health research in developed and developing countries. They further indicate that traditional research tends to generate knowledge for understanding, which may be independent of its use in planning or implementation, while participatory research focuses on “knowledge for action”.

In conventional research the failure to take account of local priorities, processes and perspectives have resulted in inappropriate recommendations. In contrast, participatory research emphasizes a “bottom-up” approach with a focus on locally defined priorities, and local perspectives.

The involvement of local people in research and planning enhances the effectiveness and saves time and money in the long term. The distinctive feature about participatory research is not the methods, but the methodological contexts of their application. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995: 1667) stated that our researchers proclaimed it a universal panacea for the problems besetting conventional practice while others adjudge it biased, impressionistic and unreliable.

Tandon (1988: 5) states that participatory research has been in existence for about 15 years. It started with the practice of adult educators in the countries of the South - Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The philosophy of adult education placed learners in the centre and focussed on learners’ control over their learning process. The major premise is that adults are “capable”, capable of learning, changing and transforming the world.

Hall (cited in Malone 1994: 25) defines participatory research (PR) as “a more accurate and critical reflection of social reality, the liberation of human creative potential and mobilization of human resources for the solution of social problems.”

On the other hand, Tandon (1988: 3) defines PR as “the methodology of the alternative system of knowledge production. It is not a set of tools, techniques and methods. It is based on the belief that ordinary people are capable of understanding and transforming their reality.”

Rahman (1993: 151), sees PR “as an organized activity to attain objectives that people have set for themselves.”

Brown (1985: 70) explains PR as “ a people-centred learning process that can transform local patterns of awareness, equalize, distributions of power and resources, and increase participation in development activity.”

Malone (1994: 26) indicates that central to PR is an acknowledgement of knowledge as a major base for power and control in societies. The creation and valuing of “popular knowledge” is a central goal of PR and its purpose is not to describe social reality (understanding ‘what is’ but to transform reality by providing a vision of ‘what could be’).”

De Koning and Martin (1996: 51) explain participatory research as “outside researchers” and “inside respondents” being partners in exploring topics of mutual interest together. They stress understanding the value of local knowledge as central to PR.

Van Rooyen and Gray (1995: 95) define PR as an experiential research process where people are collectively involved on an equal basis in collective action aimed at knowledge development, education, social change and empowerment.

Collins (1999: 2) sums up participatory research as “the collective generation of knowledge which leads to the planning and achievement of jointly set objectives.”

These different definitions and explanations, converge to the same point or have the same distinctive features (Tandon 1988: 13).

- People’s role in setting the agenda of inquiry;
- People’s participation in data collection and analysis; and
- People’s control over the use of outcome and the whole process.

The practice of PR raises personal, political and professional challenges that go beyond the bounds of the production of information, since adults are “capable” of transforming their own world.

### **2.2.1 Definition of participation**

As Cornwall and Jewkes (1995: 1668) put it, “it is a question of if all research involves participation, what makes it participatory?” They say there is conceptual blurring around the terms participatory and participation, mainly because some conventional research projects involve a limited interaction with people, others achieve a high level of in-depth participation at certain stages, without being considered participatory. Participation is about facilitating processes whereby people can reflect, analyze, plan and take action.

Burkey (1993: 59) defines participation as an “organized effort to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control”.

It is essential that people must participate fully in research in order to “live the experience” and this includes the researcher as well. The researcher, is not merely, a passive ‘participant’, she must actively participate. As is indicated by Malone (1995: 31), “the relationship I have with the participants, the way we work and struggle together, it is an intricate part of the research. I realize now

the importance of documenting my experiences as a part of the research process. I have found myself adopting an active role in social reform.”

The above paragraph clearly indicates the subjective nature of PR an aspect that which qualitative researchers have been denying themselves by taking the stance that, researchers cannot be influenced or influence the process and/or outcome of research.

### **2.2.2 Characteristics of PR methodologies**

Brown and Tandon (1983: 279) and Cornwall and Jewkes (1995: 1668-1670) indicate the following characteristics of PR methodologies:

- PR is reflexive, flexible and iterative in contrast to the rigid, linear designs of most conventional science.
- PR involves innovative adaptations of methods drawn from traditional research and their use in new contexts, in new ways, often by as well as with local people, for example social maps adapted from cartography.
- PR is the alignment of power within the research process. The distinction is on how and by whom the research question is formulated, and for whom research findings are used.
- The PR process involves mutual learning and analysis.

The methodologies in PR continue to draw on qualitative research but allow local people to explore, analyze and present their perspectives in their own terms, using their own symbols and local materials to represent their social issues. By so doing local people are able to express their knowledge within their own conceptual framework, thus building confidence in what they know (Brown & Tandon 1998: 278).

### **2.2.3 Principles and processes of participatory research**

The principles and processes that underline PR techniques and strategies have emerged from the work with oppressed people in the third world and they stem from Paulo Freire's work in education (Brown & Tandon 1983: 279).

- They are concerned with the relation of power between the researcher and those being researched;
- They affirm that people's own knowledge is valuable, the researched are seen as agents rather than objects, capable of analyzing their situation and designing their own solutions;
- The role of researcher changes from director to facilitator and catalyst;
- The process involves mutual learning;
- The researched are the owners of their own knowledge and empowered to take action.

Maguire (as cited by Malone 1994: 27) identifies three activities in the PR process investigation, education and action.

Cornwall and Jewkes (1995: 1673) indicate that once participation is secured, involvement in the research process is usually neither continuous nor predictable. Commitment and interest waxes and wanes over time. This indicates the dynamic nature of the process.

The general phases that the inquiry follows are indicated by Cornwall and Jewkes (1995 : 1673).

- **PHASE ONE:** Organization of the project and knowledge of the working area. This entails identifying the problem. The communities either invite you or you invite the community to participate in inquiry. This is gaining entry into the community because the phase is concerned with establishing relationships with the community. Conducting initial investigations into the research problem, the setting of ground rules, allowing people to self-select in or out of the research process, in group work language is the formation phase.
  
- **PHASE TWO:** The researcher and co-researchers critically analyze the problem at hand and how it affects their lives. A lot of dialoguing is done. These first two phases fall under the investigation activity.
  
- **PHASE THREE:** Implications of the problems are verified and discussed holistically. Themes and methods and tools are identified. It is during this phase that the researcher should strengthen the participants' awareness of the possibilities for action and ownership of the project.
  
- **PHASE FOUR:** Participants design the project and start to develop their own theories and solutions to problems. They begin to make sense of the research problem. Phases three and four fall under the education activity.
  
- **PHASE FIVE:** Participants and researchers work collectively to address the issues that have been identified. Participants benefit from the whole process.

#### **2.2.4 Participatory learning**

Shrivastava (in Scheck 1996:71) indicates that participatory learning is "participant centred" since the focus is on relevance to the context within which the people live, so learning has to be immediately transferable and applicable. It is further indicated that learning within a group leads to a sense of dignity. It

provides the group with an opportunity to exchange ideas and perspectives and reinforces the feeling of empowerment.

By means of workshops, participants are allowed to plan and organize a workshop, case studies and to analyze situations similar to their own. Audio-visual media helps to direct, explain and stimulate the learning process. Group discussions, story-telling, role-play, brainstorming and community theatre are some of the methods that are used to facilitate learning.

### **2.2.5 “Power as an issue in PR Process”**

According to De Koning and Martin (1996:82) power, empowerment and participation are central to the process of PR. As indicated in the above sub-heading PR is a learning process that is empowering, participants gain the confidence to question relationships with those who consciously or unconsciously control and exploit them.

De Koning and Martin (1996:89) further indicate that power is a dynamic force, which is not possessed but exercised, which is productive rather than primarily repressive, that emerges from grassroots rather than coming from top-down. These views are contrary to most accounts for conventional research. Seeing or understanding power in this light helps us to understand power relations in the researcher – researched relationships.

My understanding of the above information indicates that throughout the research process the exercise of power will shift among the researched (participants) and the researcher. Elements such as anxiety, fear, competition and admiration influence this shift of power.

## **2.3 Youth**

According to the National Youth Policy (1997:5) 39% of the South African society fall into the “youth” category aged between 14 and 35 years. This comprises a large part of the population. The past government did not develop specific



policies or programmes to address the needs of young men and women. With the democratization of South Africa, the society is faced with many challenges and new opportunities. As such the government found it appropriate to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the problems and challenges facing the youth. Thus a National Youth Policy was formulated which represents a major historical milestone in youth development. The document came about through the participation of young people in summits which were held in all nine provinces of South Africa.

### **2.3.1 Definition of “youth”**

According to the National Youth Policy (1997: 7), the term youth indicates “young males and females aged from 14 to 35 years.” It further states that the needs of the people in this group require social, economic and political support to realize their potential. The policy recognizes that there may be people who fall outside this range but who may experience similar circumstances to other young people. It recognizes that not all young persons are the same: there are those who are still at school while others are not, those who are disabled and not disabled, those in rural areas while others are in urban areas, and those who are parents (married or single).

The National Youth Policy opts to use the terminology “young men and women” or alternately “young women and men” in order to emphasize the heterogeneous character of the youth sector in a gender-sensitive and inclusive manner. The definition of other policies are also given, for example:

- The White Paper on Social Welfare (1996) “defines a young person as a woman or man aged from 16 to 30 years.”
- The National Youth Policy has adopted the same definition as used in the National Youth Commission Act (1996), that is, 14 to 35 years.

- The Child Care Act (1983), defines a child as a male or female, aged from 0 to 18 years.
- The National Youth Policy indicates the need to harmonize the definition of youth across policies, as rights given to males and females at certain ages also contain apparent inconsistencies.

The researcher will adopt the definition outlined in the National Youth Policy and will use the phrases “youth”, and “young men and women” (either way) and “young persons” interchangeably.

### **2.3.2 Adolescence as a development stage**

Letsebe (1988:50) describes adolescence as “a period for the preparation of adulthood, which is divided into early and late adolescence. The average age for the start of this stage is about 13 years for girls and 14 for boys.”

I will concentrate on the early adolescence as most of the group members fall within this category.

Letsebe (1988:50) characterizes it as a period of storm and stress when a lot of misunderstanding is experienced with parents, teachers, friends and other siblings. Youth at this stage are often unstable, with mood swings. They are unpredictable even to themselves. They feel insecure, they feel being ambiguously treated by adults.

Erickson (cited by van Delft 1998:55) indicates that problems found in this stage are identity versus role confusion. He further describes the meaning of identity as “an optional sense of identity .....” is experienced merely as a sense of psycho-social well-being. Its most obvious concomitant are a feeling of being at home in one’s body, a sense of “knowing where one is going” and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count.”

Role confusion on the other hand happens when the adolescent fails to create a positive identity. Van Delft (1998:56) further indicates the manifestation of role confusion as:

- no central perception of who one is;
- difficulty in exploring different roles and in finding a niche in which one can develop; and
- insufficient self-confidence to take meaningful decisions.

According to Van Delft (1998:56), the adolescent who feels this way becomes anxious, apathy sets in and opposes existing roles because she/he feels uncomfortable in all of them. In trying to overcome this role confusion unfortunately the adolescent develops a negative identity. This is further made worse by judgmental adults, and a society that is aggressive and quick to condemn certain behaviours.

Letsebe (1988: 5-8) indicates that the youth can derive the following from training other youth and from participating in the training programme:

- Improved self-understanding;
- Knowledge of what helping entails;
- The personal management of time;
- A better understanding of behaviour;
- Improved relationship skills, which include the ability to relate both to peers and to adults;
- Increased self-understanding and self-confidence;
- Substantial gain in the ability to identify feelings of self and others.

### **2.3.3 Characteristics of the youth policy**

As outlined in the National Youth Policy (1997) its characteristics are:

- to ensure that the youth are given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential, both as individuals and as active participants in society;

- to address the major concerns and issues critical to young men and women and to give direction to youth programmes;
- to provide a framework with common goals for development and promoting a spirit of cooperation;
- to place young people in the broader context of reconstruction and development, thus highlighting the importance of youth development to nation building and to the creation of a democratic, productive and equitable society;
- to value young women and men as a key resource and a national asset and to place their needs and aspiration central to national development;
- to provide a foundation and mechanism for youth participation in socio-economic development whilst recognizing that young people should be protagonists of their own development and not merely recipients of state support;
- to encourage an understanding amongst young men and women of the processes of governance and to provide opportunities for their participation in provincial and local programmes; lastly
- to provide a foundation and direction for the National Youth Action Plan.

#### **2.3.4 Values and principles for youth development**

The values and principles as recognized in the commonwealth Youth Charter and included the National Youth Policy (1997: 18) are the following:

- **Gender inclusive development:** it focuses on increasing the participation of women, as well as integrating gender concerns into all activities.

- **Empowerment:** a commitment to equity and access to resources in achieving equality and participation in decision-making and action, regardless of gender, location, social, cultural or economic circumstances.
- **Human rights:** a commitment to extending the benefits of development within a framework of respect for human rights.
- **Sustainability:** a commitment to sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty through philosophies and actions as espoused in the Harare Declaration in 1991.
- **Integration:** a commitment to the integration of the concerns, issues and aspirations of young men and women into the mainstream of all local, provincial, national and international activities.

The above policy will ensure that programmes that are formulated will address the needs and problems of youth because they will participate actively in decision making.

### 2.3.5 Types of youth generations

“The old adage that children should be seen, not heard, has been well indoctrinated in our society that today we encounter youth and young adults who are often neither seen nor heard. While young persons between the ages 12 and 30 represent almost fifty percent of the world’s population, their voices and experiences have often been stifled by society and in many instances, the Christian community” (Smith 1998: 4).

Smith (1998 : 5) further identifies two distinct generations of youth. Young people born between 1965 and 1981 are referred to as “Generation X”, the post moderns or the 13<sup>th</sup> generation. The other group is born between 1982 and 1999 and is called the “Millennial Generation” or “Generation Y”.

### Characteristics of Generation X or the X'ers

Smith, (1998: 5) indicates that Generation X responds primarily out of a need for personal survival. They struggle to survive economically, physically and emotionally. They have these characteristics because they have not enjoyed the safe economic prosperity experienced by their parents. The X'ers have not enjoyed the safe living standards of their parents. As college graduates, they struggle to find employment. Generation X was born in an era of great changes for example they have experienced divorces and multiple marriages of their parents.

Generation X group have inherited from their parents rising national debt. Forty-five per cent of the Generation X group has experienced the death of someone close. Eleven per cent of the same group has experienced the death of someone because of a gunshot. To top it all the X'ers grew up during a time when the place and role of religion shifted. The X'ers have been raised in an atmosphere of a host of religious practices. They are seen by society as negative, trouble makers, scape goats and rugged individuals. It is indicated that they harbour distrust and non affiliation towards institutions. (Smith 1998: 6)

The 1976 uprisings in South Africa, children were thrust "onto frontline", this making it difficult to maintain traditional social relations between adults and children. Children became used to power and control and refused to yield to the authority of adults – their parents and teachers. Conflict became inevitable. (Ramphela 1992:17).

### Characteristics of Generation Y

The Generation Y group also known as the millennial kids are experiencing protection from their parents and the community. This is seen by increased supervision as well as chaperoning. It is further indicated that this group already shows traits of being "doers" and "achievers". It is indicated that the millennial kids communicate trust in the goodness of life and confidence in themselves. This generation is expected to be more civic oriented than the preceding one (Smith 1998: 8).

### 2.3.6 The Youth and Church in transition

"I want to start a church where young people can sit around card tables, drink soda during the service, and where dim lights set the ambience for worship" (Soto 1998: 9).

"The church will need to re-explore its role within the contemporary African society or risk losing the young people. Dealing with practical needs of society is the only feasible way of ministering to the soul – what the young person calls for is the "here and now" as opposed to the Kingdom Come. We have to answer to tonight too" (Kimathi 1998: 16).

These were some of the concerns raised by young adults indicating the importance of the church not to be rigid but to transform and gain a fit with the changing society.

Soto (1998: 9) states that "to do this the church will need to programme its teachings with the realization that spiritual ministering today calls for more audience-centred approach. Since the church has for the longest time been viewed as the custodian of moral rectitude, it has of necessity, had to recognize the societal transformation that we have gone through and how that has impacted on traditional moral standards."

In order to transform – the process of achieving change according to Soto (1998: 11) the following needs to be done:

- *Correcting misconceptions* – being accustomed to certain church traditions for example church had to be on Sundays, with the pastor dressed in a three-piece suit, preaching while everyone listened.

A group of Generation X aims at coming up with a church that is Generation X friendly, topics focussed on issues that concern the X'ers, the pastor teaching in shorts and a cap.

- *Leaders who can minister* – the group of Generation X believe that people must minister and lead where they are. The atmosphere should allow people to address questions without condemnation but instead with openness of a caring community.
- *A need for innovative guidelines.* Kimathi (1998: 17) indicates that young people defy the church by staying away from the church, or coming to church and being inactive, joining more liberal denominations or making individual choices regardless of what the church has to say”.

Kimathi adds (1998:16), the church still sees sexuality outside marriage as unequivocally evil, it does not seem to recognize that individuals are becoming more empowered to make choices. Most young people see the church’s attitude as unrealistic thus the church will therefore need to come up with more innovative guidelines and new laws that reflect changed values and acknowledge that the pressures that young people face today are different from those of a few decades ago.

### **2.3.7 Mission of the Church**

According to van Biljon (1987:30) mission stems from the needs of the people it serves. It involves the general goals, values and the philosophy of the agency.

I will provide a working definition by Kritzinger (1988) formulated during a conference in 1986.

Mission of the church was seen as being threefold:

- sharing in spreading the gospel
- sharing in the renewal of the church; and
- sharing in creating a society based on gospel principles.



The Church understands mission to be comprehensive with distinguished but inseparable dimensions. Evangelism and social involvement are described on the same level not, as one being primary while the other is secondary.

*Nature of community development services within the church* - In the church there are different committees which must deal with "charity" and/or development, youth commissions, women's and men's league. Unfortunately these are viewed in terms of someone from outside coming in to "dish out" rather than assisting the church to be empowered in this regard. As such the objectives are not fully realized. A holistic approach to the mission is not considered.

The church itself is community development if they can view their mission as such. According to Perkins (1995:17) "Christian community development is commitment by Christians to create long-term solutions to the problems of poverty".

#### **2.4 Community development process**

The researcher made use of the community development process in her research. Swanepoel (1992: 116) outlines several stages through which a project traverses: making contact, the survey, needs and resource identification, the committee, planning, implementation and evaluation.

Crucial to the success of the development process are aspects which strongly influence the project, which the worker must be aware of so that the project's environment is not isolated from other environments. The community worker must also have a positive attitude and further be aware that she must act one or more of the following roles: a guide, enabler, advocate and facilitator, (Swanepoel 1992: 114).

#### **2.4.1 Stage 1: Making contact**

Swanepoel (1992: 114) indicates that this stage is the most crucial stage for community development. The researcher starts to build relationships with her co-researchers. There are three objectives:

- The researcher gets to know the community;
- The community gets to know the researcher;
- The researcher gets to know the co-researchers' needs within their environment.

Making contact also should not disturb the rhythm of the community.

#### **2.4.2 Stage 2: The survey**

The objective of doing a survey is to collect data and the action group must participate fully so that they should own the process from the onset. The survey should not be long, a detailed accurate verifiable information is not always necessary (Swanepoel 1992: 115).

#### **2.4.3 Stage 3: Needs and resource identification**

Local people must be given the opportunity to explore, analyze and present their perspectives in their own terms, choosing their own symbols from local materials to represent aspects of their lives. The community must be allowed to tell their stories, through discussions, maps and visuals. Needs that are identified must be felt by all members of the action group and the worker must also keep abstract needs in mind (Swanepoel 1992: 116; Cornwall & Jewkes 1995: 1673)

#### **2.4.4 Stage 4: The Committee**

Swanepoel (1992:116) indicates that the researcher is encouraged not to take leadership in the project. The action group must drive the process themselves even though there is a committee in place. This is to ensure that participation

encompasses all, and that there are no “free riders”. The best time for creation of a committee is after needs identification. It is important to note also that a project can go on without a committee.

#### **2.4.5 Planning**

Swanepoel (1992: 116) says planning must involve the whole action group and must be written down. It must be short-term and its objectives must be concrete and address the identified need. It must be incremental.

#### **2.4.6 Implementation**

It differs from project to project. It must come as soon as possible after the formulation of the plan. The action group must fully participate. Sometimes people from outside an action group can be involved, for example, people with “expert knowledge” (Swanepoel 1992: 117).

#### **2.4.7 Evaluation**

Evaluation is there all the time. Evaluation is necessary in order to make adjustments where necessary, in time. Record keeping makes evaluation easier and more meaningful. All members of the project should be involved.

### **2.5 Groupwork skills useful in PR**

Toseland and Rivas (1984: 95) have identified three functional groupwork leadership skills: those which (i) facilitate group processes, (ii) data gathering and assessment and (iii) action.

#### **2.5.1 Skills facilitating group processes**

Under this heading we find skills such as attending, expressive / responding, focussing, guiding group interaction and involving group members. These skills are useful in establishing relationships, allowing members to self-disclose, to clarify issues in order to be able to respond appropriately, to guide the process

without making the community feel that they do not have the power (Toseland and Rivas 1984 and Egan 1994).

### **2.5.2 Data gathering and assessment**

In this group, we find skills that help in identifying and describing, requesting information, questioning and probing, summarizing and partializing. These skills are essential when one is doing a survey, in coming up with objectives and methods and models to be used in achieving needs.

### **2.5.3 Action skills**

Action skills involve the following: synthesizing and supporting group members, reframing and redefining, resolving conflicts and confrontation, role-playing, rehearsing and coaching. These techniques allow group members to identify with others who are having the same problems and needs. It helps the group to come up with new perspectives.

## **2.6 The researcher's theoretical framework**

Person-centred development theorists, writers such as Rogers (1951), Henderson and Thomas (1980), Swanepoel (1992), Burkey (1993), Freire (1994), influence the researcher's theoretical framework in this study. For purposes of this study, I used Swanepoel (1992) as my frame of reference for the implementation of the project.

Regarding participatory research, I found it difficult to single out a specific theorist because most, if not all, have similar premises, principles and processes. As such, my frame of references will consists of mixture of Brown and Tandon (1988), Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) and Collins (1999).

Basic communication skills and the group-work skills as outlined by Toseland and Rivas (1984), Egan (1994) were used in order to lay a foundation for a conducive environment for effective collaborative inquiry.

The above theories were chosen mainly because they encourage and acknowledge that, people know best what their needs are and how they could address them. They encourage the community developer to be respectful and empathic, using the frame of reference of the community as they dialogue to understand the people. I was a co-learner in the process and not an expert. People are helped to grow and to move away from being powerless, oppressed to being liberated, creative and in control of their development and their lives.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the importance of PR and person-centred development approaches in doing research. Their values, principles and processes put the co-researchers at centre of their inquiry.

The definition and explanation of the term “youth”, was outlined. The National Youth Policy of South Africa is going to ensure that the programmes, which are formulated, are in line with the needs, problems and concerns of young men and women.

The following chapter will give an exposition about the outcome of the participatory research process, in order to discover if the researcher and co-researchers have come to new perspectives regarding the issue at hand.

The chapter will also document the process as it unfolded during the community development project.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is based on the researcher's description of the community development process that took place with the youth group from July 1996 to September 1997. What follows is what transpired and is based on my perception of the whole inquiry.

I will give a background on the church, the participants, relationship between adults and the youth within the church, and provide conceptual framework. I will also give an account of participatory research process as it unfolded.

The process will be broken down into five phases, which will follow Swanepoel's (1992) structure.

- Making contact;
- Needs and resource identification;
- Planning;
- Implementation; and
- Evaluation which will be discussed in the following chapter.

A phase in this instance covers more than three sessions or meetings. The phases will cover the action and reflection cycles indicating the theory, planning, methods and outcome as well as reflection and conclusions reached.

## **3.2 The background information**

This section gives information about the church, participants, and clarification on the researcher's role, and the relationships between church and youth.

### **3.2.1 The church**

The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika in Pietersburg was founded in 1890. Parishioners were divided by race. The black section relocated to the Seshego township,  $\pm$  13 km West of the city, due to the Group Areas Act No. 36 of 1966 which separated racial groups into different residential areas.

Since the late 1980s, the black churches were encouraged to take charge of their development. Dependence on the white mother church was gradually reduced. This independence had allowed the congregants to be flexible in terms of trying to achieve their mission. Spiritual development is not the only important objective to be realized but the social development as well. For example annual celebrations such as Father's, Mother's and Youth days are recognized. Also, fund-raising is done in order to help the poor within the church.

### **3.2.2 The participants**

Participants in the research were youth between ages of 15–23. Six of the participants were still in high school, and ten were in higher classes, that is, grade 11 and 12. Two were post-matrics.

The average number of attendants at most meetings was fifteen. But on some days attendance went down to six, and on these days the group would be so concerned that they would carry out an investigation into factors causing poor attendance. Poor attendance was common during school vacations. Attendance of meetings fluctuated due to examinations, illness, or simply just staying away. On the other hand, for girls, arriving home late from the session resulted in them being grounded for several meetings.

I was requested by the youth to facilitate their activities. It was already an existing group when I got involved. Their main activity was to hold discussions on topics such as crime, teenage pregnancy and suicide, with one of the participants leading deliberations.

### **3.2.3 The researcher**

In my working situation, I was doing generic social work, that is, my job description included youth development. I was very apprehensive about my role and where possible I would avoid the situation. I had my own stereotypes about the youth, as being uncompromising, unyielding, unruly, and undisciplined. When I was requested by the youth, through church elders to facilitate, I found myself backed into a corner, I felt obliged to agree, basically because of the context of the request. My belief about youth made me feel powerless whereas the youth and the church perceived me as having the power due to my professional standing. To be given the opportunity and responsibility empowered me in turn.

### **3.2.4 Clarification of the researcher's role**

The expectations were that I should support the status quo. Being a member of the church, as well as being an adult posed problems in terms of how I was perceived by the group. As an adult, my perceptions were that the youth saw me as a disciplinarian, authoritarian, and an "eye" for the church. My role as a researcher at the beginning of the project was clouded by the above perceptions. At the beginning of the research, the youth perceived me as an expert. Being labelled as an expert placed me outside the group. As a result I was only drawn in the group decisions as a person who has the answer to the problem at hand.

Clarifying my role was done early as I was afraid to give the youth group the impression that I would fall in line with what they had been doing. Although I clarified my role in this phase, I had to continue doing it in almost all the following phases. My roles were those of a guide, facilitator and supporter. In no way was



I going to do things for the group. Rather, whatever was agreed upon as a plan of action, was done by all of us. I outlined my intentions in relation to how participatory approach works, its aims and rationale.

### **3.2.5 The relationship between adults and the youth within the church**

The youth knew that adults within the church were not happy with their lack of participation. For example, the adults noted youth not singing during church services, not reading the text when requested to do so, and not taking part during church activities. As such the relationship between the two groups was strained. The adults were impatient; thus most of the time they nagged. This constant scolding made the youth withdraw even further. My point of departure emanated from this theme of lack of involvement by the youth within the church.

The constant nagging of adults hampered the young people in raising issues that were of concern to them. The critical questioning and problem posing made the group analyze their situation critically and take charge of their situation and come up with changes that made the young people feel good about themselves and the church as a whole. As stated in the National Youth Policy (1997: 82), "Every State should place people at the centre of development and direct our economies to meet human needs more effectively and to ensure that young people are active participants and beneficiaries in the process of development".

The talks that I gave at church, during functions, gave me an opportunity to communicate with both adults and youth. The gatherings allowed me to engage the two groups in dialogue, which clarified me further how the adults and youth perceived each other.

### **3.3 The participatory process**

I formulated the research questions, which I put forward to the group and they agreed to explore them together. The community development process aimed to answer the research questions as outlined in chapter one. At the same time each session had its own objectives set by the group to come up with solutions.

This section addressed the process as it unfolded within the various phases of community development. The phases, in particular, were making contact, needs and resource identification, planning, implementation and evaluation. The process was not as straightforward as indicated. In most cases four of the phases, namely the needs analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation occurred simultaneously, or we would move forward and backward between phases.

What follows is the process that the group underwent. In each phase I had the structure in mind which covered the following:

- Theory - which guided our process.
- Planning – objectives that guided our action in terms of how are we going to do it.
- Method and outcome – further elaborating how it was done and what happened?
- Reflection – what have we discovered and what are we going to do next?

### **3.4 First Phase: Making Contact**

This phase is the point of entry and it is at this point that the pace of the process will be set. According to Swanepoel (1992: 39) the community developer should not adopt a “know-it-all” attitude because the community may not get involved, as they will expect the developer to solve problems for them.

#### **3.4.1 Theory**

In this phase I was guided by the theories of Henderson and Thomas (1980), Toseland and Rivas (1984), Swanepoel (1992) in gaining entry and the formation phase in groupwork; and Egan’s (1994) communication skills that allow people to tell their stories.

### 3.4.2 Planning

The objectives were to:

- Formally put a request to do community development with the youth;
- Introduce each other “formally” and in so doing, gather information on the profile of the community.
- Outline each other’s expectations, roles and intentions;

### 3.4.3 Method and outcome

#### Formal request

I met with the youth group several times before this contact-making phase. I punctuated my point of entry by putting a formal request to engage the youth in a community development project. Although I was already given permission by the church, as well as having been called in by the youth, my formal request was not readily agreed to by participants. The youth group’s concern was that I was going to make them deviate from church related issues.

This was no surprise to me as I have already indicated that the mission of the church was not practised fully. The spiritual side dominated the development domain. Later on one member was sent outside our meeting sessions to “apologize” to me and indicated the group’s willingness to participate in the project. To ensure that the spiritual component was not left out, the group agreed that, before the end of sessions they had to practise hymns in order to sing well during church services.

The youth wrote a letter to the church council asking for permission to hold the church service. This was welcome, and it was put into practice three weeks later. Unfortunately I was not around to see how it went.

It took us several meetings to agree and come to a shared understanding, on the need to know each other better through introductions. It also took us time to clarify our roles, expectations and intentions. The chairperson of the youth group strongly indicated what they would like to do right away. (To me it sounded like a

shopping list and my fears emerged as to whether I would be able to manage to meet them halfway or not. I wished that they could have waited until we reached the needs analysis stage).

The youth needed the following:

- To play drama in order to entertain themselves and others.
- Invite other youth groups to the sessions – to learn and share from each other as well as to show off that they can do it.
- To go out on excursions, and learn about their surroundings, history and cultural heritage.
- Start a cleaning campaign – in order to clean the environment and raise awareness about pollution.

Participants wanted to implement the above as soon as possible.

### Introductions

The group initially did not agree to introductions. The participants indicated that they knew each other and it was not necessary for them to go through the exercise. I indicated that they may know each but I did not. Eventually they agreed and the following was done.

The puppet,<sup>1</sup> by Grobler (1996) was used as an ice-breaker. This exercise amused the group and it became a tradition for the opening of sessions.

The introductions involved each person indicating his / her name, nicknames, age, educational level, role models and why they had chosen the person, hobbies, envisaged career, and their personal strengths and vulnerabilities.

The members were allowed to get clarification from the person who was introducing himself / herself especially when they did not agree with what she/he was saying, mainly because the participants alleged that they knew each other.

<sup>1</sup>It involves the stretching of the limbs and neck, its aim is to loosen up the body joints.

As such the introductions took time, participants were encouraged to listen to each other, to know each other more than they thought they did. It was also a learning process for the group because members came up with career choices such as meteorology, which was unknown to others.

#### **3.4.4 Reflection**

On reflecting on the phase as a whole, the following was said by the group. More time was allotted for the introduction session, it marked the starting of relationships in terms of members who shared similar characteristics, as well as building trust among the participants. Everyone had an opportunity to talk and be listened to. Self-introductions encouraged the members to think deeply about themselves. It made participants to listen attentively to each other. The participants discovered that they did not know each other the way they thought they did. From then on they saw each other in a different light.

During this phase, there was a lot of playfulness, interruptions and a lack of respect for each other's opinions. The youth wanted to prove to the adults that they are able to act on their decisions, hence the need to put their "plans" into action very quickly, a characteristic of the adolescent stage.

I had to reassure the participants that I would not make them deviate from church issues, when they got involved with the community development project. One of the participants indicated that activities that they wanted to embark upon were long overdue. The group needed action.

I felt that being a change agent, moving the oppressed out of oppression it is a very difficult process because you are viewed as an oppressor. Whereas I wanted to help the group in optimizing what they were already doing, they were sceptical about my community development project (Freire 1994).

In terms of the locus of power in this phase, the youth group had the power to choose whether to agree to my request or not. I was powerless because I could

not have continued with the research if they did not agree to my request. At the same time the youth solicited my facilitation as an adult within the church, somebody who had the capacity to give support and guidance. In the beginning I wanted to be in control and have structure in the process and when the group came up with needs or activities, I felt rushed and powerless.

It was agreed that the needs would be identified in the next meeting.

### **3.5 Second Phase: Needs Identification**

According to Swanepoel (1992: 51) needs can be identified formally when the project has started and informally during the contact making phase. In this phase we formally identified the needs.

#### **3.5.1 Theory**

The theory that was used as a frame of reference was drawn from Freire's (1994), problem posing and dialogue strategies in order to allow participants to critically analyze their situation, to come up with solutions to their problems.

#### **3.5.2 Planning**

The objective set was to identify the needs. This phase came after the December vacations. The momentum was lost due to the break. It was like starting all over again. The participants requested that I should come up with a plan of activities for the year. Once more I had to clarify my role, explain what was expected of the young persons in the whole exercise. I indicated that it was our responsibility as a group, not mine as a facilitator to come up with a plan and agree on what was supposed to be done, how and when it should happen.

During this phase, Valentine's Day was approaching and the group indicated that they would like to celebrate it, with the aim of building relationships and trust. The participants agreed to contribute R10.00 each in order to buy snacks, and they also exchanged gifts. I also contributed and joined the fun. Unfortunately

the church council did not allow us to use the church premises because they were afraid that the youth would become unruly and uncontrollable. The youth were not happy, they felt that they were not trusted and that hurt. The venue was shifted to the home of one of the participants.

### **3.5.3 Method and outcome**

Through discussions, problem posing, and brainstorming, the group was encouraged to identify the needs before embarking on activities. Brainstorming was done, using a "thinking pen"<sup>2</sup> as a technique, wherein everyone had a chance to talk. The pressing issue was non-participation in church activities. Issues that were identified were written down by one of the members on a flip chart. At the same time a secretary kept minutes, I kept my own notes in order to compile process reports. The following needs and problems were identified and they are documented unaltered:

- to gain recognition by the church
- to have good relations among themselves as youth
- to share leadership in discussing topics of interest
- to learn to be responsible
- to entertain each other through drama
- to develop spiritually by means of bible studies
- to have discussions on culture and religion
- to participate actively in church activities
- to have self-discipline and respect
- to avoid using vulgar language
- to be punctual
- to dress properly
- to stop mumbling in meetings

The identified issues were discussed to allow the participants to have a common understanding. For example, on the topic of the use of acceptable and vulgar language, some of the group members felt that both terms meant the same thing.

<sup>2</sup> A pen is rotated among all the participants in order to give everyone a chance to talk.

Others felt that they differed, in the sense that one may not be vulgar but his/her choice of words may not be appropriate for the people that he/she may be talking with. The group indicated that they have their own *lingua franca* which may sound like Greek to adults, as such they must use it where it is understood and accepted.

The following themes emerged:

- the need to behave responsibly and in an accountable manner
- to gain recognition and acceptance by adults and be good role models for each other
- to have and give love and a sense of belonging

The celebration of Valentine's Day gave us the opportunity to see participants in another setting, it encouraged the spirit of cooperation and giving. The group decided to exchange gifts in the following manner. Gifts were wrapped without names written on them. Two sets of numbers were written down. One was attached outside the gift and the remaining one went into the tossing bowl. A member was allowed to pick a number, which did not belong to his/her gift. Participants received the gifts, which had numbers that corresponded to the one they picked. Later on members indicated which presents they had bought. It was fun and the group was very happy with the activity. I stayed till the end, something that the group indicated would be difficult for me to do because the youth's music was mainly what is called "kwaito". This is the youth's current popular rap music, with the same lyrics sung over and over, typically unpopular with adults.

#### **3.5.4 Reflection**

During the needs analysis the group participated actively and even passed their normal time of ending sessions. The group was able to come up with needs and concerns but could not cluster and prioritize. It was agreed this would be done in the next meeting.



The Valentine's Day celebration went well because the group managed to collect the funds and continued with the party even though the church didn't allow the participants to hold it within the church premises. It gave the group an opportunity to put into action the plan they had agreed upon. It assisted in the starting of relationships and trust building. The participants were disappointed by the decision of the church council not to give permission for them to use the premises. This decision hurt their feelings even though they were trying to behave appropriately. Being able to plan and act on what was planned boosted the group's morale and self-confidence. The participants were energized and this was observed by the way that the youth actively participated, after Valentine's Day and attendance also improved.

### **3.6 Unanticipated events**

Between the needs identification and the planning phases, the attendance rate dropped from fifteen to eight members per session. This happened immediately after the Easter holidays. The group was worried and decided to find out the reasons for this.

#### **3.6.1 Theory**

Henderson & Thomas (1980: 287) indicate that community development usually takes place in an uncertain environment. It is usually not clear what the peoples' reaction will be. Thus it is inevitable that things will not always go as planned. Adjustments will be necessary. Rogers' (1951: 483) proposition one indicates that "every individual exists in a continually changing world of experience of which he is a centre." This guided me to allow the participants to determine issues to which they needed to attend. Egan's (1994) communication skills were also applied especially probing, paraphrasing and reflection of feelings.

#### **3.6.2 Planning**

The objectives set for this meeting were to:

- investigate poor attendance

- suggest ways to improve the attendance.

### 3.6.3 Method

The technique of the ‘thinking cap’<sup>3</sup> (Grobler 1996) was used in order to allow everyone to come up with his/her ideas. Through discussions and critical questioning the group was able to identify the following:

- lack of commitment, especially after the holidays. It was agreed that the solution was to incorporate holidays into the meeting schedule
- lack of clear guidelines, rules and regulations (the constitution)
- a need to draw up a plan of action
- to be serious about youth issues
- to know what they want in life
- to believe in themselves, have trust and self-confidence

#### **How can these be achieved?**

The group agreed on the following:

- to stop relying on the leadership of one person
- to continue with a community project even though we were not the usual number
- to share the leadership responsibility
- to stop blaming.

The youth group wrote a letter to the church council, requesting that a formal appeal be made at church to inform the youth in general that meetings had resumed. On the same day participants came up with a short programme for the following week.

<sup>3</sup> A cap is rotated among all the participants in order to give everyone a chance to talk.

The plan involved the practising of drama in preparation for the next Mothers' Day. The same day hymns were practiced in preparation for church on Sunday. On Mothers' Day the youth panicked and did not perform the drama that they prepared. Instead the Sunday school children presented their drama. This made the youth group think hard about their activities, it made them to reflect. Fortunately the adults did not comment about this.

#### **3.6.4 Reflection**

The self-introspection regarding poor attendance caused the group to analyze their situation and to come with an understanding that participation does not mean large numbers, rather a sense of being committed to the process. Not being able to present the drama as agreed lowered the group's self-esteem. The youth were angry with themselves for not being courageous enough as compared to the younger children. At the same time I also felt guilty because I left them on their own at the last rehearsal. This made them reflect about the purpose of the group and at the same time parents had to change their usual communication style by keeping silent about the youth's setback. Long term planning did not fit in with the group's style of doing things. They preferred to have short-term objectives, since quick achievements of goals helped to boost their self-confidence and morale.

### **3.7 Third Phase: Planning**

#### **3.7.1 Theory**

Swanepoel (1992: 79) indicates that planning takes place to process specific detailed information in order to point the way to what must be done, when it must be done, and by whom it must be done to reach a certain objective. At this point the participants were aware that it is only they who should take responsibility for their circumstances. They have indicated that the need is to know and understand themselves first.

### 3.7.2 Planning

The participants did not see the necessity of prioritizing the identified needs. Instead the group's action plan involved grouping the identified needs into developmental areas and this took us to the larger planning, that is, deciding how to go about the need that is identified.

The group further indicated that the envisaged programme should achieve the following objectives:

- building of positive relations among themselves and others
- raising of awareness in terms of environmental matters
- getting information on issues of sexuality, drug abuse and general mental health
- instilling self-confidence in the group
- knowing themselves in order to acquire a sense of positive self-identity

### 3.7.3 Method

Through discussions and clarifications, the youth established the following sub-objectives within the identified developmental areas.

#### **The social growth**

- *There is a need to be disciplined and to respect one another and learning to be punctual at school, church and home:* The group addressed this by keeping time and attendance registers and paying attention when one of the members was talking, as well as respecting each others ideas.
- *Self-knowledge:* Knowing one's strengths and weaknesses and what one wants in life. The participants said this aspect of understanding themselves would help the youth in making decisions, evaluating the feedback given by others, and guiding them in improving themselves and one another. Self-knowledge was agreed to by participants to be the first to be addressed.

- *Be able to express one self:* The group agreed that sharing the leadership role would allow the participants to be able to talk in public. The group had already started implementing the sharing of leadership by alternating the leading of discussions of topics of interest.
- *Peer counselling in order to give guidance to one another:* The group realized they could help each other to avoid issues like suicide. The participants were made aware by the facilitator that a training programme for peer counselling would need an expert.
- *Gaining self control:* The group indicated that they need to be able to say no to peers, so that they are not influenced to behave inappropriately.

### **Spiritual Growth**

The group indicated that by practising and then doing Bible readings in church, they would gain recognition from adults. The practise of hymns in order to sing well during church also helped the youth to be seen in a positive light by adults.

### **Recreation and environmental awareness**

Musical concerts, drama, educational tours, cleaning campaigns and the celebration of annual events, were some of the activities identified to achieve this developmental area.

### **Health and welfare**

Focus was on topics related to the two fields. The group realized that their approach of relying on one person to lead discussions was not empowering. As such it was agreed that preparations should be done by all the members, to enable them to participate actively and learn from the whole exercise. It was agreed that experts would be called when necessary.

### **3.7.4 Reflection**

The participants became aware that in order for their needs to be properly addressed, a short-term plan was necessary to guide their actions. Tackling of issues should be simple.

The participants decided to work on self-knowledge, within the social growth developmental area, before deciding on what to do next. The group decided to allocate four sessions to this but was able to work on one session only because the examinations were starting.

My perception of the spiritual growth in the developmental area was that the interpretation of the youth differed from that of adults. The youth were concerned with pleasing others. As emphasized by Erikson (in van Delft 1998 : 55) the meaning of identity to the adolescent is "knowing where one is going and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count".

### **3.8 Unanticipated events**

Three things happened. Firstly, our Minister took early retirement due to ill health and a farewell function was held. Secondly, a month later he passed away which was a blow to the church. Thirdly, the youth group got an invitation from the Department of Health and Welfare to send four representatives to attend a holiday programme.

Preparations were done for the farewell function and funeral arrangements. The youth got involved by cleaning the yard as well as presenting an item during the farewell function. The church elders and parents commended participants and this boosted the youth's confidence.

One youth who attended the holiday programme gave a report back. The discussions were on drug abuse based on the pamphlets issued by the South African National Council on Drug Abuse. The four members were motivated and some enthusiasm was instilled in those who were present on that day. The whole

group participated actively. Their chairperson attended the holiday camp and was elected chairperson for central region, and given a further mandate to establish youth clubs in the region.

The representatives indicated that they were the only members who belonged to a youth club back home. This put them in the limelight. They found themselves seen as role models and having the ability to assist other areas to come up with youth groups.

### **3.9 The Fourth Phase: Implementation**

This phase may be called implementation, but it must be indicated that small plans and small-scale implementation were carried out in the previous phases, in order to bring us to this “larger exercise”. The participants agreed to call this phase “implementation” because at this stage it became clearer what the group wanted to embark upon.

The youth started applying self-knowledge activities after they affirmed that they needed to know themselves in order to be able to:

- make appropriate decisions
- evaluate the feedback others give
- have a basis from which to improve
- accept themselves and others and
- gain self-discipline and confidence

#### **3.9.1 Theory**

The participants, in this phase accepted the guide to discovering who you are or knowing yourself. Questions were extracted, from the modules of life “Skills for Self-Understanding” (National Council for Mental Health). Unfortunately due to the preparations for the trial examinations by participants not all of the four modules were covered.

### **3.9.2 Method and outcome**

The first session involved members coming up with ten different answers to the question, who are you? The responses were self-written, everyone was requested to bring his/her own book to record, for future reference and evaluation. Individually and in a group, the participants were requested to discuss what they had come up with, for discussions and clarifications. The boys could not manage to come up with all the ten answers but the girls exceeded the requested number. The young men felt that the young women were exaggerating their characters and some of the issues they had highlighted may not be true. The exercise basically showed that responses can be categorized into physical attributes, (tall, beautiful), group membership (daughter, introvert), personality traits (calm, argumentative) and unique responses (name, son/daughter of Mr and Mrs T).

From their lists the participants had to check in which predominant group their characteristics were falling. The group spent more time on the physical attributes because they felt they were most conspicuous, which also affected their self-esteem. Within the physical category, participants were requested to indicate the positive and negative aspects. The youth indicated that it was very difficult for them to accept the way they looked physically and this was a source of stress. From the module it was indicated that we can "hide" the negative points by enhancing the good ones. If that could not be achieved they should learn to accept the way they look.

### **3.9.3 Reflection**

The exercise allowed participants to acknowledge themselves as persons who are not perfect. It also gave us the opportunity to be open... it was difficult to readily accept one's weaknesses. Participants realized that more time was needed for knowing themselves. Preparations for the trial examination disrupted the process somewhat, but we were able to restart after the interruption.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Evaluation is a very important aspect in community development. The concerned people should not be left out during this process (Swanepoel 1992: 117). Collins (1999: 47) indicates that evaluation describes the results or impact of our actions with the participants. It is concerned with how we have changed as well as what other aspects need to be worked on.

#### **4.2 The objectives of the study**

Although the youth could not prioritize, and draw a full programme for the identified needs, they were able to indicate the developmental areas, as well as the objectives under each area, which the programme must cover. Throughout the research process short-term objectives were set in order to allow the participants to reach the objective of gaining recognition within the church. The participants were able to come up with needs and concerns regarding lack of participation in church activities. The youth were able to come up with action plans in order to address the identified needs.

##### **4.2.1 Objective 1**

To identify the needs of the youth. The broad needs identified were building of positive relations among themselves and others, raising of awareness in terms of environmental issues, sexuality, drug use, general mental health and becoming self-confident to take part in church activities. The need for self-knowledge was taken as the first step in addressing their concerns.

#### **4.2.2 Objective 2**

- To contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding participatory research. The grouping of the needs into developmental areas can be seen as adding to the existing body of knowledge of PR.

#### **4.3 Research questions**

These questions will be responded to separately.

##### **4.3.1 What was it that the group needed in order to actively participate in church?**

The youth group indicated that they needed to be accepted, recognized and respected by the church as a whole. They wanted guidance to be given and to have their efforts and talents acknowledged. Hence, the need to be able to sing well and to be given slots on Sundays to preach. Smith (1998: 5) indicates that the Christian community today overlooks the youth's joys, concerns, gifts and abilities. This is what the youth felt, hence their passivity. The old adage that "children should be seen, not heard" applied. It is still a problem with some of the adult church members.

The youth group realized that something needed to be done in order to gain recognition from the church. Hence, they were able to meet on their own before I joined the group. What was needed was guidance and acceptance from the adult community. Thus, the group's request that the researcher should facilitate their activities.

##### **- The Action Plan:**

The research techniques that were used, for example, brainstorming, and discussions, assisted in generating and clarifying ideas. The celebration of annual activities within and outside the church helped building relations and boosting the image of the youth.

The group gave talks on issues such as AIDS, Sexuality and teenage suicide and discussed these among themselves as a way of empowering themselves and overcoming their helplessness.

They celebrated Valentines Day and other activities such as Mothers', Fathers' and Youth Days arranged by the larger church. The church commended the group's efforts and this often boosted the youth's morale.

#### **4.3.2 Did participation within a community project improve the interaction between the youth group and the adults?**

The youth group was able to engage in dialogue with the adult community by being able to organize activities of the church together. The church was able to give positive feedback in relation to the group's participation within the church.

##### **- The Action Plan**

The following activities assisted the group to answer the above question.

- to hold church services;
- to practice hymns and dramas, and
- to render items during church functions.

#### **4.4 Lessons learned**

According to De Koning and Martin (1996: 79), among the things to be discovered, the strongest is that process is self-generating. People relate more freely when they treat and value each other as equals.

The youth group learned the following:

- to be able to identify the needs
- to plan and formulate objectives
- to organize themselves, and
- to share the leadership role.

The youth learned to exercise patience and not to take each other for granted. They also learned that in each and everything that you do commitment is needed. The awareness that they can change and be responsible was raised.

The general participatory research skills were developed among the youth, for example, their communication behaviour and listening ability improved. They were able to develop trust, respect and also learned from each other. The group gained confidence and was able to participate meaningfully in the group as well as in the broader church. They did not feel threatened by me as an "expert" in terms of the approach and method that I used. They were able to make choices whether to participate in an issue or not, for example, the group did not agree to prioritize the needs as I preferred them to but managed to work together on the issue that they felt were of importance to them.

As a researcher I gained confidence in working with youth and further feel that I can facilitate any other situation without feeling threatened. I have learnt to be confident in working with the youth and my stereotypes about young people have changed. I have discovered that they are cooperative and understanding if given the chance.

#### **4.5 Final Reflection**

Gaining entry took time. There were also long vacations, which disrupted the process, and this further lengthened the period. The attendance of the youth was irregular and this also affected the process negatively. In the beginning the participants did not implement the action plans agreed upon and each time their self-confidence went down and they were compelled to assess themselves and come up with solutions on how to make improvements. The implementation phase on the other hand, was cut short due to time constraints related to school examinations. Thus the programme that was intended to be formulated by the youth could not be fully planned and implemented.

Basically, the two research questions were answered by being engaged in the whole process. It has been indicated that a lot still needs to be done regarding the identified needs. Small activities that the participants were engaged in formed a basis for further intervention on the part of the youth, with emphasis on these developmental areas, namely, social growth, spiritual growth, recreation, environmental awareness and mental health (with specific reference to health and welfare issues).

#### What still needs to be done

- To continue with the programme formulated and address all the identified developmental areas.
- To expand further by carrying out the mandate given to the representatives who attended the holiday programme.
- To maintain and continue to serve as role models to other youth and children (especially those within the church).

The above issues are within grasp of the participants because their level of confidence, self-awareness and cooperation has improved and it sets a foundation for further efforts and growth. The participants are self-directed, they have learned to be committed and they will be able to continue on their own or with another facilitator.

## **4.6 CONCLUSION**

I found this group to be energetic, self-directed and "present focussed". The need for immediacy, when working with this group was very high: an aspect that I had to consider most of the time during the process. The PR method fitted well with the participants' working style. The group operated on short-term planning with easily achievable action plans.

It was through PR that the youth gained an understanding of what they needed in order to actively participate in church. The youth and church were able to organize activities together and this allowed feedback in relation to the group's participation within the church. The communication style for both adults and youth changed for the better, adults knew when to give praise and when to be silent.

Participatory research gives the participants an opportunity to learn in a non-threatening environment because both researcher and co-researchers have equal status in the relationship. Although the researcher is also a learner, he/she must play an important role in facilitating the process. Basic communication skills such as empathy, active listening, probing and others, play a major role for change to be effected. I gained more confidence and trust to work with the youth. Although the results of this research cannot be replicated, the participants will be able to implement the skills learnt to other situations.

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