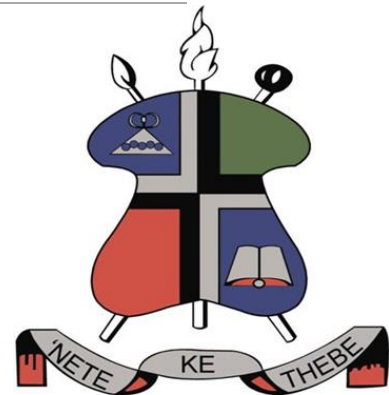


Webinar 1: The use of participatory approaches towards SDG implementation in SADC HEIs

The role of participatory approaches in the growing contributions of HEIs to sustainable development

Southern African Regional Universities Association

Thabiso Nyabanyaba



What are Participatory Approaches?

Any type of approach that can be used to contribute to inclusive research and development

- with the aim to make the research process more democratic and collaborative
- as a powerful engine for **real transformation** of HEIs themselves (intrinsic value) (Taylor, 2007)
- In a context where universities are no longer the sole producers of knowledge

Both an approach and an orientation (epistemological and ontological)

- Paradigm shift from initiatives *for* (on behalf of) to engaging people *in* R & D
- Orientation to
 - research as creating knowledge rather than discovery of truth
 - People in the environment know more than visitors
- Has a range of tools for appraisal of community, social and ecological context (go back to publication)



PAs contributions to SDGs

- **Inclusivity** of diverse stakeholders (*no one left behind – especially poor and marginalized*)
- **Contextual relevance** of good practice can lead to sustainable development
- **Ownership and commitment** towards shared responsibility based on own(ed) priorities
- **Local knowledge and expertise** for contextually appropriate solutions to local problems
- **Collaborative problem-solving** including government, CSOs, communities and HEIs
- **Monitoring and evaluation** with data collection and analysis that empowers and values local stakeholders

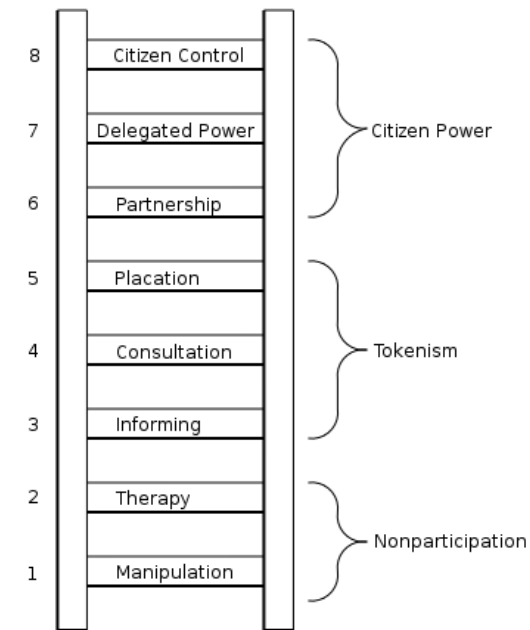


Participatory Approaches (PAs)

CHARACTERISTICS OF PAS

1. Passive participation
2. Participation in information giving
3. Participation by consultation
4. Functional participation
5. Interactive participation
6. Self-mobilization

LADDER OF PARTICIPATION (S ARNSTEIN)



Formal vs Participatory Approaches

FORMAL APPROACHES

External experts

Formal and closed

Top down

One way

Structured

Predetermined

Precise (trends) data

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

Empowering multiple perspective (Co-creation) stakeholders to contribute to solving problems

Informal, open and free

Bottom up

Iterative

Visual, interactive, flexible and responsive

Evolving

Appropriate if imprecise root causes and changes



The evolution of PAs

PA RESEARCH ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN LESOTHO FOR SADC ODL PROJECT

The third mission of universities is old but subservient (Antigonish & BOLESWA in 1960)

Family of 3 approaches to the exploration of indigenous knowledge

- Evolving through interaction between researchers, development partners and government agents and local populations
 - RRA; Rapid Rural Appraisal – 1970s
 - For rapid, extractive, field assessment of indigenous knowledge in short 3 day workshops by experts
 - PRA; Participatory Rural Appraisal – 1980s
 - Involving rural people in the analysis of their situation (sharing results)
 - PLA; Participatory Learning and Action – 1990s
 - Facilitating and stimulating self-learning and action
- The increasing role of regulatory bodies calling for
 - Accountability
 - Relevance
- Increase collaborations between
 - HEIs and development agencies
 - Among HEIs



PA Methods: Stakeholder research

Child-friendly approaches

An evolving range of PAs used in HE for inclusion of stakeholder

- Systematic process of gathering information on individuals, groups or organisations that have a vested interest.
- With a view to gaining deep understanding of stakeholders' needs, expectations, concerns and perspectives that form priorities

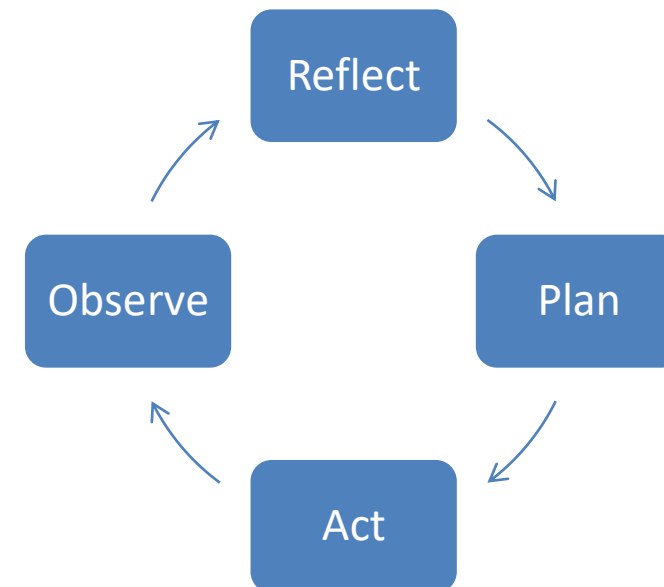


Participatory Action Research

PAR

- Research for active participation of affected people
 - to address social inequalities, empower marginalised communities and create social change through collaborative research processes

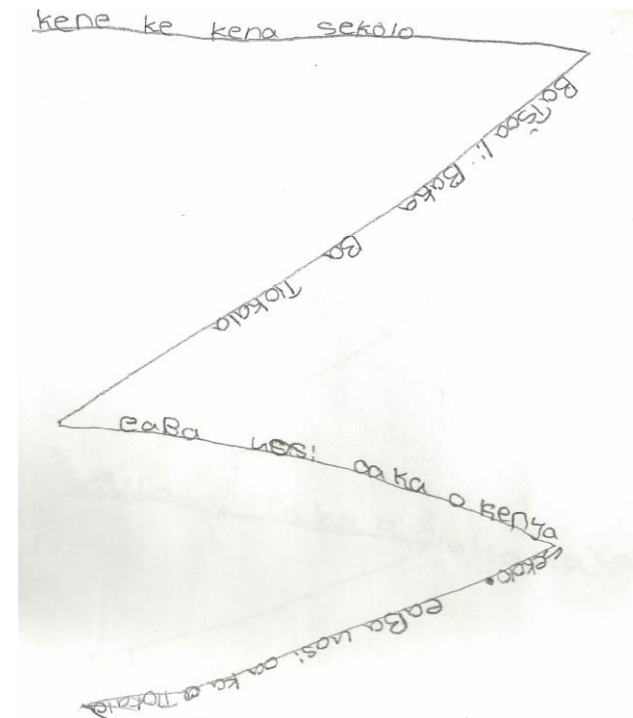
PAR CYCLE



Community-based participatory approaches

- Used as a powerful way of negotiating the agenda even where the researcher and community have not converged, using community/child-friendly methods such as FGDs and consultations

CHILD FRIENDLY RIVER OF LIFE METHOD FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL REPORT: MOET 2012



PA Methods used in HEIs

LESS COMMON METHODS

- Living Labs
 - Innovation hubs
- Citizens science
 - There is a slowly growing trend to have rigorous projects across faculties
- Science shops
 - Collaborations between researchers and the society (Citizens/Budget M & E)

STUDENT INNOVATION FOR THRESHING MACHINE: NUL INNOVATION HUB –
[HTTPS://WWW.NUL.LS/](https://www.nul.ls/)



Challenges of PAs in HEIs

Most mentioned disadvantages/challenges

- Take too long and require patience and commitment
- Members of target group may not agree
- It may be too difficult to get everyone to the table
- Takes a lot of planning and controlling
- One determined/dominant member can wreck the whole process

Subtle challenges

- The lack of institutional commitment from executive management
- Aggravated by the lack of analytics illuminating the trends
- Mindset challenges because of the dominance of conventional approaches more valued for individual promotions

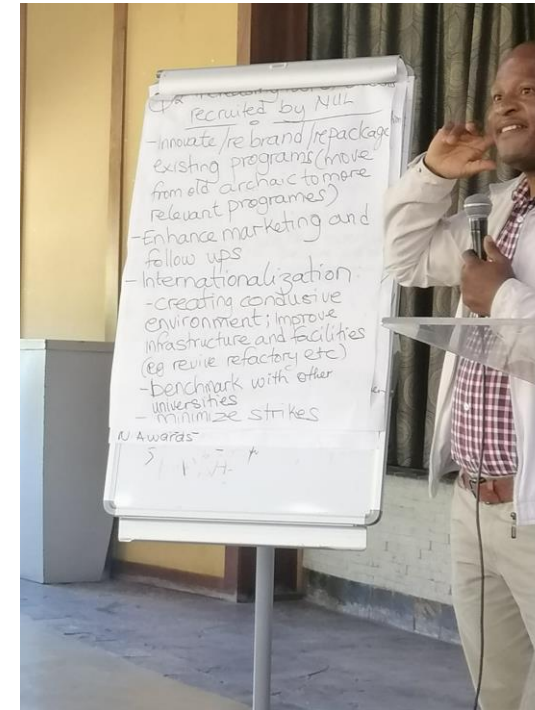


Whole institution engagement

AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

- Some form engagement vs substance level
 - Strategic engagement adding value and providing further opportunities
 - Increased stakeholder engagement across faculties but still compartmentalised
 - Industry funded chairs
 - Review of Development
 - VNR 2019 and 2022
 - Transformation still at form rather than substance
 - Need for horizontal alignment with competencies
 - SDGs still based in programmes and departments
 - Limited PA course vs conventional research

NUL STRATEGIC PLAN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



Recommendations

Need for M & E

- Increased collaborations and learning for impact assessment, reflections and improvement
- Accountability to increase transparency in PAs
- Quality Assurance to assure the rigour and dependability of processes and results

Way forward

- Institutional support (Still largely isolated in departments and individuals)
- Capacity building towards PAs
- Integrating PAs in curriculum (not yet common)

