# HOW DOES LEARNERS' INVOLVEMENT IN

# EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES RELATE TO THEIR

# DISPOSITION TOWARDS ACADEMIC SCHOOLING ?

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# DECLARATION

I declare that *How does learners' involvement in extra-curricular activities relate to their disposition towards academic schooling* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Signed:

January 2003

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on an area of schooling, namely extra-curricular activity, that should form an integral part of the daily activities of a school. This unfortunately was not the case at the school where I am teaching. This school serves a working class community which is plagued by a number of social ills and where unemployment is rife. I will not debate the fact that the social upliftment of this community is a solution to the problem.

It is my firm belief that the school should strike a balance between the academic program of the school and a program of extra-curricular activities. The learners at the school have become accustomed to the culture of violence, which is prevalent in their community. This has impacted negatively on the academic program of the school and the learners' disposition towards academic schooling.

A basic assumption of this thesis is that extra-curricular activities form the basis for a positive impact on the disposition of the learners towards academic schooling. This study makes use of action research to explore some of the dimensions of academic schooling which are impacted on by extra-curricular activities.

Data were collected from questionnaires, fieldnotes, interviews, learners' notes and the input from outside observers. Two action research cycles were employed. The major findings of the first cycle were zeroed in during the second cycle. These findings suggest that extra-curricular activities offer opportunities to;

a) connect academic classroom work to questions and issues which interest learners.

b) use their leadership and organizational skills in a practical and meaningful way.

c) express their views and feelings about issues affecting their lives including the way they are taught and discriminatory practices still inherent in the way schools treat learners.

Based on these findings, it is concluded that extra-curricular activities driven by teachers can be a vehicle for change towards more emancipatory schooling practices with the additional benefit of improving learners' disposition towards academic schooling.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

## 1.1 Introduction

In reflecting on my own teaching practice, I realised that the academic motivation of our pupils in the township schools was not at a level conducive to higher achievement. This lack of motivation needed to be addressed. I will not debate the fact that the socio-economic upliftment of these communities is one solution to the problem. The schools in these communities are faced with the following problems, amongst others:

(i)     low self-esteem of pupils

(ii)    drug abuse

(iii)   truancy

(iv)   gangsterism

(v)    high failure rates

(vi)   teenage pregnancies

I am of the opinion that schools and more especially teachers are not doing enough to address these problems. The pupils need to look forward to attending school rather than viewing it as a burden. They need to enjoy school life and strive to derive as much benefit from their presence at school. They must empower themselves to take control of their own lives and at the same time take responsibility for their own future.

## 1.2 Rationale

The authoritarian teaching methods that are so prevalent in the classroom should be broken down and the shift should be towards actions that will positively impact on the disposition that these children have to academic schooling (I will expand on this concept in chapter 2), in those classrooms.

In these classrooms pupils are expected to obey commands, listen to their teachers and sit and work passively. Pupils would ultimately become uncritical, unquestioning and docile which were in fact what the old apartheid regime wanted from the education in the oppressed communities. What exists at the school is thus what Freire (1986: 36) calls "education for domestication" or "the banking system of education." Teachers "deposit" knowledge into the "empty" minds of their pupils and then simply "withdraw" it at the time of the examinations. Knowledge is seen as a static one-way activity.

There is a dearth of latent talent sitting in those benches that need to be developed and that is not going to happen by over-emphasising academic achievement to a pupil population not motivated in that way.

In an area like Mitchell's Plain where the culture of violence engulfs the community, it becomes imperative that the ethos of the schools change to provide their pupils with the opportunity to unleash their talents.

The emphasis on the academic aspect of education at the school where I teach is far too great. I feel that a balance between extra-curricular activities and the academic programme should be instituted as this may significantly contribute to the holistic education of our pupils. The extra-curricular activities I am referring to are the sport and cultural activities that are offered at the school. This view was echoed by the principal of Turfhall Primary School in The Argus (1995: 23), after the school had very successfully closed its play at the local theatre:

> With maximum benefit a priority, we try to
> develop the child as a whole, be it academically,
> culturally or in sport. Staff members had
> noticed a remarkable transformation in many
> of the children who were involved in the play.

The fact that corporal punishment has been outlawed by the government at all schools means that teachers will be looking at alternative means of maintaining discipline in their classrooms. One alternative that I am arguing for is that teachers get involved with their pupils at another level, that is, extra-curricular activities.

In this mini-thesis I wish to share my action research projects that I undertook during the period 1995 and 1996 at the school where I taught.

This methodology is context oriented and deals with emancipatory classroom practice. (In chapter three I will give more detail about the action research approach I chose). These projects were attempts to get teachers and pupils more involved in extra-curricular activities.

For the reader to understand why I became motivated "to transform the disposition of these pupils toward academic schooling through utilising extra-curricular activities" I would like to say something about my own background as well some background of the school where I teach.

## 1.3 Personal background

I was born in Constitution Street in District Six in September 1961. I am one of six children, forming part of a very religious family. We are Muslim and follow the religion of Islam.

I do not know whether the street name had any significance but during the course of my life I have been involved in the drawing up of quite a few constitutions for sports' organisations the most important of which was the one for Western Province Amateur Volleyball Union and one for the Amateur Volleyball Association of South Africa.

Due to the Group Areas Act, we were forced to leave District Six and we moved to Maitland where I spent all of my childhood. The Group Areas Act was passed in 1950 as part of the Government's plan to restrict the residential and trading rights of all "non-whites" (Lipton;1986: 23).

Maitland was a middle-class suburb and was divided into white and coloured sections with a single road separating the two communities. This was my first experience of apartheid.

We had a patriarchal family structure and whatever my father said was "law". We would never dare to question anything that he said although at times we felt that he was being unreasonable. He would not hesitate to beat us if he felt that we had overstepped the line by way of either disobeying an order or being disrespectful towards our mother. We very seldom had full family discussions or debates with the exception of some debates between the brothers and sisters. What we often did was listen to stories about our parents' childhood and other very interesting family tales. My initial viewpoints were to a large extent derived from these stories.

In our home, we would talk about politics, but without any commitment to change what was happening or even making a small contribution to change the status quo.

My parents were socialized along racist lines and had not been exposed to anti-racist discourse because we were meant to believe that white was good and black was "evil." I remember when the insurance broker visited our home, my mother would lay out a spread for this person because he was "white."

When blacks were spoken of it was mostly in a derogatory way although my father spoke passionately of the Rivonia trialists. The Rivonia Trialists were the leaders of the African National Congress who were put on trial and convicted of treason.

The theme in our home was to know the difference between "right and wrong" as espoused by our religious convictions. Looking back at our household I found it quite ironical that although Islam states quite clearly that it is the duty of every Muslim to vigorously pursue truth and justice that my parents would preferably have someone else doing it rather than their children. Clearly my parents were overprotective.

## 1.4 Primary school influence

My primary school education was a revelation in the sense that I attended the St John's Catholic Primary School in Kensington.

It was one of the best schools in the region and this was the main motivation behind sending us to this school. I was one of only three non-Christian pupils (the other being my brother and our cousin) attending this school. We were the pioneers for other non-Christian children attending this school.

This situation to me in later thinking was a major contradiction in that in our home we were taught these strong Islamic values, yet here we were being sent to a Roman Catholic school where we were saying prayers in the classroom four times a day. On a Friday morning we would attend the 10 o'clock Mass at the church, which was adjacent to the school. I recall a teacher remarked that since I was attending the church on a Friday, I would therefore not need to attend mosque later in the day (Friday being our Sabbath).

It was while I was at primary school that I participated in extra-curricular activities of the school. I played soccer and cricket at school and this proved to be very exciting for me as we played against pupils from other schools. I was a hero in my class if the school produced good results and this motivated me to do well academically. I, personally did not only want to be recognised for my sporting accolades but I also felt the need to be recognised for my intellectual ability and at that stage intelligence was measured by academic performance.

## 1.5 High school influence

I attended the Harold Cressy High School in Cape Town, which was (and probably still is) one of the elite "coloured" schools in the Western Cape. The majority of pupils at this school were from middle class homes. They also came from all parts of Cape Town. The school was renowned for producing excellent academic results, especially at matric (final school year) level. It would produce close to one hundred percent pass rate in this examination, annually.

As much as the school was academically inclined, it also offered a variety of extra-curricular activities. I think that my own involvement in these activities resulted in laying the foundation for me to pursue teaching as a profession.

I was impressed by the teacher involvement with various extra-curricular activities at the school. When these teachers were in a class they would be strict and focused on the academic, but when they were outside of the classroom they would still be focused on the task at hand but in a more relaxed manner. For example, teachers would allow very little discussion during formal lessons and one would be confronted with an adult that would be busy with "chalk and talk." However, when these same teachers had one for an extra-curricular activity then they would have informal, light-hearted discussions with learners.

I represented the school at athletics, rugby, chess and volleyball. This again made me popular at school and forced me to continue to perform academically. As I mentioned earlier, I did not want to be viewed as a performer on the sport fields only but also an individual with intelligence. The school instituted a programme, which was called the "students' days" during which the pupils would organise the school programme for two or three days during a school term. The students would organise inter-class sporting activities and exhibitions by various societies, which were functional at the school.

For example the photographic society would exhibit photographs taken by pupils, the arts and crafts group would have their display, as would the philatelists.

Each class would also be required to present a short play and this all led to a very exciting period at school. Also, pupils who were involved in the overall planning of these activities were rewarded with certificates in the school assembly. I was fortunate to be one of the recipients of such an award.

I was in standard seven during the 1976 student uprising that enveloped the whole of South Africa. Our school was no different from any other non-white school by playing our role in opposing apartheid education.

I was engrossed by the mass protests of students during 1976. The political messages were not very significant to me. I became aware of what black students were struggling with, but these issues did not affect me that much at the time and I only grasped the magnitude of what had transpired later in my life.

At Harold Cressy High there were also a good number of teachers who were leaders in anti-apartheid organisations such as the Cape Action League (CAL) and the New Unity Movement (NUM).

Although they spoke to us often, they did not make any impression on me with their politics. It was only after I had become politically conscientised at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) that I began to understand the viewpoints and policies of CAL and NUM. I left school politically naive.

### 1.6 My encounter with the "real world"

I enrolled for a Baccalaureus Artuim (BA) Degree at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in 1980. This was the start of a new life for me. UWC was going to change my way of thinking in that, 1980 was a year of turmoil at UWC and at schools all around the country. It was the second major education crisis that the country was faced with. Christie (1985: 245) highlights' the students' feeling at the time;

We, the students have got to link up our struggle
with the struggle[1] of the black workers. Our parents
have got to understand that we will not be "educated"
and "trained" to become slaves in apartheid capitalist
society.

For the first time I was exposed to real student politics and I was made aware of the "struggle" for democracy. For the first time I was exposed to mass meetings and I was a participant as well, much to the horror of my parents who told me to steer clear of these activities.

In the matter of a couple of months I was catapulted from a person who had been largely apolitical to a position where I was to make decisions based on my political convictions and what was important to the broader struggle. One such incident occurred when all the sports clubs on campus were requested by the Student Representative Council (SRC) to move our clubs off campus (i.e. UWC clubs). The decision that we were to arrive at would have had major implications for sport on campus but also for sport in the province, as UWC clubs were prominent in the various sporting unions. The volleyball club (I was chairperson), together with rugby and netball decided to remain on campus. The "radicals" were not altogether happy with this situation but the motivation behind our decision gave credence to that decision.

This incident highlighted to me the importance of sport at the institution and importance of sport in our society. During this time we had no lectures for three months but I was on campus everyday. As UWC students we also became involved in the action committees in our residential areas. We did door to door pamphleteering as well as speaking to residents about what was happening at university and at schools. We held meetings with the civic as well as other community organisations in the area, mobilising them to participate in the consumer boycotts as well as other protest actions. During my studies at UWC, my mindset had changed dramatically and there was a new awareness in my thinking. I completed by B.A. degree in 1983 and started to teach the following year.

## 1.7 The influence of sport

Sport has played a major role in my life and has contributed significantly to my way of thinking. Before 1980 I was a "Springbok" (emblem worn by athletes of apartheid sports teams) supporter but after the student actions of that year I became aware that sport could be used as a vehicle that could contribute to our movement towards liberation. How I came to this conclusion was because the line between "them and us" was very clear (them being establishment or white controlled sport). There was no middle-ground, one was either for sporting isolation or against it.

In 1980 I was part of the founding committee of the non-racial WP Amateur Volleyball Union. At the same time I served on the UWC Sports Council, which was the supreme controlling body for sport on campus. This body served the interests of the sports clubs, and also liaised between them and the university administration.

Between 1981 and 1983 I was UWC's delegate to the S.A. Black Intervarsity Council (SABIC). In most instances when I attended these meetings I would be the sole delegate from UWC and therefore I was the only "coloured" at these meetings. This was another conscientising experience for me. I was representing UWC and its clubs were affiliated to the South African Council of Sport (SACOS). SACOS was the driving force behind getting South Africa isolated from the international sporting community. Its members consisted of all the non-racial national sports federations in South Africa, ie. those federations that were opposed to apartheid sport.

The black campuses although aware of the existence of SACOS, did not adhere to its policy. I therefore had to try and convince the delegates (about a dozen black campuses) that SACOS was going to steer us toward sporting liberation in this country. I had to explain the SACOS slogan: "no normal sport in an abnormal society and the double standards resolution" (AVASA brochure, 1987:3).

The delegates understood this but found implementation difficult in their respective regions. These groups were supported by multi-national companies (e.g. United Tobacco Company), to participate in multi-racial activities. They were given playing kits, t-shirts and transported to these activities and it was very difficult for them to refuse these handouts.

Besides the debates, I had other enlightening experiences. I mentioned that my parents had me believe that black was bad. Well, in most instances I was the only 'coloured' at these meetings (meetings were held all over the country). I wore casual clothing and these individuals wore Polo-shirts, Pringle-jerseys and Barker-shoes (all expensive brand names). This was a revelation to me because I always imagined that all blacks were impoverished. I shared the same room (meetings lasted 2 or 3 days) with black delegates from other campuses. I had breakfast, lunch and dinner with them and eventually built up a very good relationship with the standing delegates.

I have also been involved in volleyball at national level and provincial level serving both in an administrative as well as coaching capacity. As a sports person in the struggle we were involved in various campaigns to discredit racist sport.

For example boycotting all venues at which racist sport were played (Newlands, Good Hope Centre, Green Point Stadium etc), the anti-Australian cricket tour, May Day tournaments in support of our workers and many more. Over the last two years I have been involved in unifying the various sports bodies that were fragmented because of apartheid.

## 1.8  An enthusiastic teacher in the making

I started teaching at the Spine Road High school in January of 1984. The school was new and half the teachers were all teaching for the first time. I had come to Spine Road High with a great deal of enthusiasm and was looking forward to establishing myself as a "good" teacher. I had had good teachers at primary and high school and some of them were going to be my role models. I am a disciplinarian (ie. I like things to be planned, dislike unruly behaviour) and that is the foundation on which I try to educate my pupils.

This enthusiasm was initially dampened by a very autocratic principal that I had. He was not one to allow creativity and did things according to the principals' manual. If he did not initiate things, they were no good. Besides the problems that I encountered with the principal, we also had the student uprisings in 1985 to deal with.

Spine Road High was the centre of attention in Mitchells Plain and to some extent in the rest of the Western Cape. The police brutality of 1980 was relived. This time I was a teacher and had to act accordingly.

However, I was not going to stand back, after all I graduated from UWC. As students of UWC during 1980, we had learnt how to deal with the police during student protest actions. I was very much involved in what was happening in Mitchells Plain and was arrested at school during this period. I was identified as one of the instigators of the students protest actions. I also served on the Mitchells Plain Executive of the Western Cape Teachers Union (WECTU) as well as liasing with the Mitchell's Plain Students Congress (MIPSCO).

## 1.9 Encountering People's Education

While teaching, I studied part-time at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and completed my Higher Education Diploma. The coursework for this diploma was based on Christian National Education, which was the policy that was espoused by the apartheid government. According to Christie (1985: 160);

> CNE is not a neutral theory of education. It
>
> expresses the worldview of the Dutch-Afrikaner
>
> (white) people.

It says further that the teaching,

education, administration and organisation of

white schools will be "Christian" in "spirit and manner".

In 1989 I enrolled for a Baccalaureus Educationis Degree at UNISA and did courses like Empirical Education, History of Education and Fundamental Pedagogics. These courses were firmly rooted in CNE. Enslin (in Kallaway: 1984: 146) says,

> ...education at the service of the people as a
> whole, education that liberates, education that
> puts people in command of their lives.

The readings of people like Gramsci, Giroux, McLaren, Freire, Althusser and Bowles and Gintis made me conscious of the role schools played in perpetuating or contesting the status-quo in society.

This new awareness made me focus on my own teaching practice and also my role within the framework of the school. Badat (1987: 9) points out that,

> ...people's education is linked with the overall
> transformation of society and is indeed
> conceptualised as serving such transformation.

Enrolling for the Action Research Master's Degree in Education at UWC in 1995, gave me a better perspective and direction in terms of approaching the problems that I was faced with in my teaching. Teaching in Mitchell's Plain is an experience, in that one is in a working class community with all its problems. There is not a social problem that one can think of that I have not encountered in Mitchell's Plain.

It therefore became important for me to transform my own teaching practice to the benefit of the pupils whom I taught and also to the school as a whole. I felt that if I were to continue in the same mode of teaching that I was exposed to then I would not have a positive impact on the pupils that I was teaching.

I was not planning on being the "messiah" for the school nor changing things dramatically at the school. I was, however, hopeful that if I succeeded in transforming my teaching practice that somehow other teachers would want to embark on the same process. I followed the recommendation of Giroux (1988: 167) where he says,

> ...teachers need to redefine their role within the
>
> specificity of political, economic and cultural sites
>
> where regimes of truth are produced, legitimated
>
> and distributed.

I had no qualms about the fact that this transformation was a process that was going to be implemented over a period of time and it was not going to be easy. Fullan (1991: 31) concurs when he says, "Change involves loss, anxiety and struggle."

In order to fully understand the process that I had embarked upon I felt that it was necessary at this point in time, to give some background of the school at which I did my research.

## 1.8  The school at which I teach

I chose to do my research at Spine Road High School because it is the school at which I teach. The school was established in 1984 and I was part of the original staff compliment. During its very first year of existence, the staff together with the pupils participated in protests and demonstrations against the apartheid regime for trying to implement the tri-cameral system of government. This was part of the government's grand plan to further divide the South African people by creating parliaments for White, Coloured and Indian people.

Nineteen eighty-five proved to be a beacon in the history of the school. The school became the focal point of student unrest in Mitchell's Plain.

The school is situated on a little hill and was therefore strategically positioned for running battles with the police. Many student rallies were held at the school. On the 10 June 1985 the school was attacked by about sixty policemen, in what was later to be shown on national and international television as the "battle of Spine Road." On this day the school was flooded with teargas. Teachers and pupils were beaten with sjamboks(an indigenous weapon used by the police), by the police.

During that same year I was detained and questioned by the security police on my involvement with the pupils' activities. The years that were to follow did not lessen the attention on the school as the school population was always involved in the education crisis. Also the school was faced with another problem, that of gangsterism.

Many pupils belonged to gangs and these gangs wanted to use the school as their playground. The school had therefore become infamous because of its political activity as well as the gangsterism. The result was that the community refrained from sending their academically above-average children to the school. Consequently, almost any child that fills in an application form would be enrolled at the school.

**(i)    The community:**

The school is located in Rocklands, Mitchell's Plain.  Mitchell's Plain is one of the legacies of apartheid in that it was established (as rumour would have it) as a "homeland" for the coloured people.  It formed part of the government's plan to consolidate the Group Areas Act.  The one unfortunate aspect of this region was that it was not situated close to any major industrial area.  The result was that those parents who are fortunate to have employment have to do quite a bit of travelling.  This means leaving home very early in the morning and returning in the early evening.

The pupils therefore do not see much of their working parents during a working week.  The community serving the school is a working class community.  Very few of the working parents have "white collar" jobs.

Unemployment is rife in this community and most of the problems facing the community can be attributed to this.  Problems include: incest, alcoholism, drug-abuse, gangsterism, wife-battering, child-abuse to name but a few.

There are also very religious parents in our school community who are very supportive of the school.  On the whole however, parent involvement in the activities of the school is minimal.

**(ii)   The staff**

The school presently has a staff compliment of fifty-nine teachers and seven non-teaching staff (caretakers).  We have a principal (who does not teach), a senior deputy principal (only teaches one class) and two deputy principals (each teaches two classes).  This is one reason why the hierarchy of the school is out of touch with the needs of the pupils.  We have twelve Heads of Department and the rest are ordinary teachers.  I serve as an Acting Head of Department and I am responsible for sport and culture at the school.

About seventy percent of the staff members are university graduates and a number of these have done post-graduate studies. However, the one concern that I have with this staff, is that less than fifty percent are involved in extra-curricular activity.

**(iii)  The pupils**

They are the main role players in my action research project.  There are one thousand two hundred and eighty-five (1285) pupils registered at the school at this point in time.  The school has an average annual dropout rate of about one hundred and twenty pupils. Reasons for the high dropout can be ascribed to pregnancy, work opportunity, gangsterism and failure to cope academically.

I have decided to focus on the grade ten groups. The reason for this is that I am the class teacher of a standard eight-class (8B) and I teach another, namely 8A. I teach Biology and General Science because there were not sufficient science teachers when I arrived at the school. Biology and Physical Science were subjects that I did at high school. This year (1995) I have the two English medium classes with the total number of pupils being fifty-one. There are six Afrikaans medium classes, with a pupil population of two hundred and twenty-seven. In one of these classes there are sixteen pupils who are repeating standard eight.

In the 8B class, I have fourteen girls and eleven boys. I started out with fifteen girls but one started a job in a factory. The average age of this class is sixteen years with two boys reaching twenty years of age during this year. There are three pupils in this class that are repeating standard eight.

Academically, I would say that this group of pupils are below average and this I base on studying their academic results of 1994 and how they have performed up to this point. Nine of the pupils come from single parent homes and presently the majority of them are performing better than the others.

In the 8A class there are nineteen girls and seven boys. I initially had twenty-one girls. One left because of disciplinary reasons while the other has obtained a job. The average age of this class is fifteen years.

Academically, this class is one of average performers with a few of the pupils being academically above average. In this class there is only one pupil who is repeating standard eight. During the course of this thesis, one will get to know these pupils a little better.

## 1.9   Chapter Outline

In my first chapter, I have located what I would regard as the problem that I am faced with in my teaching, that is, enhancing the learners disposition toward academic schooling, through the utilisation of extra-curricular activities. I have done this by looking critically at my own teaching career as well as my own historical and schooling background which I felt has impacted on the way I view my role as a teacher. I give a brief historical background of the school where I teach and at which I did my research. There is also an introduction to the role players in my research projects.

In chapter two, I address the pupils " disposition toward academic schooling " and I will attempt to give a clearer understanding of it. Here, I give an outline as to why the pupils in township schools find themselves in this situation.

The education crisis from 1976 to the early 90's will be focussed on. The focus then shifts to post-apartheid education and the impact it had on teaching at the school where I teach.

Chapter three is devoted to defining action research, describing the development of this type of research as opposed to traditional forms of research and showing how it operates. Here I introduce scholars of the calibre of Lewin and Stenhouse. I then look at how other writers such as Elliott, Hopkins, Walker, Carr and Kemmis, Grundy and Winter developed the ideas of Stenhouse and Lewin. I look at the three modes in which action research can be carried out and discuss why I chose it as my research methodology.

Chapter four focuses on my first action research project where I highlight the use of various techniques when doing research. For example: negotiations, consultations, moral obligations and ethics, the phases of action research and also the data collecting process. It also entails getting my pupils involved in extra-curricular activity as well as the teachers teaching those pupils. I conclude the chapter by critically reflecting on the various incidents that occurred during the project and link it to the central issue of the learners' disposition toward academic schooling.

In chapter five I deal with my second action research project where I tried to expand on the extra-curricular activities being offered to the pupils. I also set up projects that the pupils would have to organise by themselves. Parents support is enlisted for some of these projects. In concluding this chapter, I briefly reflect on my experiences during these projects. It is important to note that the second action research project that I embarked upon was different from "normal" action research in that some of the activities were opportunistic.

In chapter six, which is the concluding chapter, I evaluate the whole process of my action research. I endeavour to describe the success or otherwise of my research, the constraints placed on action research and the problems facing the teacher-researcher. I conclude by suggesting that emancipatory action research is a possible vehicle for transformation.

# CHAPTER TWO

# PARTICIPATION FOR SUCCESS

## 2.1 Toward an understanding of the disposition of pupils from Mitchell's Plain to academic schooling

I shall give an account of my understanding of the disposition of these pupils to academic schooling, as this forms an integral part of my thesis. By academic schooling is meant, the examination subjects in the school curriculum and the engagement of learners and teachers with these subjects.

In the past two decades, schools became the battlegrounds in the struggle for democracy. This not only led to the deterioration and destruction of much of the physical infrastructure of schools, but also alienated the majority of the oppressed community from the apartheid dominated education system. The development of a learning society requires the reclaiming of the education system by all the communities in this country. This is especially true in a township like Mitchell's Plain, which has seen some of the worst acts of violence against school children during the period of the education crisis. It is for this reason that I have looked at engaging pupils in extra-curricular activity to transform their disposition to academic learning at Spine Road High School.

It would become necessary for pupils to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities so that they will ultimately look at working harder at achieving academically. The creation of an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching and which restores the links between schools and their communities becomes imperative. In understanding why the pupils from this community find themselves in a somewhat negative disposition one needs to have an understanding of the role that education has played in the liberation struggle in South Africa.

## 2.2 Education as a site of struggle

Education as expressed through the curriculum in formal educational institutions is never neutral. Education is therefore rooted in some ideology and have objectives of some sort. This cannot be more emphasised than in the words of H.F.Verwoerd (Christie; 1985: 12) (he was Minister of Native Affairs in the apartheid regime);

When I have control over native education,

I will reform it so that natives will be taught

from childhood that equality with Europeans

(whites) is not for them.

Many educationists have tried to point out the close relationship between curriculum, "official" and "hidden" and the socio-economic reality.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) have contributed to the development of what they call the reproduction model, arguing that education plays an important role in reproducing the social order and power distribution within society.

They (1976: 32) claim that the kind of personality traits such as obedience, passivity and docility that are developed in schools parallel those characteristics which are required in the workplace. These are not necessarily negative traits as such, but have, under certain circumstances the ability of limiting and even reducing human potential.

In the South African context, schooling in the oppressed communities had to support the view of reality accepted by the ruling class and it had to perpetuate economic domination by the elite. So the schools reproduce the economic inequality of the workplace. We find that working class schools have large classes, few facilities and little free space needed for an open, flexible educational environment. This lack of financial support requires that pupils be treated as raw materials on a production line; it places a high premium on obedience and punctuality and there are few opportunities for independent and creative work (Davies; 1985: 39).

Others like Apple (1979) and Hyslop (1987) disagree with the reproduction model because it assumes that teachers and pupils passively accept what the school inculcates in them.

They are convinced that there are opposition tendencies within these institutions. We only have to look at the student uprising of 1976 and the subsequent turmoil in schools to see how a particular education system has been opposed and rejected, (Hyslop, 1987: 21).

This point is further emphasised by Davidoff and van den Berg (1990:16) when they mention that schools are sites of struggle within society. Teaching is essentially a political act and teachers should understand that their actions could have an impact on the power relations in society (Esau; 1994: 3). It is against this background that I wish to give a historical overview of the resistance to apartheid education.

## 2.3   The education crisis

The year 1976 should be seen as a watershed in the history of education in South Africa. In 1975 the Minister of Bantu Education instructed that half the subjects must be taught in the medium of Afrikaans. There was widespread opposition to this regulation. Some people opposed it for educational reasons, stating that the children would suffer. Others opposed it for political reasons. The student uprising of 1976 was therefore not merely a rejection of Afrikaans but rather a rejection of the whole Bantu education system and apartheid.

Black pupils no longer wanted an education system, which would relegate them to a position of perpetual subordination. On 16 June 1976 about 20 000 pupils marched through Soweto in protest against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction for some subjects in their schools. The police confronted the marches and opened fire on them and in the process killed Hector Petersen.

The first casualty of the uprising had appeared. The events that were to follow, could never have been anticipated by the apartheid government. The pupils responded with violence. Anything that was perceived to be representative of the government were destroyed, including offices and vehicles. A few weeks after the initial clash, the whole country was involved in the uprising. Throughout 1976 and 1977 there were repeated skirmishes between police and the pupils (Christie; 1985: 241).

In April of 1980, a new pupil revolt was started in Cape Town when pupils embarked on a campaign to boycott classes. This action very rapidly spread throughout the country. In certain regions schools were completely closed down. A further development, were teachers coming out in public support of the pupils' actions and pledging their solidarity with the pupils. I was attending university at the time and we also came out in support of the pupils' demands.

These demands included that the following be addressed: the bad state of repair of schools; poorly equipped schools; shortage of qualified teachers and also the presence of security police on school grounds.

In 1984 pupils came out in protest at the establishment of the tri-cameral parliamentary system, which gave the Indian and Coloured population groups in S.A. their own chambers in parliament. No provision was made for the blacks to be represented. Again it was the schools that were used as the sites of struggle.

Spine Road High School was established in 1984 and the school and its population were immediately thrust into protest action during its first year of existence. The majority of the teachers had graduated from the University of the Western Cape and therefore had experience of participation in protest action. The hierarchy of the school was not too pleased with this state of affairs but had little success in persuading the pupils and teachers from participating in these protest actions.

During the harsh months of 1985 the slogan "Liberation before education" was increasingly heard (Ramphele; 1989: 149); at the same time, voices were raised within the oppressed community warning against too facile an assumption that boycotting of schools would necessarily bring about a speedy end to the existing oppressive political order.

Although it is hard to see how such boycotts could really challenge the might of the state, the government took the most extreme measures in trying to stamp out the protests. Subsequent to the Soweto uprising of 1976, several hundred school children were shot dead. The cycle of violence which started out with peaceful protest (student marches and boycott of classes) followed by the violent reaction of the state (using sjamboks [whips], teargas, rubber bullets, live ammunition, detention, and on some occasion, torture) had grown ever more vicious.

Military force was redirected from the borders to the townships. A new internal arena for military operations was defined in the suppression of the so-called unrest. This mobilisation and deployment of troops in the townships not only represented an escalation in the amount of violent force the government was willing to use in suppressing resistance, but the presence of troops in the townships also signalled a profound reorientation in the minds of the oppressed. Military force, which was normally utilised by the state for protecting its borders from foreign invasion, was now being utilised within the country's own borders. It was hard not to form the impression that certain parts of the country, including Mitchells Plain, were under military occupation.

During 1985, over 35 000 troops were deployed in ninety-six townships throughout the country.

In official government discourse (Chidester; 1992: 101), the South African Defence Force (SADF) troops were in the townships for *"the prevention or suppression of the internal disorder."* On 21 July 1985, a limited state of emergency was imposed in over thirty-six magisterial districts. On 12 June 1986, a nation-wide state of emergency was declared that effectively placed the entire country under martial law (1992: 101). This state of emergency was renewed every subsequent year throughout the decade of the 1980's. In imposing the first state of emergency, P.W. Botha (president of RSA) argued that special measures were necessary to stop violence and to return to normality in the townships. But normal township life was violent and the presence of police and troops merely intensified the violence of life in the townships.

## 2.4    Post - apartheid education

Apartheid education and its aftermath of resistance has destroyed the culture of learning within large sections of South African communities, leading in the worst-affected areas to a breakdown of schooling and conditions of anarchy in relations between pupils, teachers, principals and the education authorities. This is echoed in the words of the Minister of Education to parliament (Hansard; 1994: 2774);

We shall never forget that the struggle for

democracy, was to an exceptional degree,

a struggle for and within education.

The fragmented, unequal and undemocratic nature of the education system has also had a profound effect on the development of the economy and society. It has resulted in the destruction, distortion or neglect of the human potential of our country, with devastating consequences for social and economic development. The latter is evident in the lack of skilled and trained labour and the adverse effects of this on productivity.

With the first democratic elections in South Africa having taken place on the 27 April 1994, the above scenario was destined to change. The African National Congress (ANC) won this election and all the rhetoric and slogans that formed part of the liberation struggle had now to be brought to fruition. The task of the new regime was going to be a difficult and demanding one because it had to answer to a nation that had high expectations. It had a mandate to plan the development of the education system for the benefit of the country as a whole and all its people. The challenge the government faced was to create a system that would fulfil the vision to "open the doors of learning and culture to all".

The new Minister of Education from 1994 to 1999, Professor S.M.E. Bengu, was faced with bringing together all the different education departments and forming one department with a common vision for South African education. In his own words (1994: 2774);

> We need to transform South Africa as a whole
> into a learning nation, which prioritises the
> development of its most valuable asset - the
> human resources of this country. Citizens from
> all walks of life should be engaged in becoming
> part of our project to create such a learning nation.

He further pointed out that the goal of his educational policy was to enable individuals to value, have access to, and succeed in lifelong education and training of good quality.

Educational and management processes had to put the learners first, recognising and building on their knowledge and experience, and responding to their needs. An integrated approach to education and training would increase access, mobility and quality in the national learning system. Ultimately the improvement of the quality of educational services was essential.

## 2.5 The school as a site of struggle

The school was born at the time that the struggle for liberation was intensifying both in education and the workplace. The result of this had been the fact that the school has constantly seen "action" in the way of pupil protests, teacher strikes, school boycotts, worker strikes and community demonstrations.

Consequently, through the years, a culture had been established at the school where at every given opportunity the pupils would participate in any action that would lead to the disruption of the normal school programme. To give an example, the slogan *" an injury to one is an injury to all"* was taken to the extreme by our pupils.

They always felt that they had to show their solidarity to whatever cause was happening in the community, or at another school or for that matter any other pupil or teacher. During one such action in 1985, two of our pupils lost their lives through the direct action of the police. During this same period, a number of our teachers spent time in police detention for supporting the liberation struggle. I was also detained in 1985 but fortunately I only spent twelve hours in police custody. After I was interrogated, I was released because according to the police, the situation at our school was too volatile and they did not want to add flame to the fire by keeping another Spine Road High School teacher in detention.

One of the most prominent of the teachers at our school that was in detention, at the time, was Ebrahim Rasool. He is presently the Minister of Economic Affairs in the Western Cape government, representing the African National Congress.

During the early years of the school's existence, there was another factor that led to disruptions of the school programme, and that was the plague of gangsterism. Our school had become a playground for these gangsters. Some of our pupils were also members of these gangs or they were indirectly connected to them through relatives or neighbours. A number of our pupils were casualties of these gang attacks while quite a few lost their lives in gang activity. Fortunately, by virtue of a strong stand taken by the teachers, we managed to save the school from being overrun by these gangsters. Today we seldom experience gangster activity on the school premises during the school day.

With the liberation struggle being a thing of the past, subsequent to the first democratic elections in 1994 and the establishment of a government of national unity, I thought that this was a golden opportunity to get the pupils to participate in extra-curricular activity in order to achieve success academically.

The pupils now had no reason to boycott classes or disrupt the school programme. We had an ANC government with Nelson Mandela as the leader, corporal punishment had been banned and a system of free education was being established by the new government. The pupils were now at liberty to concretise the school's motto, that is, *"via ad successorem"* - meaning, the road to success, in the time they spend at the school. I was hoping to assist them on their road to success. The role of sport as an extra-curricular activity is quite significant in this process.

## 2.6 Education and school sport

It must be noted that sport is an integral part of reconstructing and developing a healthier society. Specialist sport, developmental sport or recreational sport must be accessible for all. School sport is an integral part of the education of the whole child and should therefore be presented at school level via the whole school community, which includes the parents, the pupils, the staff, the various state structures - for example the Department of Education and the Department of Sport and Recreation, as well as the sports and community organisations of the broader society.

The benefits of participation in school sport are thought to be many. Proponents provide persuasive examples of how sport contributes to the physical, psychological and social development of youth, viz.:

- to develop motoric competence

- to teach children how to co-operate

- to develop healthy and strong bodies, minds and identities

- to contribute to moral development

- to develop social competencies

- to provide opportunities for physical-affective learning, including learning to understand and express emotion, imagination and appreciation for what the body can do

- to develop leadership skills

- to teach sportsmanship

- to promote and convey the values of society

It is important to note, according to Hendricks (1995: 4), that the afore-mentioned benefits can only be realised and achieved, through the combined efforts of all the role-players, who in turn, must have a clear understanding of the child's needs and limitations. The major challenge therefore facing us would be to develop sustainable programmes and strategies to realise these objectives.

The social benefits of sport should and must ultimately lead to an overall improvement in the quality of life as well as the mental, moral and physical well being of a people.

Sport can also lead to improved health-care and advances in social policies. It goes without saying that sport can provide a bridge to the classroom and can act as an extremely effective educational and socialising instrument. According to French (1996: 61), the principal of Springs Boys High School in Gauteng,

> I have seen the sportsfield as being the cultivating acre of character.
>
> It is in the heat of competition when players are fatigued, emotions running high and tempers flaring that the true character reveals itself where qualities that cannot be learnt from books, can be taught.
>
> As such, sport is the vehicle where virtues for which pupils strive in their personal lives can be replicated and guided: virtues such as compassion, self-discipline, integrity, fairplay,etc.

It is my contention that sport is not a luxury but an essential part of our whole being and we have a major task in establishing a new developmental sports ethos amongst our pupils in all our schools in order to reap the benefits that sport can provide. This is further emphasised in a research done by Taylor and Taylor, 1989 (1996: 16) in Canada, it was shown that children receiving a quality physical education program are not only healthier, but perform better academically.

They further found that students who were active in these physical activities tended to perform as well if not better than their less active counterparts. They also found that for up to two hours following exercise, pupils enjoyed improved concentration, enhanced memory and learning, enhanced creativity, better problem-solving ability, and improved mood state, all critical factors in the learning process.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that in the new educational and political dispensation, it is the duty of teachers to find innovative means of transforming the disposition of pupils to academic schooling at the schools at which they teach, especially those schools in the townships. History had shown these pupils that academic schooling was generally boring for them and the fact that we were governed by a new regime was not necessarily going to change that scenario drastically.

In the following chapter (chapter three), I discuss emancipatory action research as an alternative to the "technicist" approach to research. I also explain why I chose action research as my research methodology. My research incorporated two action research projects that I undertook at the school where I teach. These projects were attempts to get my pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities in order to transform their disposition to academic schooling. The idea was "participation for success".

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE NATURE OF ACTION RESEARCH

## 3.1    Introduction

The aim of educational research is revealing different layers of reality in education so that it's fundamental structure may be revealed.   Educational practice is thus the research area of the educational ethnographer.   Various research methodologies have been used in this research area.   One of those is the empirical educational research approach used at most historically Afrikaner universities in South Africa.   They argue that problems in education can be resolved if a scientific approach to educational research is utilised and the result correctly analysed (Van Schalkwyk; 1988: 289).

Action research is not a new approach to educational research.  It has been used and defined by researchers and practitioners in a variety of ways. It provides a way for teachers to reflect on and research their classroom practice.

In this chapter, I will give a brief historical background of the development of action research, define it, explain how it operates and give an indication as to why I decided to use it as a research methodology.

## 3.2     Historical Development

The success of research in the natural sciences led to an attempt to emulate that success in the social sciences. According to Carr and Kemmis (1986: 131) the early critical theorists, like Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, were concerned with the dominance of positivist science and the degree to which it had become a powerful element in twentieth-century ideology.

By the late 1920's, the early critical theorists saw that science had become too "scientific" believing in its supreme power to answer all significant questions. They saw this as a great danger to modern society, that is, the threat of the end of reason itself. A new approach was sought.

The term "action research" is a concept that was already used in the 1940's by Kurt Lewin while doing social research in human relations (Oja and Smulyan; 1989: 1). Lewin, although not necessarily the first to use and write about action research, nevertheless did "construct an elaborate theory and made action research a respectable mode of inquiry for social scientists" (McKernan; 1991: 9). The concept of action research was not first used in an educational situation. Elliot (1984: 74) explains Lewinian Action Research which was first used in industry as an;

... activity engaged in by groups of

communities with the aim of changing their

circumstances in ways which are consistent

with a shared conception of human values.

It is a means realising the common good

rather than merely individual good.

Lawrence Stenhouse (1975: 23) followed up on Lewin's action research in the late sixties in order to improve the education process. This is pointed out by Cowan (1990: 4):

... the beginning of a serious attempt

to use action research in education was given

momentum in England when Stenhouse (1975)

encouraged teachers to view themselves as researchers.

The proposal by Stenhouse (1975: 26) to utilise teachers as researchers in order for them to contribute to the development of the curriculum, was taken further and given a more critical perspective by scholars such as Elliot, Hopkins, Carr and Kemmis, Grundy, Mckernan, Winder and Walker during the 1980's and 1990's. The first systematic attempt to define action research in education was done by Stephen Corey in 1953 in his book "Action Research to improve school practices" (McNiff; 1988: 19).

His work was partly inspired by the expressions of Kurt Lewin. In South Afica, according to Davids (1991: 39), an emancipatory form of action research is still a relatively new educational initiative with the book edited by Flanagan et al (1984) being among the earliest material printed on the topic.

Esau (1994: 49) points out that the idea of action research as a research methodology was given a boost when it became part of a formal and structured master's programme in the Education Faculty at the University of the Western Cape (U.W.C.) in 1987 under the guidance of Owen van den Berg and Dirk Meerkotter. According to Van Den Berg (1993:15)

Action research can be a powerful force in freeing South African teachers from the shackles of their socialisation....(it) action research needs space in the academia to flower rather than to perish.

## 3.3 What is action research?

There is not one agreed upon definition of action research as various scholars have described it differently. The definition given by Carr and Kemmis (1986: 162) is probably most utilised:

> Action research is a self – reflective enquiry
>
> undertaken by a participant in social situations
>
> in order to improve the rationality and justice
>
> of their own practices, their understandings
>
> of these practices and the situations in which
>
> these practices are carried out.

Davidoff and Van Den Berg (1994:266) defines action research as

> ... a way of taking a systematic, close, critical
>
> look at the way in which we teach with the view to
>
> changing it so that the classroom experience
>
> becomes a more meaningful one for all those involved
>
> in it.

This definition clearly dispels the notion that action research is a loose and unstructured process. It is in fact systematic and requires that the researcher do careful planning before becoming involved in the action. This then strengthens the case for teachers to become researchers in their classroom practice (teaching).

In this way they can look critically into improving and possibly changing their teaching. Who best can report on the teacher's activities than the teacher and her pupils! Davidoff, et al (1993: 33) points out that action research is:

A form of educational research in which the participants engage in a critical process of deconstructing the values, assumptions and interest underlying social practice to uncover different understandings of reality and existing power relations.

To put it simply, action research means to research one's own actions. It's potential for transformation depends on the way in which it is done, who is involved in the process and how this research is then able to change the conditions in which practice occurs.

In the light of this transition phase (new government) that South Africa is in and while we are busy ridding ourselves of the shackles of the past (apartheid education), we need to develop profound understandings of the existing as well as new relations and conditions in education.

In my first action research project, I have identified extra-curricular activity as having a vital role to play in the education of our pupils. My concern was that the disposition towards academic schooling that the pupils find themselves in needs to be transformed. I was of the opinion that through participation in extra-curricular activities the pupils' disposition toward academic schooling will be enhanced.

I was in search of a process in which the pupil will empower herself/himself in order to take her/his rightful place in society and hopefully make a positive contribution to it.

I saw myself therefore engaging in an emancipatory process in which others with whom I interact, for example: colleagues, pupils and parents who participated in the research derived a new and purposeful approach to what they were doing. As Carr and Kemmis (1986: 205) point out:

> Emancipatory action research is an empowering
>
> process for participants, it engages them in the
>
> struggle for more rational, just, democratic and
>
> fulfilling forms of education.

These were items that were lacking in apartheid teaching situations and this practise is what I am engaging in presently. It becomes necessary then to put into perspective the reason why I am engaging in emancipatory action research and why I do not simply modify the teaching practices of the past.

In order to achieve this it is necessary to explain the three knowledge constitutive interests as explained by Shirley Grundy on Habermas.

## 3.4    Knowledge Constitutive Interests

Jurgen Habermas (Grundy; 1987: 10) identifies three basic cognitive interests namely, the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. Grundy (1987: 10) explains that knowledge constitutive interests both shape what we consider to constitute knowledge and determine the categories by which we organise that knowledge. Knowledge in itself is not sufficient, as action is a basic requirement to complement that cognitive knowledge. Both must interact for the welfare of society. As both of these components interact in educational practice, they are determined by a particular cognitive interest.

### a)    Technical Interest

The technical interest starts from the premise that the world consists of facts and that each fact is logically dependent on other facts. The logical form of statements depends on whether the facts can be falsifiable.

According to the technical interest there is only one type of knowledge and that is scientific knowledge. The knowledge obtained from the natural sciences enables one to control the natural environment and thereby improve one's quality of life. This form of knowledge is known as "positivism", the term coined by Compete (Grundy; 1987: 11). The positivist has a special conception of explanation, with the aim of setting guidelines to change existing problem-situations in education.

It demonstrates the following characteristics: the distinction it draws between discovery and reliability, the neutral viewpoints with regard to the objectivity of the knowledge and the methodological unity of the sciences (Fay; 1975: 94).

To present the best means to realise the objects in educational research, one needs to use the best technically correct action and here Fay (1984: 13) speaks of the "policy science." According to him these decisions are made by policy scientists (educators/teachers), based on the best available social scientific knowledge, that is relevant to the educational problem in order to satisfy a research objective. Value-judgements are excluded because only science is in a position to eliminate it. The scientist makes use of experiments which are reproducible and gives guidelines based on the process of reasoning that are universally acceptable and explanations of which the results are publicly verifiable.

Grundy (1987: 12) emphasises this position in her definition of the technical interest, which states that the technical interest is:

A fundamental interest in controlling the

environment through rule-following action

based upon empirically grounded laws.

The technical interest by implication identifies the existence of certain power relationships within the learning environment. It implies that ultimate power rests with the person, organisation or institution who formulates the objectives. In the classroom situation for example, the teacher is in control (at least we hope) and manages the behaviour and learning of her pupils.

The teacher is guided by a syllabus, which has been foisted upon her by an outside authority, namely the education department who has as its fundamental principle the control of teachers, pupils and the curriculum. Ruskin in Grundy (1987: 30) puts this into perspective:

Education does not mean teaching people to

know what they do not know. It means teaching

them to behave as they do not behave.

**b) Practical Interest**

The practical interest claims that understanding society is logically different from understanding the natural world because its logical form differs to the picture of the technical interest which states that all science is of the same logical form (Grundy; 1987: 13-14).

In the relationship between the observer/teacher and the participant (pupil) neither of the two is passive. The researcher wants to unveil the truth but is sensitive as to what the pupil has to reveal to her.

She puts forward questions but must be prepared to await answers instead of pressing for answers and then getting wrong answers. It is because of this involvement that the practical interest is judged by the positivist as being subjective.

The researcher sees himself as though from a distance in the phenomenon of education, as in a mirror-although not himself, it is persons like himself who are engaged in the act of education. The researcher in this process of educational research attempts to establish the intention of education. Moreover he further attempts to place these intentions into a wider context of meaning, that is relating it to more general practices (social practices).

Social actions can according to Wittgenstein (Bloor; 1983: 7) be compared with the learning of language because in both instances one is confronted with clear and sometimes alien symbols and in both instances one can only understand the symbols by way of learning the rules, which govern these symbols. This demonstrates the fact that understanding within the practical interest implies having "shared perceptions."

Grundy (1987: 14) speaks here of the notion of consensus which is important with respect to the interpretation of meaning. Confidence in an interpretation depends upon agreement with others that such an agreement is reasonable. Grundy (1987: 14) defines the practical interest as follows:

> The practical interest is a fundamental interest
>
> in understanding the environment through interaction
>
> based upon a consensual interpretation of meaning.

The knowledge that is gathered by the practical interest can be carried over to the social life because it is the prerequisite for the underlying understanding between different members of the same social order or between members of different social orders.

## c)      Emancipatory Interest

The emancipatory interest states that in human affairs (as in the case of education) all facts are socially constructed, humanly determined and interpreted and hence subject to change through human means. It further questions orthodox scientific assumptions that facts are value-free and that those facts can be described and examined in language that is neutral and objective. The emancipatory interest goes further, that no social fact is value-free, language is always loaded and objectivity depends on where you happen to be standing in the social world.

The emancipatory interest is different from the technical interest and the practical interest in that it recognises and acknowledges commitment, relativity and subjectivity as unavoidable, necessary and desirable characteristics. It is only through embracing of this theory that the realities of the social world can be authentically disclosed and understood.

According to Gibson (1986: 5) the emancipatory interest therefore claims to provide enlightenment as to the actual conditions of social life, that enlightenment consists in the disclosure of the time interest of individuals and groups. Here interest refers to the needs and concerns of particular groups.

The emancipatory interest sees conflict and tension rather than harmonic consensus as a central feature of social life. It yields representations of reality and probes more powerfully into the nature and causes of our social world. This emancipatory interest lays bare the springs of human action as it exposes the roots of injustice and inequality. Through this it shows how ideology interprets everyday life, familiar assumption, mundane practices and beliefs.

It goes beyond merely using ideology to describe major systems of political or religious belief, for example, socialism, fascism, to name but two, rather it stresses the way ordinariness, its familiarity, its manifestation in the taken-for-granted assumptions of family, classroom, workplace and friendship relationships.

According to Gibson (1986: 11) it shows how common sense serves to maintain certain interests at the expense of others. Referring to the South African situation, if common sense told the "white man" that he was "naturally" superior to blacks then he would have been in the grip of ideology.

Ideology is therefore a form of consciousness, which pervades common-sense assumptions and everyday practices.

Through the emancipatory interest one sees how common-sense, which Grundy (1987: 19) refers to as false consciousness distorts and conceals true interests, thereby fostering injustice by preventing certain groups and individuals from gaining greater control over their own lives.

An integral part of the emancipatory interest is ideology-critique in which an attempt is made at demonstrating that the beliefs and attitudes which people have are incoherent. This is because they are internally contradictory or that their self-understandings are deficient because they fail to account for the life experiences, which the people themselves have.

In other words, an attempt is made to demonstrate exactly in what ways the ideologies of the people are illusions, with the ideas that such demonstrations will strip these ideologies of their power.

Fay (1984: 98) asserts that the emancipatory interest tries to show people how they have been deceived, given their experiences, aim and desires and in the process it seeks to reveal to them the rational way of going about getting what they really want. This is clearly illustrated in the definition of the emancipatory interest given by Grundy (1987: 19);

> A fundamental interest in emancipation and
>
> empowerment to engage in autonomous action

arising out of authentic, critical insights into

the social construction of human society.

## 3.5 How does action research operate?

Kurt Lewin in Mcniff (1988: 22) describes action research as a spiral of steps.

Each step has four stages: planing, acting, observing and reflecting.

Others like Carr and Kemmis, Elliot and Dave Ebbutt modified the scheme of

Lewin to produce their own schemes (see appendices A, B and C).

These spirals of cycles as proposed by Lewin can be repeated continuously

with each cycle establishing a new layer of understanding and improved

practice. Carr and Kemmis (1986: 165) point out that:

> ... the (Action Research) project proceeds
>
> through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing
>
> and reflecting with each of these activities being
>
> systematically and self-critically implemented
>
> and interrelated.

I endeavour to discuss the different but interrelated phases of the action

research process.

## A. The planning phase (stage one)

Before one embarks on any research project one needs to have a general idea as to what one wants to improve or change. On this, Kemmis and McTaggart (1982: 18) offer the following advice to the potential researcher:

> You do not have to begin with a problem. All you
>
> need is a general idea that something might be improved.
>
> Your general idea might stem from ... the recognition
>
> that existing practice falls short of aspirations.

Mcniff (1988: 57) also gives guidance to the potential researcher as to how to identify problem areas:

1. What is your concern?

2. Why are you concerned?

3. What do you think you can do about it?

4. What kind of evidence could you collect to help you make some judgements about what is happening?

5. How would you collect such evidence?

Another of McNiff's (1988: 44) useful contributions to the way action research operates is the identification of what she calls "spin-off-spirals." These are problems that the teacher researcher picks up as the research process proceeds.

Thus the planning stage according to Esau (1994: 54), which is the accepted first phase of the action research cycle, involves the teacher-researcher forming a general idea of what it is he/she wants to research. This will involve looking more carefully at what is happening in one's classroom from a number of different perspectives.

Here it becomes necessary to look at the classroom within the context of the school and if necessary within the broader community. One cannot plan a project in isolation.

During the planning stage the researcher must have negotiations with all the role players involved in the research project as action research is a collaborative process. The role players here would refer to the colleagues of the researcher, the pupils, the principal, parents and if necessary a triangulator. The triangulator can be described as the sympathetic "outsider" who will assist the researcher as well as clarify issues with the researcher. The negotiations with all the relevant role players form an integral part of the planning stage of the research. The importance of negotiations is stressed by Boomer (1990: 51),

> ... if teachers set out to teach according to
>
> a planned curriculum, without first engaging the interest

of the student, the quality of the learning will suffer...

negotiating the curriculum means deliberately planning to

invite students to contribute to, and to modify, the

educational program, so that they will have

a real investment both in the learning journey and

in the outcomes.

The researcher needs to make an assessment of the physical resources at her disposal. For example, the condition of the classroom and the number of desks in that room. The researcher also needs to take cognisance of the time frames in which she has to work. The gathering and collation of data has to be well structured. Data collection is an important aspect of research and influences the outcome of one's research inquiry. The researcher can make use of the following techniques when collecting data: questionnaires, field notes, pupils' diaries, interviews, triangulation and audio/visual recordings. Hopkins (1985: 41) advises action researchers that,

... any method used must not disrupt the

teaching commitment, and must not be too demanding

on the teacher's time.

An important point to note in the planning is adaptability to changes that may occur in the school situation, for example, damaged buildings, disruption of classes and absenteeism.

## B.     The acting phase (stage two)

Once the planning has been done the researcher now proceeds to implement that plan.    This has to be done in a thoughtful and structured manner although the researcher is at liberty to deviate from the plan if circumstances change.  An important aspect of this stage is the researcher's ability to monitor the process of implementation of the plan as well as its effects.

## C.     The observation phase (stage three)

This phase is utilised by the researcher to collect data about his/her action, using the techniques set out in the planning stage.   John Elliot (1981: 9) highlights the following points for the researcher:

a)     use techniques which provide evidence of how well the course of action is being implemented.

b)     Use techniques which provide evidence of unintended as well as intended effects.

c)     Use techniques which will enable one to look at what is going on from a variety of angles or points of view.

The pupils and the triangulator will also be making their input at this stage.

## D. The reflection phase (stage four)

During this phase the researcher analyse the data, which she has gathered and compares it with what she had planned to do.

There is a need to understand the processes that have taken place. Esau (1994: 57) contends that the:

> Contradiction in one's data will provide one with
>
> useful starting points to get different perspectives
>
> on understanding the forces that impact on the classroom.

It is also necessary at this stage to discuss and debate the research findings with the triangulator and the pupils. This will ensure that the analysis of the data is complete and will therefore be credible. This collaboration between the role players leads to mutual understanding and consensus, democratic decision-making and common action. On collaboration Oja and Smulyan (1989: 12) point out that:

> Collaboration (all role players) recognises and utilises
>
> the unique insights and skills provided by each
>
> participant while, at the same time, demanding that no
>
> set of responsibilities is assigned a superior status.

The researcher is now in a position to use this collective evaluation to plan the next action cycle. This is the stage of the research, as Davidoff and van den Berg (1990: 47) put it,

> ... where you are looking back at
>
> your efforts in order to look forward
>
> on your future plans.

## 3.6    Action research as my research methodology

I started teaching without doing any formal teacher training. I had to rely on my high and primary school teachers as my role models. They were using the technicist approach to teaching. I completed my teaching diploma at UNISA which entrenched this teaching approach.

During the education crisis of the 1980's I was confronted with People's Education, which had as its fundamental principle education for liberation.

My fundamental principle is education for liberation. My positivistic mind-set was jolted and a major introspection was to take place where I came to realise that I had to transform my teaching practice. I was no longer focused on maintaining strict discipline but looking at how to democratise my classes. This is not to say that democratising my classes will lead to a drop in the level of discipline that I have maintained.

Doing action research has allowed me the opportunity to sustain my endeavours to transform my teaching practice. As Davidoff et al on Grundy (1993: 75) points out; "The guiding ethic of emancipatory action research embodies the social and political ideals of freedom, equality and justice."

One cannot be wholly satisfied with one's teaching practice and one should at all times explore ways of improving this practice. Emancipatory action research offers that much needed vigour to assist teachers in this process. McNiff (1988: 5/6) notes:

> Action research is not just teaching. It is being aware and critical of that teaching, and using this self-critical awareness to be open to a process of change and improvement of practice.

Action research encourages a teacher to be reflective of her own practice in order to enhance the quality of education for herself and her pupils.

It is a form of self-reflective enquiry that is used in school based curriculum development, teacher development, school improvement schemes and actively involves teachers as participants in their own educational educational process (McNiff; 1988: 1).

It approaches education as a unified exercise, seeing a teacher in the classroom as the best judge of her total educational experience. Here teachers are encouraged to develop their own personal theories of education from their own classroom practice.

In the following chapter, I give an account of my first action research project that I undertook in my classroom. This project was an attempt on my part to introduce my pupils to extra-curricular activity and for them to be participants in these activities.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# MY FIRST ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

## 4.1 Introduction

South Africa is currently engaged in a process of nation-building. In this process of nation-building our youth plays a very important and vital role, as they will become the future leaders of South Africa. The teacher and the school therefore have to make great input in this process as they should allow each child the opportunity of reaching his or her full potential.

In order for the teacher and the school to present these opportunities to their pupils, they must transform the pedagogy of the school as well as their own pedagogical situation. This can be achieved through researching what they are doing as they do it or in other words using action research. Action research, according to Davidoff and Van Den Berg (1990: 266);

> ... is a way of taking a systematic, close,
>
> critical look at the way in which we teach,
>
> with a view to changing it so that the
>
> pedagogical situation becomes more
>
> meaningful for all those involved in it.

In this chapter, I provide the details of my first action research project in which I made an attempt to use extra-curricular activities to change the disposition of the learners to academic schooling.

I also discuss various research techniques that I utilised which could be beneficial to prospective action researchers in their venture to democratise their classroom practice.

When I started out, I was highly motivated and excited although there was some anxiety as well. Involvement in extra-curricular activities was an aspect of education that always formed part of my teaching. Now I was going to research this aspect of my teaching.

## 4.2    Tackling the problem

My main concern was the academic motivation of the pupils at township schools and in particular the pupils at my school. I had earlier given some idea as to where the school is situated and the community that serves the school. The school is faced with problems such as truancy, drug-abuse, high pregnancy rates, gangsterism, low self-esteem of pupils, high dropout rate of pupils, amongst others.

I see these problems experienced by our pupils as partly a reflection on the school and that not enough is being done at the school to prevent these problems from occurring year in and year out (I have been teaching at this school for twelve years). I feel strongly that by using extra-curricular activities I would be able to enhance the attitude of the learners towards academic learning.

I see that a necessary balance between the academic programme and the extra-curricular activities (sport and culture) should be instituted, as this may significantly contribute to the whole education of our pupils and would probably lead to school improvement. This point is emphasised by Fredericks (1995: 30) (President of United School Sport Association of South Africa) when he said;

> If we take the discipline required on the sportsfield into the classroom and make sport a motivating factor for teachers and pupils, we would have achieved a tremendous step towards re-establishing the culture of learning in South Africa.

A number of studies have been done in the United States of America regarding the link between involvement in extra-curricular activity and academic achievement. In one such study done by Mahoney and Cairns (1997: 242), they indicated that engagement in school extra-curricular activities is linked to decreasing rates of early school dropouts in both girls and boys. They discovered that such participation provides marginal students an opportunity to create a positive and voluntary connection to school.

Gerber (1996: 44) found that extra-curricular participation is not detrimental to student performance and that participation in these types of activities promotes greater academic achievement.

In addition, she discovered that participation in school-related activities was more strongly associated with achievement than was participation in activities outside of school.

In order for me to tackle the problem it becomes necessary for me to look at improving my own teaching practice but also focusing to some extent at school-wide improvement. The main reason for this school-wide focus is, I feel that whatever transformation occurs in my own teaching practice should have some impact on the school. I therefore deem it necessary to do my action research projects at a micro (own classroom) level and school-wide level.

At the end of 1994 I did a survey at the school with regards to pupil involvement in extra-curricular activity and I found that 450 out of a possible 1200 pupils were involved (see appendix D). The question obviously arose as to whether the other 750 pupils were experiencing the problems that was mentioned earlier. If there was a link then it had to be investigated.

Prior to the democratic elections of 1994, teachers at this school were screaming for equality in education and the school itself had become famous for its role in the education crisis of 1985 and in the years that followed.

However, it is these same teachers that leave the school premises as soon as the end of day siren goes. Less than fifty percent of the teachers at this school are actively involved in providing extra-curricular activities for their pupils. If they do get involved then they view it as a burden rather than part of the whole education of the child. The teachers are generally not motivated because they do not live in the area. They have to collect their own children at other schools outside of Mitchell's Plain. The administration of the school does not give enough support for teachers to get involved which contribute to this unhealthy situation.

## 4.3    Identifying my target group

I taught two grade eight classes, two grade ten classes and one grade twelve (matric) class. To the grade eights I was teaching General Science and to the grades ten and twelves, I was teaching Biology. I decided to work with the two grade ten classes on my project because I was the class teacher of the one class and I would be seeing both classes on a daily basis. Also, the grade ten pupils were in the middle of their high school years and are probably the most vulnerable to the problems that I have identified.

These pupils were fairly established at the school, being their third year at the school, at least for most of them.

I was also able to gather some valuable data on these pupils with reference to their progress through grades eight and nine. The fact that I was a class teacher of one of these classes put me in an ideal position to deal directly with the parents. I had also taught some of these pupils the previous year. There were fifty-one pupils in total in these two classes of which, nineteen were boys and thirty-two were girls.

## 4.4    Negotiations

After the first meeting of the action research masters group, I held a meeting with the principal and at the same time negotiated with him to allow me to carry out my research at the school. He consented to this request but he wanted to maintain the right to veto any aspect of the research which he felt unhappy about. I could not agree to this condition, as this would jeopardise the validity of my research. He then consented without reservation.

I then held discussions-cum-negotiations with my two standard eight classes. I informed them of my involvement in the Masters Programme in action research and elaborated on what the research entails, the benefits for them and the benefits for myself and hopefully the school.

They were very responsive and positive during the negotiations but needed clarity on how they were going to benefit from my research.

Here, I must mention that the pupils were impressed by the fact that I was studying further but were concerned that if I was successful in my studies, I would leave the school in the near future. To this I added that one may not always be aware of what opportunities may arise but in the short term I would remain at the school.

At the first parents-teachers meeting of the year, I informed my class's (grade 10B) parents of my studies. They too were impressed but were anxious that what I was embarking on would interfere with their children's education. Again I had to reassure these role players that what I was doing would benefit everybody in the long term. The fact that the pupils would indulge in extra-curricular activities would in itself be a benefit because it would immediately keep them occupied. The experiences that they have through these activities may impact on how they approach their future activities.

I informed the parents that I needed them to complete a short questionnaire for me (appendix F). I also mentioned the fact that I would like to interview a few of them during the course of the year. They had no problem with this. The importance of negotiation with the relevant role players in an action research project cannot be overemphasised. It smooths the way for the implementation of the activities which the role players are going to be involved in.

Emancipatory action research, being a collaborative learning process, needs the support of all the role players. In this instance I had sought the support of the principal, pupils and their parents. The one group that I needed to convince was my colleagues, that is, my fellow teachers. I raised the issue in a staff meeting, where I explained to the staff what it was that I was trying to achieve.

During previous staff meetings, before I enrolled for the Masters Programme, I had directly and sometimes subtly tried to convince teachers that they needed to participate and organise extra-curricular activity at school. This appeal seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. The reason as I mentioned before was the teachers' lack of motivation to become involved. After the explanation there was a deafening silence, at which point I asked whether there was any individual that had any objections and, if so, then they had to raise it at that point. There was a silent consensus. This is the manner in which the staff members at this school give their approval to most issues.

After the meeting a few individuals approached me to volunteer their services whenever I needed it. This was very encouraging especially since there was a murmur from other sectors in the staffroom, which were not too pleasant.

I had expected this kind of response but to me the more important factor was that everyone on the staff was now aware of what I was busy with.

## 4.5 Data collection

The sorting of the data collected is an important phase for evaluating one's actions in specific situations and also provides some measure whereby one can monitor one's judgement. In utilising the various research tools I adhered to the advice given by Hopkins (1985: 41 – refer page 52). Some of my colleagues were hoping that I would falter as Hopkins had pointed out. Individuals at the school become envious of other individuals being innovative because it poses a threat to their way of doing things. I decided to use the following research tools.

## A    Questionnaires

I would be using the questionnaire quite extensively in my research. I set up questionnaires for the pupils (Appendix E), their parents (Appendix F) and the teachers involved in teaching the two standard eight classes. The questionnaires were issued to the pupils and parents during the first school term. I felt that the information received from these questionnaires were very useful once it was compared with information gathered from the other research techniques.

## B    Field notes

The position that I was in (Acting Head of Department for Sports and Culture) allowed me the freedom to move around the school, so that I would be able to

observe what was being done in the physical education classes. It also allowed me access to team talks of the various sports codes, sitting in on meetings of the cultural societies functioning at the school as well as conducting my own meetings. Since I had this freedom of movement, the use of field notes became very important. Woods (1986: 45) points out that the field notes should then be transferred into a journal, which allows for daily additions.

When I started off with my project, I made use of field notes in order to gain a general impression of what was happening in my classroom. It is also the most convenient method of capturing and holding onto an impression or incident. It was through these field notes that I came to realise that something extra was needed at the school and in my own teaching practice to further motivate pupils to attend school.

**C    Pupil's diaries**

The majority of pupils in my two standard eight classes did not keep diaries when I started the project and those that did were girls. I then requested that they start keeping a diary, as this would provide me with interesting feedback from the pupils themselves. The pupils were very excited about this activity and they were very keen to have their notes read.

Some, in fact wanted me to evaluate their notes or just pass comments on their thoughts. This was to form a mini-activity in my action research project as the pupils found this idea stimulating and exciting. The English teacher, that taught both classes, also made the use of a diary as a theme in her lessons. The diary can also play an important role in the pupil's own self-reflection.

## D      Video-tape recordings

I have a video tape recorder and I used it to get footage of specific sport and cultural events at school. The video footage would allow me to observe an event as it unfolded. I would also be able to reflect immediately on such observation.

I think the more interesting aspect would be making a recording in my classroom, of one of my lessons. The reaction of the pupils was very interesting to observe. They were obviously aware of the presence of this new gadget and were not their normal selves in terms of their behaviour. Initially they were quite but later individuals wanted to be seen and heard.

## E      Statistical data

I thought that statistical data was going to be useful in either substantiating the transformation that would have taken place or showing that more needed to be done.

In the light of the research that I was doing, statistical data was significant. The major portion of the statistical data was on the progress that the pupils had made in the major examinations (appendix G,H,I). The data are presented through the use of graphs and diagrams.

The reader will be able to get an overall picture of the data at a glance. According to Mulder (1982: 03), such data can be used in descriptive way so as to give the reader and the researcher a clearer understanding of the data. I will also use the data to determine whether there is any indication in the results of teachers that are involved in extra-curricular activities with these classes and those that are not involved at all.

## 4.6 Implementing my plan

I started off with implementing my plan by giving the two grade ten classes the questionnaire (Appendix E) which basically required information on whether they were involved in extra-curricular activities or not. The responses of the pupils to the questions were very enlightening. About forty percent of the pupils were involved in extra-curricular activities. Here all the activities were participation in codes of sport.

Those pupils who were not involved in any extra-curricular activity cited the following as reasons for not being involved:

- not interested

- prefer to watch television

- play tv-games

- don't have time, must do chores at home

- there was no activity that they had an interest in

These responses were of great significance to me as these were the pupils whom I needed to reach in my classroom and through activities that I was planning in my projects. Most of the pupils felt that there were not enough cultural activities being catered for at this school.

For example, many of them were interested in speech-and-drama, some indicated an interest in art, while others were interested in having music and dancing (both modern jazz and ballroom). The former activity would impact directly on the pupils use of language and how they would express themselves. Participation in speech-and-drama could only enhance the pupils comprehension of language, which would improve on the pupils oral marks.

After I had evaluated all the questionnaires, I held a discussion with my pupils during which I revealed my plan to them. I told them that I wanted them to participate in extra-curricular activities being offered at the school and especially in those activities in which I was directly involved.

I wanted to see how these pupils would interact with me when we were involved with extra-curricular activities. I informed them that they were not obliged to participate but that they should feel free to do as they pleased. I would also be interviewing some of them from time to time or another teacher may conduct such an interview and I would be looking through some of their diaries. Again I informed them that they were under no obligation to co-operate. They were quite keen to get started on the project. I got the impression that they were expecting some drastic change to occur in the classroom during the course of the research.

My first project was conducted during the first school term, that is, from the beginning of February to the end of March. This is the summer period in Cape Town and I am normally involved in athletics and cricket during this period.

**(i)    First Activity**

During the first week in February the school has its inter-house athletics competition. This was then targeted as the first major activity in my project. The idea of the inter-house is to have all the pupils at the school participating in this event. The pupils that excel on the day are then selected to represent the school at an inter-school event, where they compete against the best athletes from other schools.

I used the goal of the inter-house, as the motivation for the pupils in my classes to participate, the goal being that winning was not as important as participation. They all agreed to attend the eliminations in their respective 'houses'. Those that could not participate because of medical reasons assisted the teachers with the elimination of pupils in the younger age groups.

During the days that followed there was a keen rivalry amongst the pupils in the class as the class was split between the four houses. Each one said that their team was going to outdo the other teams.

This was done in a very jovial way. The atmosphere in the class had also changed, as the pupils appeared to be more energetic. They were also eager to ask questions, some not necessarily directly related to the Biology lessons but questions of biological importance. Some of the questions put to me were:

- what do I have to do to build more muscle ?

- how does steroids effect the body and one's performance ?

- what do I have to eat in preparation for the event ?

- how often should I train for my specific event ?

The significance of these questions were twofold. Firstly, it showed an eagerness on the part of the pupils to know more about their bodies as well as being able to ask those questions without feeling inhibited. Secondly, it facilitated my teaching of Biology as I could manipulate some aspects of the syllabus in order to answer their questions. The pupils were in actual fact doing biology through their own experiences. For example, in the Biology syllabus there is a section on the function of certain muscles in the body. Another section of the syllabus covers the digestive system, which had a direct bearing on the questions that were asked.

The sporting event, that is, the inter-house, itself proved to be quite successful as a number of the pupils won their events. This was not only a boost to their self-confidence but also the spark they needed to do well in class. These pupils went on to represent the school at the inter-school championships.

**(ii)     Activity Two**

The second activity involved taking the boys in the classes to play cricket for the school since the school had three teams registered in the inter-schools league. The girls then questioned the fact that there was only cricket offered to the boys at our school. They accused me of sexism since I was in charge of cricket at the school.

Without my knowledge, they sent around a notice at the school requesting all girls that were interested in cricket to attend a meeting. The response to this was overwhelming. I had no idea that there were so many girls interested in cricket. The meeting quorum was checked and seventy-six girls attended the meeting. I was forced into organising cricket for the girls at the school. In this regard, I utilised the girls from my grade ten classes, who had initiated the meeting, to assist me in getting an internal competition off the ground.

A major debate followed in my classes between the boys and the girls, as the boys were not too keen having the girls play cricket. The debate on sexism in all aspects of their daily lives was extensively covered. Here are a few of the statements that were bandied around:

- your place is in the kitchen - boy to girl

- you boys think that we are not capable of playing all sports

- we should have a match between the boys and the girls

- the girls should play with a tennis ball so that they do not get hurt

- where are you going to put the groin guard

What was supposed to be a normal process of preparing the boys for their cricket matches, boiled over into a battle of the sexes and loyalty was being questioned all the time.

This activity brought out the direct link between what is supposed to taught in the Lifeskills or Life Orientation lessons, that is, respect for the opposite sex. I had not bargained for this type of response from the pupils when I set out on my second activity but it was well worth it.

## (iii) Activity Three

I decided to organise a trip to Wiesenhof Holiday Resort in Stellenbosch for the whole school. This trip was to serve as a fundraiser for the school. I thought this would be a great opportunity to meet my two standard eight classes away from the school and on an informal level.

As I was fully in charge of organising the day's events, I had to make sure that I would be able to spend a large part of the day with my pupils. I enlisted the assistance of a few teachers and a number of the senior pupils to take control of particular events on the day.

The days leading up to the day of the outing were filled with excitement. Many of the pupils at this school seldom come out of Mitchell's Plain let alone taking a trip to Stellenbosch, which is about thirty-five kilometres from Mitchell's Plain. The excitement revolved around issues like;

- what are you going to wear
- are you going to swim and what type of swimsuit do you have

- what activities are being organised for them

- what was there to eat

- is Sir (teacher) going to swim

I suggested to the classes that they organise their own braai (barbecue). The pupils were very excited about this idea and quickly organised the menu. In a short space of time, every individual knew what they had to bring, what they had to prepare and how much money each had to contribute. Certain individuals took responsibility for purchasing the meat, spices and other necessities. This was also a great opportunity for individual pupils to show leadership as well as organisational skills. At this point I took a bit of a backseat.

What a day it turned out to be. Of the fifty-one pupils in the two classes, forty-six were present. We then found ourselves at a relatively secluded part of the resort where we settled down.

Here we briefly discussed how to implement some of the things that we had planned. The first thing we decided on was to explore the resort. We walked through the resort as a group, chit-chatting about trivialities. A number of comedians came to the fore on this short walk. I pointed out things that had relevance to the Biology syllabus but they wanted none of that.

We then ended up at the volleyball court where we played a few sets. At about noon we moved to the barbecue area where a fire was started.

This period was the most informative period. Some of the observations that I had made in my field notes were being contradicted. For example, the quiet, introverted pupils were now not as inhibited. They spoke freely, directed personal questions at me and generally took control of the barbecue. Jokes were being shared, some of which were not very innocent. One of the pupils brought along a ghetto-blaster (mobile music system) and soon everybody was dancing. Through all of this I managed to speak to individual pupils about themselves, their families and friends. Some of them were very frank in these conversations and a few family secrets were revealed.

All in all the day proved to be a huge success and consolidated the confidence the pupils had initially shown towards me. This was re-emphasised in the days following the outing. The pupils were more relaxed in the classroom and responded well to any request that I put to them.

## 4.7   Reflecting on my project

Davidoff and Van den Berg (1990: 46) put this phase of the project into perspective;

> ... where you are looking back on your efforts in
> order to look forward to your future plans.

In reflecting on my project I must be critical but constructive in that criticism. Action research has taught me that transformation is an ongoing process. There is no easy solution to the problems that I had initially identified.

In some aspects of my research project I might have achieved some success but this success could be short-lived if there was no follow-up on consolidation of these successes. I must acknowledge that the pupils were very co-operative in this project. They completed all the minor tasks that I requested of them. During activity one, I found myself in a position where I wanted to make it compulsory for the pupils to participate in the inter-house athletics. I am glad that I did not take that option if I reflect on how they responded.

Activity two did not turn out the way I had planned it but in retrospect I could not have planned it that well. The deliberate response of the girls when I started out with this activity, showed a maturity on their part that I could not have aroused by any of the plans that I had thought of.

The important thing to learn from this is that we are also in a learning process and if I want to indulge in an emancipatory approach to action research then I need to eliminate sexism in my classroom.

Activity three was also very encouraging for me in that I achieved what I had set out to achieve on that day. My only concern was the fact that five pupils did not turn up for this event which I thought was going to be very important in consolidating the relationship that I had built up with my pupils.

One of the major difficulties that I encountered was time. There was just not enough time to implement some of the things that I had set out to do. For example, following up on the lack of cultural activities at the school. I also did not have the time to consult with teachers who had the expertise in this field but who have failed to do anything in this respect.

The one positive aspect of my first project was that the pupils had definitely become more positive and confident in their approach to the academic programme.

## 4.8    Concluding remarks

I have come to realise that transformation and change cannot happen overnight. This is going to be a long process but one, which I am willing to remain with. I do believe that I am on the right track and ultimately some children will benefit from what I am trying to do. This to me is a major source of inspiration and a means of overcoming some of the obstacles, which I have encountered and will still encounter.

I also see the necessity on embarking on another project in order to consolidate what I have started in this project. It was clear from the first project that pupils have a disposition to academic schooling, which has little to do with their intellectual ability. This disposition is borne out of their circumstances, lack of accepted role models, few opportunities for formal employment once a pupil has graduated from high school, amongst others. The role models that they have are gang members who drive flashy cars, wear designer clothing and expensive jewellery. These individuals were mainly school drop outs. Academic schooling has this to contend with.

In terms of my findings in project one, I was able to identify three areas in which development needed to take place. Firstly, there was the need to provide opportunities for the pupils to express themselves. Secondly, they needed to see the link between the extra-curricular activities that they were involved in and their academic work. Thirdly, it was clear that participation in extra-curricular activities would develop the learners' leadership and organisational skills. I will elaborate on these findings in the next chapter.

There is no doubt in my mind that the pupil's involvement in extra-curricular activities can change their disposition towards academic schooling as I can reflect on my own experiences as a pupil. Involvement in activities that have a direct or indirect bearing on their subjects will facilitate this process. I therefore had to take this into consideration when I embarked on the second project.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# MY SECOND PROJECT

## 5.1 Consolidating my first action

In this chapter I give an account of the second action research project, which I had embarked upon. I saw this as a continuation of the first action research project but also as a means of consolidating what I had started. I had set out to use extra-curricular activities to change the disposition of the pupils towards academic schooling. Although the second project was to be guided by the first project, circumstances created an opportunity for me, which I could not allow to pass. The school had on its year-planner, a food fair as well as a work-shadow programme, which I thought to be ideal activities that I could use to benefit the pupils. The one area that I observed during the first project about the pupils was their need to be provided with opportunities where they could express themselves about their friends, family, likes and dislikes. I felt that I needed to spend time on this aspect during their future participation.

I also found that learners demonstrated an interest in academic work that are linked to the extra-curricular activities they were engaged in. For example, in the cricket and athletics activities they wanted to know about the biological functions of their bodies in respect of these sports. I linked this to their Biology topics dealt with in the classroom.

The third area in which the learners showed development was in leadership and general organisational skills. This was clearly demonstrated during activity three of my first project.

My first project was completed during the first school term and I was not in a position to commence with a second project during the second school term. During this period I was looking at and trying to learn from the experiences that I had encountered with my first project.

For example, I utilised some of the research techniques for the first time and I needed to learn from that experience, so that I could refine it the second time around. The first project was time-consuming and I was quite exhausted on its completion. I needed time to gather my thoughts and to plan properly for my second project.

Also the second school term is short in terms of the academic programme since everybody starts to prepare for the mid-year examinations. These examinations are very important to the pupils as it has a direct bearing on the progress of the child during that particular academic year. I however, did not abandon the emancipatory action research mode that I was in. One could easily revert to the old approach of 'drilling' the pupils in order to prepare them for their mid-year examinations.

The atmosphere in my classes were such that the pupils knew the importance of the examinations and co-operated fully in the period leading up to the examinations. This gave me a great deal of satisfaction. Their examination results were to reflect their confidence. There were a few pupils who had very good results but this was to be expected. Generally, however, there was an improvement in the results although not drastic. This improvement that I am referring to is in comparison to their previous year's mid-year results.

I did mention earlier (4.5: 76) that I would utilise statistical data and this is an example (appendix G,H,I). To quote Grundy and Kemmis in Robinson (1989: 68): "The function of data in action research is to provide a basis for reflection."

## 5.2 Starting a second action research project

My second action research project was scheduled for the third school term, which runs from July to September. During the two months leading up to the third term I was reflecting on my first project but was also preparing mentally for the second project.

Between the second and third terms, we have a three-week school vacation period, which gave me the time to think through my second action research project and do some of the groundwork for this project.

Through the course of my preparation I came across this quote from McNiff (1988: 3), which I found inspirational:

> ... the greatest revolutions start with individuals
> and this teaching revolution must start with
> individual teachers in their own classrooms who
> are attempting to make sense of their own practice.

I was keen on being 'revolutionary' in order to get the teachers at my school more motivated to do extra-curricular activity for the sake of the pupils that they were teaching.

## 5.3 Negotiations

Before I embarked on my second action research project I deemed it necessary to again consult with some of the role-players in the project. The first person I spoke to was the principal. He was happy that I was still endeavouring with my research and again promised his support.

On the second day of the new school term I held discussions with my two standard eight classes. Two topics were discussed; the first concerned their mid-year examination results, with which I was fairly satisfied. The second issue raised, concerned my second action research project in which I wanted them to be participants.

Again they were quite enthusiastic about participating. I highlighted to them the fact that they were to be the main beneficiaries of the research. By being active in the activities, was going to be beneficial to all the participants. This was obviously the chief motivating factor. The pupils also had their own comments on the first project and some on the second project. The following are some of the comments:

- The day at Wiesenhof was great and we should do more of that.

- Next year I am going to challenge for a place in the WP cricket team.

- I have been participating in the cross-country races for the school since the athletics have been completed, in order to keep fit.

During these discussions I pointed out to them exactly what I had planned for the second action research project. I had planned three activities for this project. The first would be that the pupils had to play volleyball for the school team since I was the coach and this was my winter code. The second activity would involve the pupils in a work shadow programme (I will explain this in more detail later). Finally, they would be involved in the school's "Food Fair" which was being organised to raise funds for the school.

I informed them that they were not obliged to play volleyball and that they could participate in another code if they so wished. However, participation in the work shadow programme was non-negotiable.

They then wanted clarity on the work shadow programme. An explanation was given and they appeared to be very excited about it. There was unanimity in volunteering to be 'guinea pigs' in my project.

The third group of role-players were the parents. I met with them at our annual post mid-year examinations parents-teachers meeting at which the mid-year results are discussed. The fact that there had been a general improvement in the classes results meant that the parents were fairly happy and that their anxiety about the research was laid to rest. I then briefly highlighted some of the comments parents had made in the questionnaire I had given them during the first project. These were some of the main commentaries:

- There should be more extra-curricular activities offered at the school
- All teachers should participate in extra-curricular activities.
- Teachers should not run home when the siren goes for dismissal.
- These activities will keep the children off the street.
- We are prepared to assist where we can.
- All pupils must participate in extra-curricular activities.

Most parents supported the idea that there should be more extra-curricular activities offered at the school especially cultural activities.

There were however a few parents who had their concerns and these related to their children attending Madressa (Islamic schools) after the normal schools have been dismissed. They felt that their children would lose out. The other concern raised was the fact that in some households the mothers were working and therefore their children had to complete a number of household chores after school. I then explained to them what I had planned for the second project and they were as excited as their children, especially about the activity on the work shadow programme. They gave their full support to the project. This second round of negotiations seemed to have gone smoother than the first and also the support from all concerned appeared to be greater. I think the fact that there was action had a lot to do with the new level of enthusiasm.

To assist me in the observation of this project I invited two people to act as triangulators in my activities. One was a teacher at the school, who also taught both standard eight classes. The other person was the principal. McNiff (1988: 15) says the following about triangulation:

> Triangulation is commonly used to refer to the
> process of obtaining information on a subject from
> three different points of view, viz. the teacher, pupils
> and a participant observer or other third party.

They both agreed to act as observers in my classroom and also when I was out of the classroom, busy with my pupils' extra-curricular activities. I wanted them to focus on the atmosphere in the classroom and also the teacher-pupil relationship.

## 5.4 Collecting of data

As I pointed out in my first action research project that data gathering plays a significant role in an action research project. I decided to employ the following research techniques in this project:

### a) Field notes

Field notes definitely assisted me in gaining an impression of what was happening in my classroom during my first action research project. This seemed the easiest means of capturing the ongoing activities in my classroom and outside of it.

### b) Interviews

Interviews would be conducted with pupils, parents and teachers in order to get a more personal perspective of the project from these individuals. The questionnaires succeeded in giving me an overall picture of how each role-player viewed the concerns that I had.

Unfortunately the questionnaires do not afford the individual the opportunity of giving their complete opinion about a specific issue and therefore I planned to use the interview to fill that void.

### c)     Pupils' diaries

Again, I was going to use the pupil diaries as they provided me with very interesting reading. It provided me with invaluable resource material because of the diversity in their perceptions of particular events and in other instances almost complete commonality. Some diaries were well kept while others were less encouraging.

### d)     Triangulation

As I mentioned earlier, I invited two persons to act as triangulators in my second project. I felt that at this stage in my research that it was going to be important for me to get the opinions of outside observers. Matheson (1988: 13) postulates that:

> Good research practice obligates the researcher
> to triangulate, that is, to use multiple methods,
> data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity
> of research findings.

## 5.5    Putting my plan into action

What follows is an account of the activities that I had planned for this project.

**Activity One**

The first activity that I had planned was for my pupils to get involved in playing volleyball. The reason for this was quite simple, I was in charge of all volleyball activities at the school. In this particular code of sport, we cater for both boys and girls teams. Since my experience in the first project I made sure that I was treating both sexes equally. I learnt from this experience and so did the pupils. This was a clear indication to me that I was in this process of emancipatory action.

All the pupils in these classes were not interested in playing volleyball. Some participated in basketball; others in cross-country; chess; netball; soccer and rugby. To me the most important issue was that they were participating. There were however, a few pupils who did not participate at all. These were less than ten. I spoke to them about getting involved but to no avail.

They would participate when they felt they were ready and in an activity that they felt confident with. I organised training sessions on Monday and Tuesday afternoons for the volleyball players. Inter-school matches were played on a Wednesday afternoon.

Practice sessions comprised of three segments, namely, physical fitness training, ball drills (using the volleyball as part of a drill) and match play. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed these sessions as I alternated the leaders as I changed the exercises, with every pupil given the opportunity to lead an exercise. It was during these sessions that I observed who had leadership qualities and which pupils lacked these qualities.

After the training sessions we would sit around and chat for a few minutes. Those few minutes after training proved to be most exciting for me since the pupils would tell me about things that transpired in their other subject classes during the course of that particular day.

Remarks would be passed about certain staff members (which I obviously did not entertain although sometimes with great difficulty). I would be informed of the social activities of certain pupils in my class. Pupils would inform me of their likes and dislikes. This action confirmed my first finding in the first action research project. Learners had the desire to express their own opinions and they had to be provided with that opportunity. They would also tell me about what they liked about my teaching and what they disliked. I tried to adjust accordingly, depending on the number of pupils who called for this adjustment or whether I felt that they were justified in their statements.

This latter discussion was very informative to me in that I was able to make adjustments to my teaching practice in order to improve my pupils' perceptions of my teaching. Here the pupils had an input into changes that were to be made in my classroom and this interaction can best be described as "democratic" pedagogy in action. I was also now very aware and conscious of my teaching practice and always evaluating what I was doing in my classroom.

**Activity Two**

This activity was initiated by my triangulator, Ms A.Saban, who teaches English. It focuses on the work shadow programme, which formed part of the Careers Research and Information Centre (CRIC) pilot project for high schools. This programme involves the pupils spending a few days at a place of work (employment), for example, at a doctor's surgery, an engineering firm, a computer company or at a police station. According to the co-ordinator of the programme at CRIC, S.Bock (1996: 1):

> Young people are exposed to the world of work,
>
> gain first-hand understanding of the working
>
> environment and work ethic and are exposed to the
>
> values and skills needed to function in the workplace.

This particular activity spells out to the pupils the importance of academic schooling with direct reference to the link between academic schooling and the world of work. The subject choices that they had made would impact the type of job that they were going to get themselves into. The pupils were asked to indicate what they wanted to do when they leave school.

Using this information, Ms Saban and I contacted a number of business houses to ascertain whether they would be willing to accommodate a pupil or pupils to do observation on their premises for about a week. The idea was that the pupils were to get first hand exposure to a possible career of their choice. The response from companies were mixed. Some were very positive about the idea while others were not interested at all.

Those that were positive would allow the pupils or a pupil to spend only two days on their premises while others would take the pupil/s for the full week. In some instances individual pupils made their own contacts, which took away some of the pressure from my colleague and I.

The principal was then informed about this proposed action and he willingly sanctioned it. This was necessary since the pupils would be spending from two to five days away from school. The parents were also informed and they were very excited about this project.

Some parents also gave us contact numbers of companies that would be willing to accommodate our pupils. Eventually all the pupils were scheduled to spend time at one or other company. In some cases four or five pupils were accepted at one company while in other cases only individual pupils were accommodated.

The days leading up to the week of the work shadow programme were filled with excitement but also anxiety because it was the first time that most pupils were going to spend time in a workplace. They had no idea of what to expect and with my limited knowledge of these companies I tried to give as much motivational talks as I could. It was the first time that this type of project was ever done at the school. The week itself proved to be very exciting for the pupils based on their responses when they returned. Each pupil was required to write a short report on their experience.

Some of the companies also gave reports of the progress made by the pupils. In some instances the pupils were issued with certificates by the companies while other companies paid the pupils for the days that they spent at these companies. This was an added bonus since we were unaware that this was going to happen. The following were some of the pupils' remarks about the programme and their experiences:

- This was a great experience and I got paid as well

- I had to get up at 05h30 every morning so that I could be at work on time.

- That companies offices were posh and I would like to get a job there when I leave school.

- They treated us as if we were part of the management of the company.

- They told me to come back during the school vacation.

There was one incident in which two boys were told by an engineering company not to return after they pitched up late on the first two days of their supposed five-day week. This was the only blemish on an otherwise successful programme. This programme has now been established as an annual event for either the grade ten or grade elevens groups.

We could see from activity one that there were definite connections to the findings of the first action research project. For example, the pupils realised that there was a link between the academic work and the world of work. They also realised that in order for them to be able to follow up on the job opportunities they would have to perform academically.

The other finding from the first action research project was the development of the learners' organisational skills. They had to plan their transport arrangements to the places of work, punctuality became important in their lives, personal presentation also became important as well as adapting to a new environment and situation.

**Activity Three**

This activity involved the pupils in these classes organising and running a stall at the school's Food Fair. This was a fund-raiser for the school and each grade group was responsible for a stall.

I decided that my grade ten classes would go it alone in organising a stall separate from the other grade ten classes. This resulted in the grade ten group having two stalls. Nobody seemed to mind that there was going to be an extra stall. Here again I wanted to give impetus to my findings in my first action research project, which focussed on leadership and organisational skills development.

The reason for operating separately was because I wanted to use this event as part of my project but also the fact that the pupils in these classes had built up a good relationship during the course of the year.

This event created the opportunity for them to combine their talents in order to reach a specific goal. The goal in this instance was to make as much profit from the stall as possible. The other reason was that both classes were doing Business Economics as an examination subject and this event was going to give them practical experience in running a business.

The first thing that had to be decided was what type of food was going to be sold in this stall. Through a democratic process it was decided that this would be a "hot-dog and French fries" stall. In this process pupils had to put forward suggestions as well as motivate why their suggestion was good. The class had to decide, based on the information that they had gained from their fellow pupils, what would be the best options. This information had to be communicated to the general organising committee so that no other group would sell the same products. The pupils then elected their own committee, comprising of three pupils from each class. I would act as ex-officio member when this committee met. The other important feature of this committee was that there were four girls and two boys serving on it.

A frame of reference was worked out for this group with their main task being that of co-ordination. This committee then split the classes into specific work groups.

For example, one group was responsible for the decoration of the stall, a second group had to organise the foodstuffs, a third group had to collect fish-oils, spices and sauces. One group was responsible for all the packaging requirements while the last group had to draw up a work roster for the stall as well as a budget. Each group outlined to all the pupils in these classes what their specific task was and requested information on contacts for items that was needed from the pupils.

At the food fair our stall was one of the more attractive stalls. The day proved to be very successful for my classes and also for the school as a whole. The parental support was good and many were curious to see what their children had been up to, in the build up to the fair. They were satisfied with what they had seen. The pupils themselves were also very happy with the outcome of the event and the fact that they had nearly reached their projected profit.

There were, however, some complaints by the girls that they had worked longer hours than the boys in the stall. They were also physically tired from the event. This action by the girls was a demonstration of the confidence they had to complain and challenge the input of the boys in this event. They were given the opportunity to express themselves and they took that opportunity.

## 5.6    Reflecting on project two

I could never assume that my project had been an emancipatory action research project if I was not prepared to be self-reflective of my action. I must once again emphasise that I was opportunistic in grabbing the two activities that presented itself during the third term. After project two I thought that I would have gone a long way towards achieving what I set out to achieve.

I felt that my planning for project two was better than that for project one. Again the experience of project one was responsible for this. The activities that were embarked on in my second action research project were more structured and therefore I contributed to the type of positive response I was getting from the pupils. Also the fact that we had spent more than half the year together was another contributory factor.

During activity one the pupils participated in inter-school volleyball matches. Matches were played on a home and away basis, which meant that we had to travel to other suburbs in the Peninsula to play our matches. Every away match was like an excursion for the pupils. This was an opportunity to get out of Mitchell's Plain, which was not happening to them often in their normal social lives.

One of my pupils was also selected to the provincial youth volleyball team and participated in the South African national youth championships, which was held in Pretoria. This was a major boost for the pupil, the school and myself. Her remarks after returning from the national event were:

- I'm a W.P. (meaning a provincial player).

- The trip was great and I met lots of new people.

- One of my opponents from Gauteng asked me

 to visit her during the school vacation.

- Thank you Sir for giving me the opportunity to

 play volleyball.

Not all the pupils participated in volleyball. I was amazed by the reaction of one of my academically weak pupils who decided to play basketball for the school, to the attitude of other pupils who were playing basketball. His feelings were:

The other boys are not dedicated. They attend

training whenever they feel like it and they are not

always punctual. They are not serious about basketball

because they fool around at training.

He was annoyed at this situation and wanted to do something about it. This to me was a revelation. Here was a pupil who was experiencing the difficulties that teachers face in their classrooms on a daily basis.

I put this scenario to the class and asked them to compare it with the situation of teachers and together they had to find a solution to this pupil's problem. They suggested that he should have a serious talk to the other participants about his grievances and the need for them to change their attitude.

The second activity, which focused on the work shadow programme proved to be very exciting for the pupils. This activity was different to all the other activities because the pupils were to a large extent on their own during the programme. They were being given personal responsibility, which was part of their own personal development. They were also responsible for making sure that the school name was being respected since they were representatives of the school while at these institutions.

It gave the pupils a critical understanding of the world of work. This was the comment from my triangulator a few weeks after the pupils returned from the programme:

Many pupils showed a new interest in their school work,

realising that their grades would determine to a large

extent whether they can follow the career of their choice or not.

Activity three was also exciting in that the pupils were again taking most of the responsibility during this activity. The qualities of teamwork and leadership came to the fore in this activity.

The pupils were fully aware that their work was being evaluated by teachers, other pupils and their parents therefore they tackled this activity with great gusto and were fairly successful in carrying it through. From an academic point of view this activity consolidated in a meaningful way the work that was being done in the Business Economics and Accounting classes. The pupils were implementing in a practical way the theory they had been taught in these subjects.

This project to some extent brought into question my earlier assertion that change and transformation was a long and tedious process. During the nine weeks of that school term, the positive attitude and enthusiasm of those pupils were nothing short of amazing.

My triangulator, Ms Saban, pointed out to me that she had also experienced positive changes in the attitudes of the pupils especially the class of whom I was the class teacher. One must take cognisance of the fact that she also taught both classes. The principal also remarked that he had seen some positive changes (meaning that they seemed more focussed on their academic work) in these two classes and he had had the same type of feedback from the parents.

## 5.7 Concluding remarks

In concluding this chapter, I want to emphasise that although I felt a sense of victory in terms changing the pupils disposition toward academic schooling, I still had to gauge whether this transformation was a short-term change or whether in fact the pupils were going to inculcate it as a long-term activity.

I also realised that change is a continuous process and that no emancipatory action researcher can ever afford to sit back and say " I have done it ." Education always presents new challenges to the teacher and he/she needs to equip himself/herself for those challenges. There is no smooth and easy road in education especially in South Africa.

In this chapter, I have given an account of my second action research project. I also reflected on how it linked with the findings of my first action research project.

These links were: giving pupils the opportunity to express themselves; demonstrating to pupils the links between extra-curricular activities and the academic work; developing the pupils organisational and leadership skills. My hunch that affording pupils opportunities where they can exercise these skills would strengthen their disposition towards academic schooling was further confirmed.

The next chapter is the final chapter and I give an overview, evaluate, reflect and attempt to explain in which ways my two action research projects had been emancipatory. I conclude by proposing emancipatory action research as a means of change in the education of the children in South African schools.

## CHAPTER SIX

## REFLECTION

### 6.1    Reflection on my actions

In this final chapter I feel that I need to answer the research question as to whether light was shed on my wonderment, on whether involvement in extra-curricular activities impacted positively on academic schooling. I also needed to see whether I could improve my teaching practice by becoming a teacher-researcher. The two research projects were the products of that process.

Let me point out that I was motivated into this process by Giroux (1988: 46) when he states that:

> ... schools need to be reconceived and
>
> reconstituted as democratic public spheres,
>
> where students learn the skills and knowledge
>
> needed to live in and fight for a viable democratic
>
> society. Within this perspective, schools will
>
> have to be characterised by a pedagogy that
>
> demonstrates its commitment to engaging the
>
> views and problems that deeply concern students
>
> in their everyday lives.  Equally important is the
>
> need for schools to cultivate a spirit of critique
>
> and a respect for human dignity.

It has always been my contention during the twelve years that I was teaching at this school that pupils' concerns were never really addressed, either at an academic level or on the pupils' social level. What I attempted to do in my action research projects was to give the pupils the opportunity to address some of their concerns and the concerns that I had as teacher-researcher. My projects clearly brought this to the fore in that what Giroux is referring to in the contents of his statement was linked to the pupils' activities.

He further makes reference to "... cultivating a spirit of critique..." which I managed to do in developing the pupils while doing the research projects. For example; the pupils did not hesitate to critique my teaching; the objections that the girls had about being excluded from the cricket set up at school; the pupil who became upset with his team mates for failing to pitch at training and also the girls complaining about the laziness of the boys during the food fair. Lets face it, education I believe has the greatest potential in our society to address the problems faced by our children in their everyday lives.

If in this process I claim that my projects were liberatory then it would be appropriate to measure my actions according to the definition of emancipatory action research given by Carr and Kemmis (1986: 205):

Emanipatory action research is an empowering

process for participants; it engages them in the

struggle for more rational, just, democratic and

fulfilling forms of education. It is 'activist' in that

it engages them in taking action on the basis of their

critical and self-critical reflection, but it is prudent in

that it creates change at the rate at which it is

justified by reflection and feasible for the participants

in the process.

In reflecting on this definition and in conjuction with my projects, I would answer the question that I posed earlier in the affirmative, that my action research projects have been both fulfilling and liberatory. I say this in respect of the manner in which the pupils developed that spirit of critique as well as their development in the aspects of organisational and leadership skills.

The fact that the pupils were active participants in the process is another indication that the process was a liberatory one. Parents also participated in the process. Here I would like to endorse what McTaggart (1989: 3) has to say about participation:

Authentic participation in research means sharing

in the way research is conceptualised, practised

and brought to bear on the life-world. It means

ownership - responsible agency in the production

of knowledge and the improvement of practice.

Mere involvement implies none of this; and creates

the risk of co-option and exploitation of people

in the realisation of the plans of others.

In this process of having the pupils and parents being active participants I was trying to 'empower' my pupils, their parents and myself. One of the end results of this was that there was a greater appreciation of each other's roles in the education process as well as a deeper sense of trust that was established.

This relationship becomes imperative in changing the pupil's disposition toward academic schooling. When the parents realised the impact that extra-curricular activities had on their children, they wanted to involve themselves in these activities. Parents became involved in the work-shadow programme by finding companies that were prepared to host our pupils, they involved themselves in the food fair by supporting and purchasing from their children's stalls.

Where the extra-curricular activities are directly linked to particular academic subject matter, both parents and pupils gain extra satisfaction from the experience. It is therefore abundantly clear that teacher, parent and extra-curricular activities can contribute, if they work together, to changing the pupil's disposition to academic schooling. The role of sport as an extra-curricular activity is quite significant in this process.

It has been my personal experience that involvement in sport and other extra-curricular activities can and does have a positive impact on one's outlook in life. Sport has broadened my horizons, has brought me into contact with individuals from all works of life and has given me the opportunity to travel. This is part of the message, which I thought was important for the pupils whom I taught and who participated in the research projects.

## 6.3   Is action research a viable option for teachers ?

In concluding this mini-thesis, I deem it necessary to pose this question so that prospective action researchers can take heed of my experience. Action research does provide an educator with a viable option that cannot be ignored. It is a process that can assist us to transform not only ourselves but also our own teaching practice. This would obviously be beneficial to the child because any transformation that the teacher undergoes would be reflected in that teacher's classroom practice.

Change, as we are reminded by Kincheloe (1991: 24), "is a fundamental goal of the teacher as critical researcher."

I would like to concur with Davidoff et al (1993: 75-78) on her views that action research is a viable option for the teachers in our schools. They highlight the fact that it would not be an easy task but one, which can instil the change that is so necessary in our schools. They point out that emancipatory action research is a collaborative process. A collaboration that needs to be instituted between all teachers in a school and if that is difficult, then I would suggest that teachers collaborate either in standard groups or in their subject departments.

Emancipatory action research also encourages teachers to be democratic. By democracy, I mean the active participation of the pupils in decision-making in matters concerning the classroom situation. This democracy can then be extended to decision-making in matters relating to the everyday functioning of the school.

As I mentioned in my earlier discussion, participation of all the role-players in the educational situation is vital if the vision that has been established for that class or school is to be realised.

Emancipatory action research also encourages teachers to be reflective practitioners, that is, reflecting on their classroom realities within a broader social context. This is one aspect of the educational situation which most teachers find a problem with. They cannot grasp the true value of being a reflective practitioner.

Emancipatory action research sets out that its guiding ethic extends beyond the individual to the social. Here I am saying that the classroom forms part of a school and the school forms part of a broader community. It is here where the teachers will be making their contribution towards the social concerns of justice, equality and freedom. I would like to conclude by saying that I need to continue engaging with the process of emancipatory action research in my endeavour to change the disposition of the pupils toward academic schooling, in my classroom and in the school where I teach. Davidoff, et al (1993: 82) says that:

> ...schools can begin to change through the endeavours of one particular teacher; similarly, school-wide change attempts can make a contribution to individual classroom change.

I hope that my contribution has been in the former category.

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# APPENDIX A



*Collaborative Action Research*

Figure 2 contains the following labels:

- What is happening now
- General idea
- Reconnaissance
- Field of Action
- Discussing / Negotiating / Exploring opportunities / Assessing possibilities / Examining constraints
- How can I monitor the effects of my action?
- General Plan
- First action step
- Evaluation
- Monitoring
- rethinking / discussing / reflecting
- replanning / learning
- understanding
- Revised General Plan
- Second action step
- The Action Research Spiral

*Figure 2:  Action Research Planner: Stephen Kemmis*

Source: Ebbutt. D (1985) 'Educational action research' Some general concerns and specific quibbles.' in Burgess. R. (Ed) *Issues in Educational Research. Qualitative Methods.* Lewes. Falmer Press. p 163. figure 1.

# APPENDIX B

*Action Research – Principles and Practice*

CYCLE 1                          CYCLE 2                          CYCLE 3
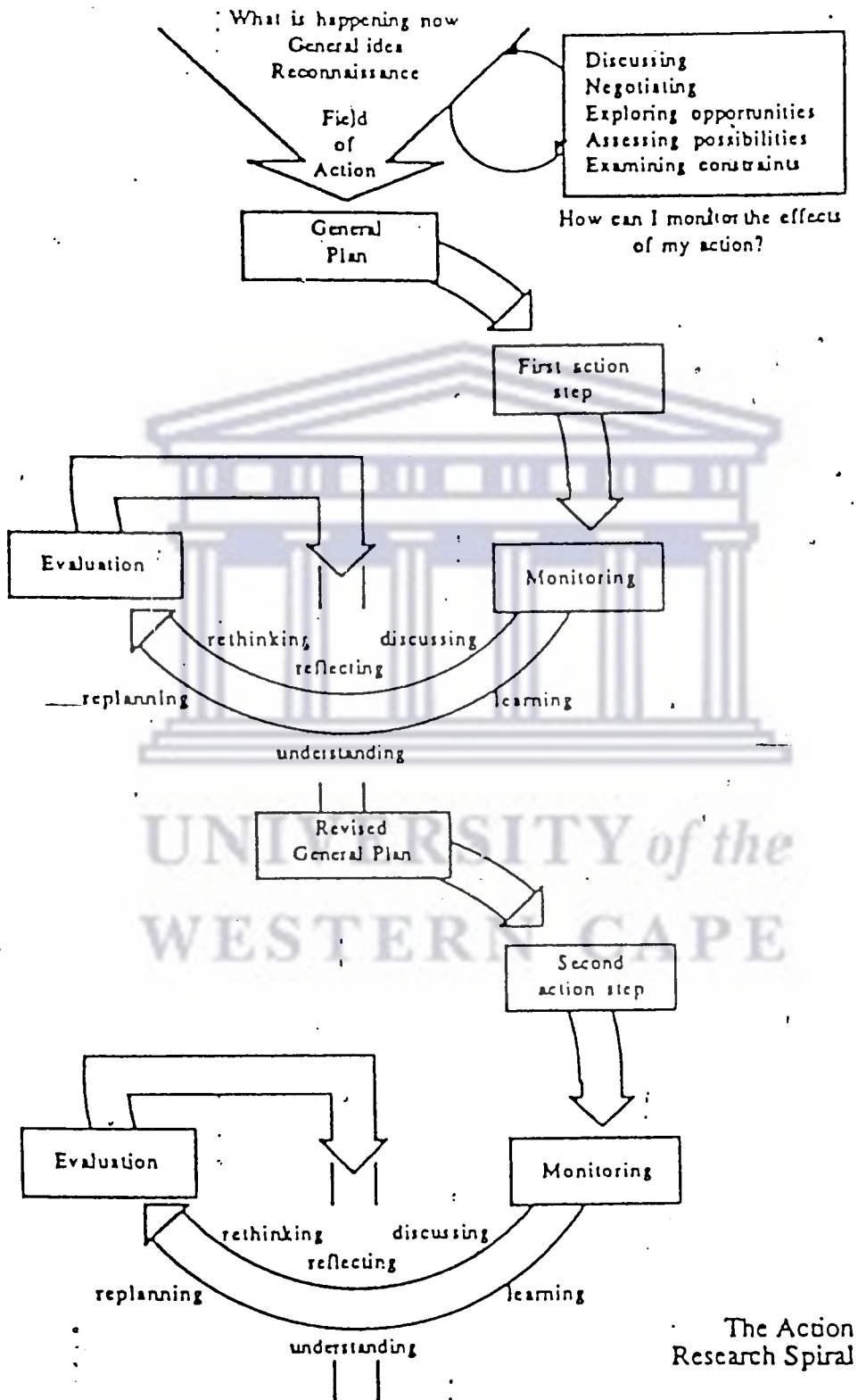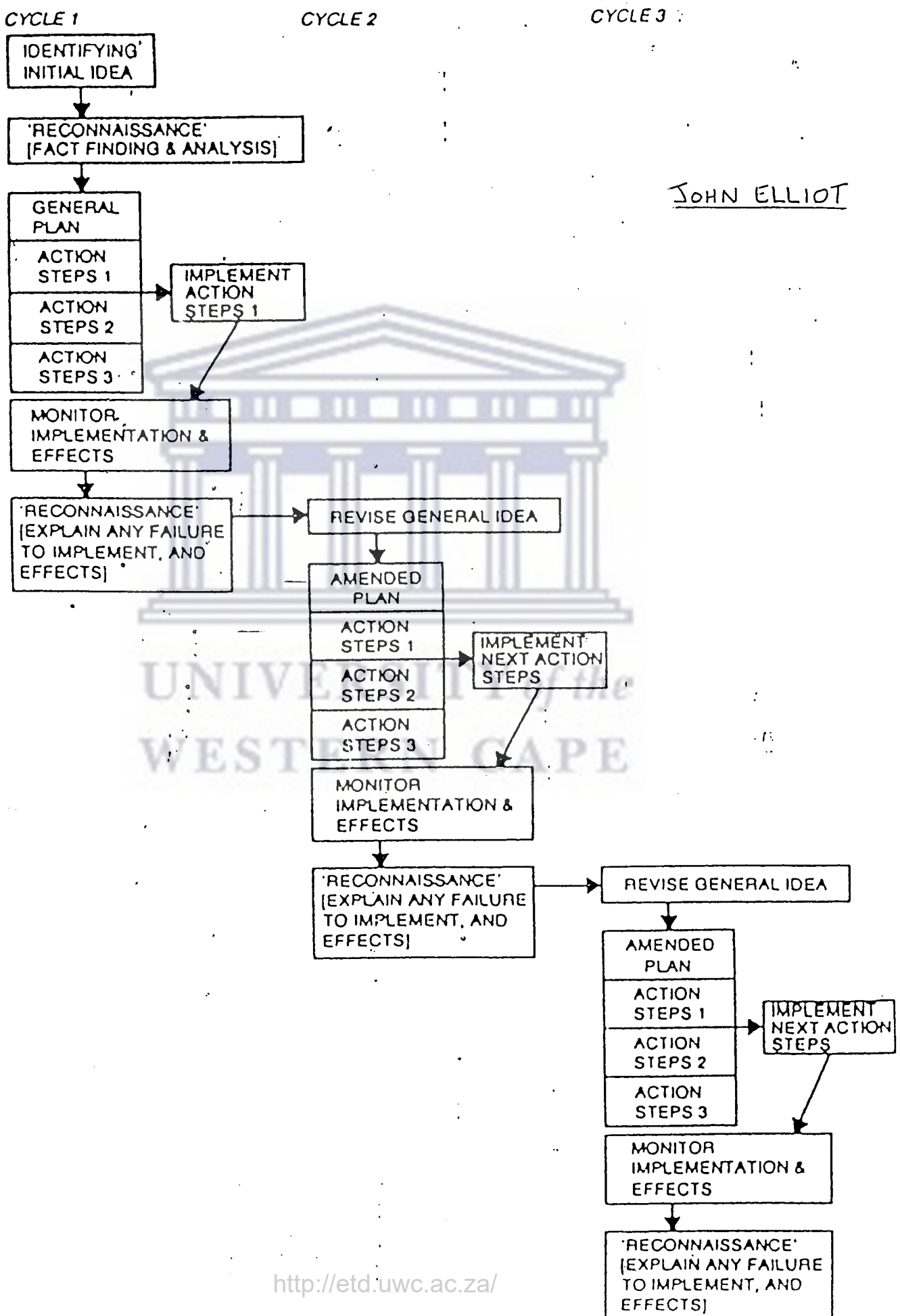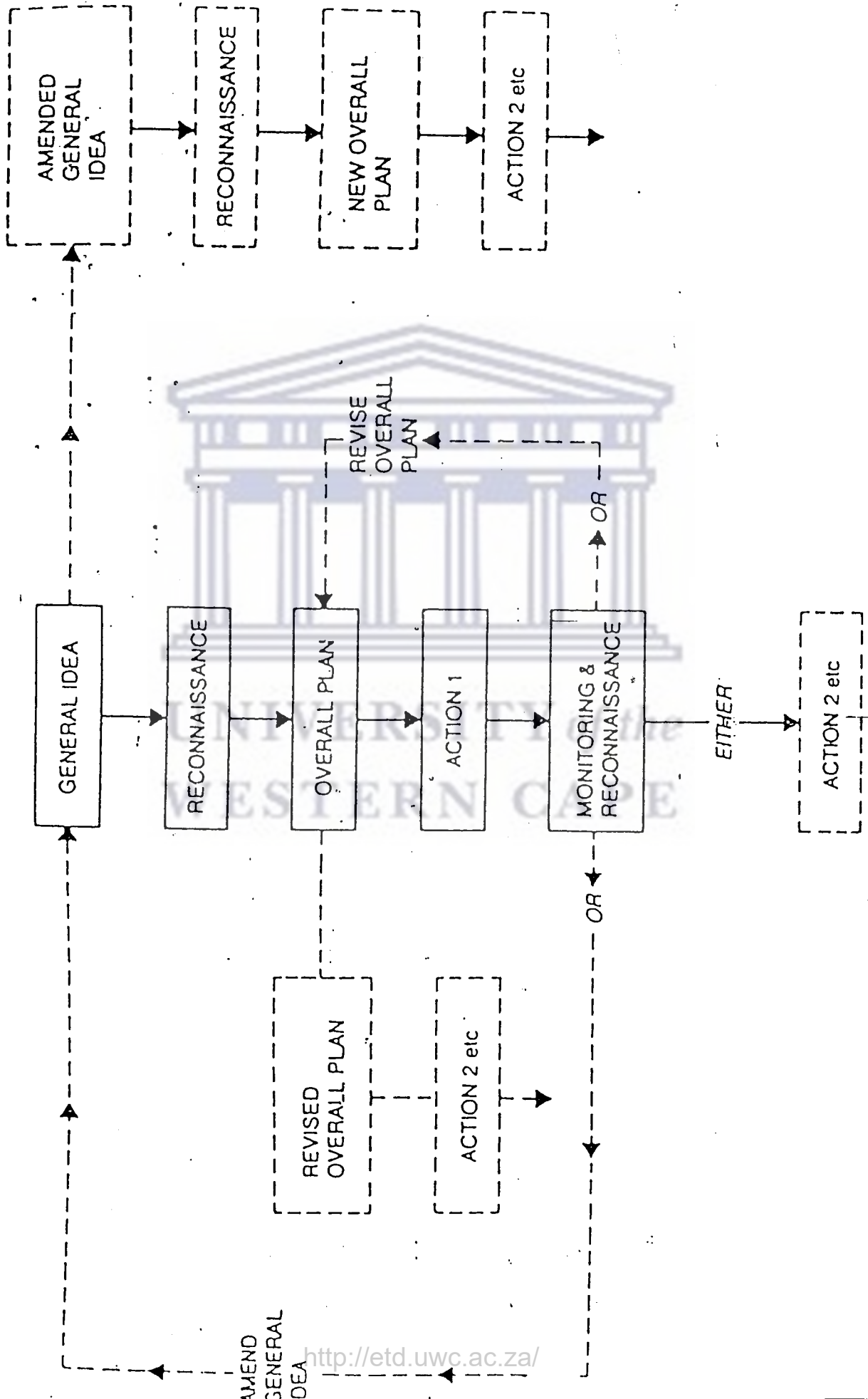
JOHN ELLIOT

```
┌─────────────────┐
│ IDENTIFYING      │
│ INITIAL IDEA     │
└─────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ 'RECONNAISSANCE'            │
│ [FACT FINDING & ANALYSIS]   │
└─────────────────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐
│ GENERAL         │
│ PLAN            │
├─────────────────┤      ┌─────────────┐
│ ACTION          │─────▶│ IMPLEMENT   │
│ STEPS 1         │      │ ACTION      │
├─────────────────┤      │ STEPS 1     │
│ ACTION          │      └─────────────┘
│ STEPS 2         │
├─────────────────┤
│ ACTION          │
│ STEPS 3         │
└─────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│ MONITOR             │
│ IMPLEMENTATION &    │
│ EFFECTS             │
└─────────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
│ 'RECONNAISSANCE'    │───────▶│ REVISE GENERAL IDEA  │
│ [EXPLAIN ANY FAILURE│        └──────────────────────┘
│ TO IMPLEMENT, AND   │                  │
│ EFFECTS]            │                  ▼
└─────────────────────┘        ┌─────────────────┐
                               │ AMENDED         │
                               │ PLAN            │
                               ├─────────────────┤    ┌─────────────┐
                               │ ACTION          │───▶│ IMPLEMENT   │
                               │ STEPS 1         │    │ NEXT ACTION │
                               ├─────────────────┤    │ STEPS       │
                               │ ACTION          │    └─────────────┘
                               │ STEPS 2         │
                               ├─────────────────┤
                               │ ACTION          │
                               │ STEPS 3         │
                               └─────────────────┘
                                       │
                                       ▼
                               ┌─────────────────────┐
                               │ MONITOR             │
                               │ IMPLEMENTATION &    │
                               │ EFFECTS             │
                               └─────────────────────┘
                                       │
                                       ▼
                               ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
                               │ 'RECONNAISSANCE'    │─────▶│ REVISE GENERAL IDEA  │
                               │ [EXPLAIN ANY FAILURE│      └──────────────────────┘
                               │ TO IMPLEMENT, AND   │                │
                               │ EFFECTS]            │                ▼
                               └─────────────────────┘      ┌─────────────────┐
                                                            │ AMENDED         │
                                                            │ PLAN            │
                                                            ├─────────────────┤    ┌─────────────┐
                                                            │ ACTION          │───▶│ IMPLEMENT   │
                                                            │ STEPS 1         │    │ NEXT ACTION │
                                                            ├─────────────────┤    │ STEPS       │
                                                            │ ACTION          │    └─────────────┘
                                                            │ STEPS 2         │
                                                            ├─────────────────┤
                                                            │ ACTION          │
                                                            │ STEPS 3         │
                                                            └─────────────────┘
                                                                    │
                                                                    ▼
                                                            ┌─────────────────────┐
                                                            │ MONITOR             │
                                                            │ IMPLEMENTATION &    │
                                                            │ EFFECTS             │
                                                            └─────────────────────┘
                                                                    │
                                                                    ▼
                                                            ┌─────────────────────┐
                                                            │ 'RECONNAISSANCE'    │
                                                            │ [EXPLAIN ANY FAILURE│
                                                            │ TO IMPLEMENT, AND   │
                                                            │ EFFECTS]            │
                                                            └─────────────────────┘
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# APPENDIX C

*Action Research – Principles and Practice*

DAVID EBBUTT

*Idealized Representation of the Process of Action Research*

## APPENDIX D

### EXTRA-CURRICULA ACTIVITIES REPORT

Education is a process which encompasses the holistic development of the individual ie. both academically and otherwise. I am sure that every teacher here has at some point or other during their studies come across this or similar statement. We as educators, have therefore been entrusted with that responsibility and it goes without saying that that process cannot only take place in the classroom but rather the bulk of it outside the classroom.

In 1994 we embarked on a programme where each teacher was asked to enlist at an activity in which they could assist. Teachers signed        next to one or other activity but in reality we only had partial success. Some of the successes you know of, eg. rugby, volleyball, netball, cross-country, to some extent cricket, hiking club and to some extent the newsletter and the Argus Quiz. These successes can be attributed to about a 1/3 of our staff compliment and also the fact that a number of these teachers activities overlapped.

What happened to the rest of our staff ?

* no drama society

* teachers enlisted for cricket withdrew leaving only 2 teachers to look after 2 teams

* soccer never really got off the ground yet Rocklands is a soccer area

* SRC-only for educational crisis?

* MSA/CIA not really visible in terms of organising programmes

* no arts and crafts .......etc

There are teachers on this staff who may have talents in a field which is not currently being catered for. Why  \become involved in an activity that you are not really happy with? Why not initiate an activity in which you have the expertise and that will not only benefit you but also the pupils and the school. The school presently offers the following extra-mural activities ;

| SPORT | CULTURE & OTHERS |
|---|---|
| Athletics | MSA |
| Cricket | Geogs Society |
| Rugby | CIA |
| Volleyball | Argus Quiz |
| Soccer | SRC |
| Netball | Newsletter Group |
| Basketball | ........... |
| Cross-country | ........... |
| Gymnastics | ........... |
| Table-tennis | ........... |
| Hiking | ........... |
| Chess | ........... |
| | ........... |

In 1994 only about 450 pupils were actively involved in extra-curricula activities. This year Spine Road Secondary will have an enrollment of 1200+ pupils. We, as a staff need to provide these pupils with as many opportunities to express their talents and give them the necessary exposure they deserve.

The school is therefore calling upon you, the educationist, to commit youself to being proactive in at least one extra-curricula activity during 1995.Your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

I.TELADIA

## APPENDIX E

## <u>QUESTIONNAIRE - STUDENTS</u>

1   State your age / **Hoe oud is jy ?** ....*15*....................

2   Do you participate in any extra-curricula activity at school / **Neem jy aan enige buite-muurse aktiewiteite by die skool deel ?**
(Y/N) ....*Y*..........

3   If yes, name the activity or activities / **Indien ja, noem die aktiewiteit of aktiewiteite.**
....*Volleyball and cricket*.............................................
....................................................................................

4   If no, why not / **Indien nee, hoekom nie ?**
....................................................................................
....................................................................................
....................................................................................

5   Are you satisfied with the number of sport codes which are being offered at school / **Is jy gelukkig met die aantal sport-kodes wat by die skool aangebied word ?** (Y/N) ....*N*..................

6   Name any code of sport that you would like to see being offered at this school / **Noem enige ander sport-kodes wat jy graag aangebied wil sien by die skool.**
....*Tennis*...........................................................................
....................................................................................

7   Are you satisfied with the cultural activities which are being offered by the school / **Is jy tevrede met die kulturele aktiewiteite wat by die skool aangebied word ?** (Y/N) ....*Y*....................

8   Name any other cultural activity that you feel should be offered at this school / **Noem enige ander kulturele aktiewiteite wat jy graag by die skool wil sien.**
....................................................................................
....................................................................................
....................................................................................

# APPENDIX F

## QUESTIONNAIRE - PARENTS

1    Do you feel that the school'is offering enough extra-curricula activities for the chldren ?

   Y / N ........*NO*......

2    Do you think that more activities should be added ?

   Y / N ........*YES*......

3    If yes, name the activities.

   *THERE SHOULD BE DRAMA, ART, MODERN OR BALLROOM DANCING AND SELF-DEFENCE*

4    Do you encourage your child/ren to participate in these acttivities ?
     If yes, why ? If no, why not ?

   *YES. I THINK THAT IT IS HEALTHY FOR A CHILD TO BE INVOLVED IN SPORT AND IF THEY EXCEL THEN THEY COULD GO PLACES.*

6    Do you think that all teachers should be involved inextra-curricula activities ?

   Y / N ........*YES*......

7    Would you be willing to assist in any extra-curricula activity being offered at the school ?

   Y / N ........*YES*......

8    Do you think that more time should be given to extra-curricula activity during the school day. ?

   Y / N ........*YES*......

9   Briefly explain what you have gained from your participation in these extra-curricula activities / **Bespreek kortliks watter baad jy met jou deelneme in die buite-muurse aktiewiteite gevind het ?**

......I.....have.....gained....'experience....in.....the.....school....sport.....
.....as.....well.....making.....new.....Friends.....and.....seeing.....
.....the.....different....types....of....schools.....
.....................................................................................

10   Are your subject teachers involved in any extra-curricula activity that you are involved in / **Is enige van jou vak onderwysers betrokke in enige van die aktiewiteite waarin jy deelneem ?**

Y/N    N

 st. STD 8 :: 1996)

| | Tel-NG Afr-NG Ger-NG | ...NG Afr-NG Afr-NG ENG-NG Eng-NG Sci-NG Geo-NG His-NG Soc-NG Sus-NG Typ-NG Nee-NG Tel-NG Art-NG Mus-NG Geo-NG His-N |
|---|---|---|
| JUNE TOTAAL/TOTAL | 1543 7382 4626 | 42172 10272 23182 20471 17315 4124 8152 25865 9037 12741 19753 0 17165 1494 169 |
| KANDIDATE/CANDIDATES | 15 57 20 | 200 63 67 200 148 0 25 35 226 101 95 155 0 140 13 2 |
| GEMID. PUNT / AVG. MARK | 103 153 261 | 212 167 207 152 113 0 165 233 114 92 127 127 0 122 115 7 |
| GEMID. PERS / AVG. PERC | 102.9 153.1 261.2 | 211.7 167.0 209.2 152.4 115.0 0 155.0 232.9 114.4 92.4 127.0 127.4 0 121.6 114.9 75. |
| SEPTEMBER TOTAAL/TOTAL | 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 |
| KANDIDATE/CANDIDATES | 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 |
| GEMID. PUNT / AVG. MARK | 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 |
| GEMID. PERS / AVG. PERC | 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 |
| NOVEMBER TOTAAL/TOTAL 1756 7577 5315 | 44163 7613 32314 22678 17351 6931 0 7719 29710 14272 10821 19651 8278 11024 1367 211 |
| KANDIDATE/CANDIDATES 15 60 29 | 206 64 65 204 153 25 0 25 241 113 65 161 76 140 14 2 |
| GEMID. PUNT / AVG. MARK 131 132 188 | 214 150 184 160 113 159 0 266 127 126 140 122 237 102 112 5 |
| GEMID. PERS / AVG. PERC 150.5 132.0 155.8 | 214.5 150.2 169.4 160.2 113.5 159.2 0 263.2 123.7 153.7 139.7 122.1 272.7 102.1 112.1 61. |

| | Tel-NG Afr-NG Ger-NG | A-NG Afr-NG Afr-NG ENG-NG Eng-NG Sci-NG Geo-NG His-NG Soc-NG Sus-NG Typ-NG Nee-NG Tec-NG Art-NG Mus-NG Geo-NG His-N |
|---|---|---|

| KLASSIFIK./CLASSIFIC. | JUN. | SEP | NOV |
|---|---|---|---|
| GESLAAG/PASSED | | 0 | |
| GEDRUIP/FAILED | | 0 | |
| ONITREX/WITHDRAWALS | | | |
| | | | |
| TOTAAL/TOTAL | | | |

# APPENDIX  H

# APPENDIX I

| | GES-NG | Tel-NG | Afr-NG | Dui-NG | Xho-NG | Afr-NG | Eng-NG | Eng-NG | Wet-NG | Aar-NG | Ges-NG | Bos-NG | Bed-NG | Til-NG | Naa-NG | Ele-NG | Teg-NG | Kun-NG | Mus-NG | Aar-N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TOTAAL/TOTAL | 3119 | 1197 | 3272 | 1940 | 5160 | 3755 | 36142 | 13732 | 0 | 4030 | 7720 | 21962 | 11205 | 14475 | 5740 | 14291 | 0 | 5413 | 232 |
| KANDIDATE/CANDIDATES | 35 | 11 | 35 | | 47 | 37 | 131 | 115 | 0 | | 35 | 197 | 125 | 65 | 35 | 115 | 35504 | 57 | 2 |
| GEMID. PUNT / AVG. MARK | 94 | 109 | 65 | | 174 | 191 | 144 | 171 | 0 | 177 | 255 | 111 | 105 | 163 | 95 | 122 | | 95 | 10 |
| GEMID. PERS. / AVG. PERC. | 94.2 | 108.6 | 99.2 | | 172.6 | 170.6 | 144.5 | 171.0 | 0 | 176.9 | 255.2 | 111.5 | 105.3 | 163.3 | 95.4 | 122.1 | 0.0 | 95.1 | 101. |