

Women in Sports Development : A Study on the Ministry of Youth and Sports



Eric Mensah-Bonsu

PhD. Business Administration (Management), Valley View University

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This research proposal is as a result of long period of gender disparity which has received much attention in recent years as a roadblock to the country's growth. As women development advocate, "How do I create a conducive environment for all stakeholders especially women to effortlessly partake and benefit equally from youth and sports empowerment in the ministry for the betterment of Ghana?" The enhanced focus on the problem stems from the awareness that the country's holistic development necessitates all genders' human resources. After several years of experience in the civil service I have been frustrated on how women have traditionally been marginalised in their attempts to build and exploit their intellectual resources due to gender discrimination at the strategic planning and implementation level. I wish to use my PHD to examine this issue and go deeper into how I can improve greater understanding of women development in my organization. In my preferred opinion women development is promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. Women development is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential. contributing their skills to the workforce and can raise happier and healthier children.

Following the above explanation, my work will seek to promote and give more space to expressing women voices through positive dialogues.

While there are various explanations for gender disparity in the region, the most cited cause is society, primarily the patriarchal structure in place (Jayachandran, 2015). In different aspects of life, patriarchy has put men in a position of authority and respect over their female counterparts (Fallon et al., 2012). Men hold a respected status in traditional Ghanaian culture, which means they have the final say on what happens in the home, office, and other settings (Akita, 2010; Adeabah et al., 2019).

According to IFAD, Ghana is ranked 70th out of 135 countries in the Global Gender Index, with a score of 0.6811, an organisation dedicated to encouraging development in rural communities in countries like Ghana. The nation was ranked 17th in economic activity, 91st in political participation and empowerment, 104th in health and longevity, and 111th in educational achievement when core individual aspects of life were, professional growth strategies and relevance have evolved (Wirth, 2001). Organisations must pay attention to what makes women excel in adapting to their professional growth needs and staying successful (Nelson et al., 2002). This study concentrates on women's advancement in Ghanaian civil service, especially in the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS).

1.1 The Ministry of Youth and Sports

One of the public and civil institution in Ghana charged with the responsibility towards the development of youth and sports is the ministry of youth and sports. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has since the first Republic undergone several changes in its structure and functions to reflect the policy directions of the incumbent Government. In 1978 the Ministry was re-designed for only sports headed by a Commissioner for Sports, who was directly responsible to the then Head of State of the Republic.

In the year 2005, the Ministry was merged with the Ministry of Education to form the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. A year later the Youth and Sports segment of this Ministry were separated. The Sports segment was combined with Education and Science to form the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports whilst the Youth segment was merged with Employment and Manpower Planning to form the Ministry of Employment, Youth and Manpower Planning.

The Government in January 2009, decided to re-establish the Ministry to represent an emergent trend, among countries worldwide, particularly in the Commonwealth Nations, which acknowledges the inherent advantages in the natural affinity between Youth and Sports as an instrument for national development.

The Ministry as it stands now implements its goals and objectives through the following Agencies and Institutions:

- * The National Sports Authority (NSA)
- * The National Youth Authority (NYA)
- * The National Sports College (NSC, Winneba).

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The mandate of the ministry in line with Sections 11 and 13 of the Civil Service Law 1993 (PNDCL 327), the Ministry of Youth and Sports by Executive Instrument (EI) 28, 2017 is mandated to initiate and formulate Youth and Sports policies as well as coordinate, evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of the sector to achieve national integration and international recognition. The ministry vision is an harnessed potential of the Youth and the Values of Sports for National Development. The Ministry of Youth and Sports mission is to exist to provide effective leadership in the formulation, co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Youth and Sports development policies and foster greater public-private sector participation for national and international integration.

The policy framework of the ministry promote and encourage the organisation and development of mass participation in amateur and professional sports in Ghana, empower the youth through the delivery of education and skill training to develop their full potential that is responsive to the labour market, provide skill training and job opportunities for unemployed youth and encourage private sector participation in absorbing, placing and exiting the youth into mainstream employment, Train, retrain the technical human resource and research into topical sporting issues, unearth talents, and provide state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities, Initiate and formulate Youth and Sports policies, taking into account the needs and aspirations of the people, undertake development planning in consultation with the National Development Planning Commission, co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of the Sector and specifically the implementation of programmes.

1.2 Problem Statement

Women participation in decision making from planning to implementation has been limited as a result of gender disparities evidenced from my over 25 years practice in the civil service. Similarly, the MOYS has not always been transparent with women development policies.

One major challenge the MOYS is faced with is the lack of participation of women in policy planning and implementation at all levels within the various departments in the ministry because of lack of gender policy document. The ministry has now taken steps to develop gender policy documents that will pave way for gender inclusivity at all levels such as committees, teams and boards such that decision making at various levels will be all inclusive.

Although Ghana has made vast provisions and commitments at the global and national level to ensure the participation of women in the decision making processes at all levels. Also, the experience women in the organization mostly occupy sub-professional positions because of low educational background such as receptionist, typing and secretarial. The younger ones who have higher qualifications are now climbing the professional and managerial ladder so it will take them some time to actually occupy leadership positions. Lastly, by virtue of their positions and their grades they are not able to benefit from the refresher courses being organized for senior management staff both locally and internationally thus hindering the development of their managerial skills.

1.2.1 Research Question

This action research proposal aims to improve women development within organisations using the ministry of youth and sports as a case study. The proposed research will seek to answer the critical question: How can the ministry of youth and sports improve women development to achieve the aim of gender equity policies.

1.2.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of the proposed research is to find out how ministry of youth and sports can improve women development to enhance the role of women in the strategic management in organisations.

The specific objectives are to :

Investigate how the ministry of youth and sports can improve the participation of women in decision making processes.

Develop a strategy that promotes transparency in women development in organisations. • How is gender equality constructed, understood and enacted within practice between the various organisational members, and how is that relationship sustained over time?

What factors influence that relationship, and how can issues be dealt with by using effective dialogue?

How do gender inequality activities surface during dynamic interactions between organisational members?

To what extent does the changing public sector environment influence how gender balance is understood and enacted within the practice.

1.3 Scope and Limitation of Study

Due to time and resource constraints, the research will not cover all the civil service organisations sector. As action research requires much time for engagement and participation by stakeholders, the research will be carried out in the ministry of youth and sports of Ghana.

1.4 Significance of study

The ministry of youth and sports from 1978 has initiated and formulated youth and sports policies with collaboration from agencies such as National Youth Authority, National Sports Authority and stakeholders. Both external and internal, women within the ministry

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have been neglected to the background with minimal space for participation in youth and sports management planning. The proposed research will use action research to add to existing knowledge and improve women development within the ministry to enhance transparency, accountability, and equitable benefits. Despite the fact that several studies have tried to explore how women development can be used as a tool to achieve development objectives, there has not been any position on its relationship with strategic management and gender. Only a few studies have used action research that seeks to provide answers through the collaboration of stakeholders.

1.4 Action Research: Context and Relevancy

According to Coghlan (2001), action research has two specific tasks: to bring about organisational change and generate actionable knowledge. McNiff (2013) extends understanding by asserting that action research is about action and thinking about an action, which challenges more complex thought processes about the work practice. According to Coghlan (2001), action analysis is a participatory method of questioning the status quo and providing a re-education forum. It is a mechanism for rigorously inquiring into my practice and recognising the research issue within its context; it is an essential conjoining between cognitive research and social research; it is a framework for rigorously inquiring into my practice and understanding the research problem within its own setting. For example, one of the most critical features of functional experience is the principle of contextualisation, which says that it differs from place to place because what works in one environment can not work in another (Coghlan, 2001). As a result, understanding the underlying constructs of the research issue posed in this study and the surrounding context is critical. This aids in gaining a deeper understanding of the research issue, which is in line with the spirit of action research.

This work will be in line with participatory action research (PAR) because it allows one to participate in focused learning by working on the leadership challenge to effect progress. Additionally, it makes for a collaborative approach to problem-solving and critical thinking as a community, with aspects of mutuality and long-term learning in the study process (Raelin & Trehan, 2015). Furthermore, PAR is a beneficial way to understand and engage civil servants as experts in decision-making systems that can affect and alter the organisational environment in which they operate. PAR is an effective change management technique because it elicits first and second order change not just in the individual manager researcher but also in the team undertaking the action analysis inquiry (Coghlan, 2001). Regardless, civil servants should be allowed to make a valuable contribution and help influence how gender issues are viewed and addressed consistently with their values and beliefs.

1.5 Scholar-Practitioner Role

In alignment with action research, my position is one of a dual scholar-practitioner in that I am a full member of my agency and a scholar engaged in researching within my practice. The research will begin with a first-person inquiry. It will offer glimpses of a storyline that will be interlinked with this research. As I zoom in and out, interacting with the research at different angles, I will be demonstrating the interplay between my past experiences, assumptions, values, beliefs, and how knowledge about something can be known within my work practice context (Coghlan & AB, 2019). I will position myself not as detached or value-free as an outsider but rather as an insider (Coghlan, 2001; Evered and Louis, 1981). I will have a dual role in this study as one practitioner discovering actionable knowledge about their craft wearing their academic hat.

However, I am cognizant that as a manager, researching within my organisation comes with potential drawbacks, given my pre-understanding of the organisational issue. I am mindful that there is room for biases and preconceived notions to surface. Therefore, I will opt to keep a reflexive journal that will allow me to reflect on the overall process, including my thinking, actions and inactions. Another area that will become prevalent is organisational politics, as this required finding balance between institutional demands from the research and my political activities (Coghlan & AB, 2019) for conducting this research. To navigate the above, I have to develop a keen sense of political awareness of the various actors and their roles or interest in the research area to keep me grounded. I see parallels with issues relating to role duality when drawing on examples from Coghlan (2001), as it relates to relational complexities that I will face. This stemmed from the dual role I play as a Director in my department researching while enlisting my subordinates to be involved as the Collaborative Inquiry Team. This will be overcome by drawing on my leadership approach, which is more relational. As a Human Resource Director over ten (10) years, I will make a concerted effort to be collaborative while valuing and building relations with my team. This will help when we needed to have open, frank and free-flowing discussions. I am aware of groupthink and the possibility for consensus building with me as the Director. Therefore, I will enlist two team members who are not part of the Collaborative Inquiry Team to act as a counterbalance during data collection and analysis.

1.6 Framing the Research

Extensive research has identified factors that hinder the advancement of women in organisations. Yet, scarce literature exists about factors that facilitate such development. According to Burke (2002), organisations need to document efforts to develop women managers and professionals. More knowledge about factors that positively influence women's advancement in organisations is necessary because research has focused on barriers. Although the workforce is becoming more diverse (Fernandez, 1999), and more women are participating in the labour force (International Labor Organization (ILO), 2004). Few studies in Human Resource Development (HRD) have addressed issues related to diversity, such as gender and race equality, power, discrimination, and others (Bierema & Cseh, 2003). Besides, Wright (2003) stressed the need to emphasise more positive aspects of work and life in

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organisational research. This study will address a more positive perspective of women at the workplace by exploring the factors contributing to their development.

1.7 Rationale

Gender inequality is becoming prevalent in ministry, thus making it essential to study this topic. The study's primary interest is to give an insight into how women have been victimised with the existence of unequal treatment of men and women and how it has affected the ministry's development process. Gender inequality has slowed down the development of the ministry, and if women were given equal opportunities as men and not made to be victims, the organisation would be better positioned in terms of development. Equity is significant for any society to move forward and achieve some growth. Several steps need to be taken for equity to be achieved, and thus the sooner organisation start to take those steps, the faster development will stop being a dream but a reality.

Therefore, I have selected action research as it allows us to engage in problem resolution collectively while bringing about change through the various action research cycles, hence effecting change within the organisational practice. Additionally, it allows the researcher and co-researchers to test the plausibility of relational gender theories like the leaky pipe effect and glass ceiling elements within the course.

1.8 Literature review (Theories)

1.8.1 Realism

One of the earliest books on Realist theory is Machiavelli's *The Prince*, written for the de Medici family. A later, more comprehensive book that helped build Realist theory's foundation was *Politics Among Nations* by Hans J. Morgenthau. Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws with their roots in human nature. To improve community, it is first necessary to understand the rules by which society lives. Humans are in their nature evil, and there exists a power struggle. This theory relates to the research on inequalities are formed between men and women within an organisation because of the power struggle. In the ministry, the power struggle has put men at the top, thus victimising women. This power struggle makes gender relations difficult as gender roles are deeply defined in the organisation.

1.8.2 Radical Feminism

According to Willis (1984), radical feminism is a current theory within feminism that focuses on patriarchy's view of a power system that organises society into complex relationships producing radical feminists' claim male supremacy oppresses women. This branch of feminism, known as cultural or progressive feminism, seeks to counter and overturn sexism by rejecting conventional gender norms and male domination of women, as well as calling for a radical reorganisation of society. Rather than legal systems (liberal feminism) or class struggle, radical feminists place the root cause of women's pressure in patriarchal gender relations (socialist feminism and Marxist feminism). This theory relates to this research because the existence of male supremacy in the organisation, women are oppressed and feel like victims. This victimisation of women brought about by how the organisation is patriarchal thus works in favour of men.

1.8.3 Leaky Pipe Theory

Women face many workplace equality barriers, resulting in "leaking" from the workplace development pipeline. The example of a leaking pipeline is sometimes used to explain the loss of women's progression in the workplace and, arguably, other sectors before achieving senior positions. (Resmini, 2016; Howes et al., 2018). While gender inequality and sexism can be blamed for pipeline spills, another significant factor influencing women's lack of employment seems to be where and when they have children (Resmini, 2016; Ledford, 2017). This theory will guide me to identify the factors that hinder women development in the ministry of youth and sports

1.8.4 Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling is an obstacle that emerges from one's gender or race that prohibits one from going further in one's career (e.g., promotion or hiring) (Bruckmüller et al., 2014). In addition, the glass cliff phenomena according to Ryan and Haslam, (2005) can place women in precarious leadership positions, increasing their chances of failure. With the challenges of breaking through the glass ceiling, it's little surprise so many women experience imposter syndrome, which is the belief that one is unworthy or incompetent amid proof to the contrary. This issue is more common in women than in men, and it's often related to women's performance attributions (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). Men are more likely to attribute their performance to stable attributes within themselves than women are to transient factors such as chance (Lee, 2015). Beyond subjective perspectives, there is statistical evidence that women are not valued similarly to their male counterparts - discrimination, gender wage gaps, and less opportunities for advancement are all challenges to job equality that women face on a regular basis (Kohout & Singh, 2018). Women also have less chance of being hired in the first place compared to their male counterparts (Savigny, 2014).

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1.9 Literature review (Empirical evidence)

Other works have looked at the development needs of women in the workplace (Bierema, 1998; Mallon & Cassell, 1999; Tanton, 1992; Metz, 2001), and it has been suggested that women's advancement differs from men's (Bierema, 1998; Phillips & Imkoff, 1997; Stroh & Reilly, 1999). Women, unlike men, do not pursue a linear or lifetime career path; instead, they see themselves as engaging between work and relationships (Powell & Mainiero, 1992). Women's growth differs from men's, according to Bierema (1998), since women's jobs are interrupted more often. Women's roles mainly cause interruptions as primary caregivers for children and the elderly (Albrecht, 2003; ILO, 2004). Women's growth is progressing, and it is contextualised (Bierema, 1998). The evolving existence can be due to factors such as the information age, job transitions, demands for work-life balance, and workplace inequality (Bierema, 1998), as well as personal decisions such as the growing trend in Ghana of not marrying and having children (Hewlett, 2002). The pressures of work-life balance and gender inequality are critical factors in women's performance. For the same form of jobs as men perform, women are paid less or have fewer chances for advancement (ILO, 2004; Metz, 2001). Simultaneously, social and interpersonal contexts also shaped women's advancement since, generally, norms, beliefs, and perceptions have reflected men's career development models, under which women have become oppressed (Bierema, 1998). According to Bierema (2001), male-oriented ideas that do not explain women's career trends have often governed women's growth. These theories interpret creation as a sequence of stages, each of which necessitates a particular collection of interactions to proceed from one to the next (Mainiero, 1994). Women's futures are harmed because they lack the necessary experience for success (Metz, 2001). It has been argued that male-dominated organisational structures are a deterrent to women's advancement (Marshall, 1995; Ragins et al., 1998) because men tend to gain greater authority and wealth than women in those cultures. Consequently, women's active career growth is strongly contingent on the context in which it happens. This study will investigate the causes that contribute to women's advancement in the workplace.

1.10 Methodology

This chapter will lay out the overall strategy and corresponding dimensions used to explore the research area. It attempts to set out the methodology and methods of inquiry selected to explore the leadership phenomenon.

1.10.1 Philosophical Position: Ontology and Epistemology

Philosophical positions need to be understood and make sense of the phenomenon of interest. These realities need to be explored to gain deeper meaning that has been purposefully created. Therefore, the ontological stance taken is grounded within the relativist constructionist perspective, in that the research considers that there is "no objective reality" (Krauss, 2005, p. 760). However, the possibility of multiple realities created by individuals who experienced the concern of interest (Krauss, 2005) exists. This perspective supposes that the reality of the situation consists of numerous realities instead of a single solitary view of the world (Krauss, 2005). The epistemological stance taken is broadly interpretivism, whereby exploring questions on whether the organisational practice exists may transcend social agents' perceptions within the system (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Therefore, our understanding must be premised on those agents' experience, who work within that particular social system (Bryman & Bell, 2003). It is recognised that by operating within the interpretivist perspective, the researcher needs to get very close to the data and become entrenched in the overall process to ascertain what knowledge is known through the actors' subjective experiences (Creswell, 2013).

The significance of researching leadership in the paradigm mentioned above is that the potential is there to add value to the exploration of public sector leadership through qualitative research.

1.10.2 Research Strategy

The methodology chosen for this research sits within the qualitative framework, as the main goal is to extend understanding of the gender phenomenon. Accordingly, to inform business practice and ensure the scholar-practitioner link, the overall research strategy is to use the organisation as a single case study within the PAR framework, a subsection of action research. In this regard, PAR could be viewed as a complementary methodology within the overall qualitative approach. However, to understand PAR's tenets, one should first broadly explore the underlying framework of action research.

1.10.3 Action Research and Participatory Action Research

In action research, the first-person inquiry is representative of investigations which is carried out on oneself (assumptions, intentions, life philosophy and so forth); the second person entails inquiry into work practice and others; and the third person involves inquiry of communities (Coghlan & AB, 2019). The method for enacting action research is premised on a four-step model which incorporates multiple iterative cycles of constructing, planning, action and evaluation (Coghlan & AB, 2019; Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Action research encompasses other sub-sets, such as participatory action research (PAR), which involves a broader community or participation by a wider community to bring about transformative change to some situational facet.

In efforts to demonstrate a scholar-practitioner link, I decided to use PAR to inform my doctoral research. The justification is that the notion of public sector leadership has wider implications for my immediate agency and reverberates throughout the more prominent public sector community, at varying levels throughout the organisation. Acquiring new knowledge, or perhaps building

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on current knowledge and understanding in public sector leadership, will assist in bringing about organisational change in how we approach leadership and how we approach leadership development for overall work practice improvements.

1.10.4 Situating the Researcher

My position is identified as an “insider” action researcher premised on the fundamental philosophical positions. Within this context, it is viewed that there is no solitary, knowable external reality and that the researcher is a vital instrument who plays a pivotal role in the overall research process (Coghlan & AB, 2019). The position of “insider” researcher could be broadly defined as an individual researching within their organisation and is a fully functioning member of that organisation (Coghlan & AB, 2019). This dual scholar-practitioner role, or the insider action researcher, bears some similarities to Alvesson’s (2012, p. 174) concept of self-ethnography. The researcher is seen as having “natural access” and plays an active role. The justification for decisions taken on the researcher positionality in those mentioned above was derived after careful consideration of the theory’s nature and function in the research and the study’s primary goal (Coghlan & AB, 2019).

The researcher could be viewed as an instrument in the overall process as they would be intimately involved in the data collection, enacting the PAR cycles, data analysis, interpretation and so forth. Moreover, Coghlan and AB, (2019) note that the role of the researcher could be described as that of an insider action researcher, where the notion of role duality comes into play, particularly, as the researcher wears two hats, one of the employee’s (or one of us) and the other as the researcher (the outsider).

1.10.5 Reflexivity

Reflexivity, broadly interpreted by drawing on Coghlan and AB’s (2007, p. 60) definition, could be conceptualised as an essential tool that the researcher employs as a means of exploring and mitigating any potential issues between “the researcher and the object of research”. My interpretation of reflexivity within my specific research context is having a keen awareness of my own biases, personal responses, and how I will use knowledge within the research environment to guide decisions taken, understand the situation more fully, and engage in the process of learning and transformation. Etherington (2007) suggests that reflexivity allows the researcher to be mindful of the research’s cultural and social context and the potential implications on the research agenda.

1.11 Methods of Data Collection

This section describes the data collection processes, which were primarily driven by the overall research questions and goals and the ontological and epistemological decisions made. Methods were chosen to allow the dynamic complex social interactions to emerge and maintain the interconnectedness between the various actors within the system.

1.11.1 Creating Action Outcomes

In rethinking how PAR could be used to gain a deeper understanding at the operational level, I decided to engage my immediate work team, who, as organisational stakeholders, would act as the Collaborative Inquiry Team. Additionally, the Collaborative Inquiry Team will play a dual role in that they will also operate as co-researchers to inquire about our organisation. The rationale for selecting this particular team is that a “system” could be viewed as a complex, multidimensional and intricate web of interrelated networks, inclusive of processes and procedures that function following complex patterns that self-organise as a response to an evolving environment (Foster-Fishman & Watson, 2010). In this regard, my agency could be described as one element within the complex public sector network of varying entities. To create change, it is essential to understand the system’s innermost workings. Therefore, understanding leadership within my immediate team context could give insight into understanding how leadership is approached within the wider public sector.

1.11.2 Interview Intervention

Understanding action research from a position of creating change, interviews play an important role in the initial inquiry as it helps to address the ‘what’ questions. In this sense, interviews will be used to gather data as a means of enacting first-order change by attempting to gain “directory knowledge” (Ullrich, 2019, p. 142). Probing deeply into the various aspects of directory knowledge equates to exploring commonly held assumptions, beliefs, descriptions, and so forth. This would assist in uncovering the “what” areas as it relates to public sector leadership. For example, interviews aim to gain multiple perspectives to understand how the system operates and what people do within leadership capacities at various levels. Interviews and visual methods will attempt to gain axiomatic knowledge (Ullrich, 2019), endeavouring to reveal the ‘why’ questions. This will help explore underlying causes and patterns being exhibited in the system; according to Ullrich, (2019), this probing manner may encourage second-order change.

1.11.3 Interventions through Visual Methods

Pictorial representations or the use of images will be employed as an additional means to collect data. The justification for using this method is based on Uhl-Bien’s (2011) assertions that are incorporating other techniques to gather data to explore relational leadership, such as aesthetics, are centred on the generation of knowledge through sensory experiences. For example, how a person’s feelings, thoughts, or reasoning pertains to a particular sensory experience could inform their perception. Therefore, asking respondents during the interview to create a pictorial representation of what gender inequality is and the factors that improve women

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development within the public sector context may help access their tacit knowledge. This knowledge then becomes explicit as visual leadership conceptualisations are drawn.

1.11.4 Secondary Sources

Secondary data sources will include archival documents and company policies and procedures deemed relevant to supplementing and verifying background information, government reports, and published statistics. Secondary sources will also provide the historical context (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012).

1.12 Ethics Consideration

Ethics within a PAR framework is not a distinct and definitive process as seen when undertaking traditional research, given that action research is rooted in the values of democracy, freedom, participation, and justice (Coghlan & AB, 2019). The above assumes a closeness level between the researcher and research participants, which will require open, transparent, and sound decision making throughout the research process. As a means of being fully committed to doing good quality research and ensuring that the highest ethical standards are upheld, a Participant Information Sheet and a Consent Form will be developed which addresses issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, data privacy, data security, destruction and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Also, as a further mitigating measure, the researcher will be committed to maintaining an open dialogue with respondents throughout the research process, ensuring accountability and openness.

1.13 Action Research principles

In seeking to establish criteria whereby validity and rigour are seen in action research, Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjala, and Pesonen (2012), suggest five principles to assess action research's validity demonstrated below.

Table 2 – Principles of Validity for Action Research (adapted from Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjala and Pesonen, 2012, p. 8).

Validation principles for action research	
Historical continuity	Analysis of historical actions – is assessing how action evolved historically.
Reflexivity	Employment – the extent to which the narrative proceeds in a logical and coherent manner
	Subjective adequacy – is exploring the nature of the researcher's relationship with the object of the research.
	Ontological and epistemological assumptions – is the researcher's standpoint on knowledge and the nature and reality of the situation.
Dialectics	Transparency – clarity and robustness in how the researcher describes methods of inquiry, materials and techniques used
	Dialogue – insight developed in collaboration with others. Polyphony – representation of various voices and interpretations in the research.
	Authenticity – “how authentic and genuine are the protagonists of the narrative?”
Workability and ethics	Pragmatic quality – the degree to which the research is successful in generating workable practices.
	Criticalness – types of discussions elicited or provoked by the research. Ethics – dealing with ethical issues and emerging issues.
	Empowerment – “does the research make people believe in their capabilities and possibilities to act and thereby encouraging new practices and actions?”
Evocativeness	Evocativeness – the degree to which the research narrative evokes mental images, memories relative to the phenomenon (research theme) being researched

The concepts mentioned above provide a good starting point for judging validity and rigour and a collection of criteria that can be applied at any study process level (Heikkien et al., 2012).

Additionally, other ways of ensuring data quality could be achieved by triangulation through members checks and verification of primary data through secondary sources (Bryman, 2006), in addition to utilising what Bryman (2006) terms methodical triangulation (one by one data collection methods). Coghlan and AB (2019, p. 15), opines that achieving quality and rigour in action research could be akin to three prime elements: (a) “good story” (good explanation of what transpired); (b) “rigorous reflection on that story” (thorough explanation, interpretation and analysis of what occurred – sense-making); and (c) “an extrapolation of usable knowledge or theory from the reflection on the story” (this addresses the, ‘how’, ‘what’, ‘why’ and what happens now questions)

1.14 Data Validation and Reliability

A number of validation strategies will be employed to ensure that good quality research and reliable data are being produced. In reducing the researcher biasness, every effort will made to incorporate a level of self-reflexivity through journaling, interview summary sheets, notes, in addition to maintaining an awareness of behaviours, attitudes, preconceived notions, judgements, or biases

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that could prevail upon or contaminate the data at any stage (Creswell, 2013; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015), for example, during the interviews, data analysis and interpretations.

This is one of the reasons data will be transcribed verbatim and quoted from the original source material to preserve its integrity and authenticity. Furthermore, although the instrument will be tested using an independent party prior to adopting it for the interviews. However, findings were presented to the Collaborative Inquiry Team as a means of member checking, which acted as a mitigating measure. Additionally, post interviews, transcriptions will be presented to interviewees for review and signoff for transcription accuracy. Notwithstanding, questions to pose at the executive level will be similar to those at the departmental head level, and this will be then taken to the employee level (Collaborative Inquiry Team) within my organisation. This will create the space for similarities and disparities in responses to be confirmed or dispelled.

1.15 My Belief, Values and Goals

Belief: I think in my opinion that women should be granted the opportunity to participate in sports and youth management, planning and decision making effectively. Their secret voices will be heard, and their points of view will be heard if given the opportunity. This influenced my decision to use action study design in my investigation.

Goal: My long term vision is to see an enhanced women development in organizations to make their own decisions about their development, to take leadership roles and decision making processes, and to achieve holistic women development.

Principles: Basing on this aim and conviction, I hold the following principles: I will be communicating with women who need to discover who they are and their position in youth and sports decision making processes; they are not on this same level of understanding and thus should be treated as individuals; and also I believe that confidence should be established at the of the process, and that ground rule for participation should be established and at the end of the process, all participants should be encouraged to make the best decision that is consistent with their principles, priorities, and beliefs.

I will try to do the following: Share the knowledge and skills required for individual growth and involvement, assist stakeholders in discovering and developing their passions and talents, encourage and empower participants, and model the values I hold which include integrity, compassion and hardwork. Whenever possible, I will consider and discuss the human factor, be a thoughtful professional, appreciate my participants and provide information and guidance to make my participants effective.

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