

Reflections on Doing a Participatory Action Research: Case Study of Three Rural Communities in KwaZulu-Natal

Thamsanqa Thulani Bhengu¹ and Sandile Sam Mbokazi^{2*}

¹*School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

²*School of Built Environment and Development Studies,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

E-mail: ¹<bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za>, ²<mbokaziss@ukzn.ac.za>

KEYWORDS Participation. Education. Action Research. Rurality. Community

ABSTRACT This paper presents reflections and written notes of two researchers about their experiences in conducting a participatory action research (PAR), using an ethnographic approach, in three rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal. The study sought to understand the complex relationship between rurality and education within the context of rural poverty. This paper highlights some crucial methodological issues with which the researchers grappled, as the research unfolded. The issues include those of power, patriarchy, and ethics in research. The results indicate that patriarchal issues still dominated and influenced the direction of the research. It also influenced the extent to which women participated in the research. Expectations of the community of the benefits of their participation also influenced the relationship between them and the researchers. It also emerged that conventional ethical considerations may not be acceptable to the people who have been subjected to marginalization of various kinds. Implications for employing PAR for community development are highlighted.