

Using Participatory Action Research for Racial Diversity Pathway Program Evaluation

Case Study: Youth Educator-based Strategy To Empower and Enroll Racially Marginalized Students (**yESTEEM**)

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Problem Statement

- Low enrollment of SoC in STEM fields at LUC
- Lack of STEM role models of color in middle and high schools in Chicago Public Schools
- Low college literacy and minimal support for racially minoritized students to access higher education
- Need for wrap around programs, including mentorship, funding, and community building

Participatory Action Research

PAR is a collaborative research process that involves collective co-construction of knowledge that collapses traditional hierarchies of power between the researcher and researched, critical self and group reflection and awareness, “and the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process” (McIntyre, 2008, p. ix).

Many critical scholars in education have identified PAR as a scholarly approach that can fulfill values of social justice, because it privileges and centers the perspectives and agency of historically marginalized communities (McIntyre, 2008). In K-12 education, teachers have used the method to position themselves as scholar-practitioners working in partnership with students and communities to advance transformative social justice change (Atweh, Kemmis, & Weeks, 1998; Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

PAR Cycle

Planning-Action-Evaluating

Year 1

- Plan the yESTEEM program with neuroscience, nursing, and education scholars.
- Implement the high school peer-mentor based program in local middle schools. Provide research opportunities for high school students. Provide leadership opportunities for college students.
- Evaluation is a researcher driven approach, evaluated by students and researchers, redesigned for year 2. Year 1 includes research training.

Year 2-5

- Plan the yESTEEM program with neuroscience, nursing, and education scholars *and students*.
- Implement the updated program based on first year evaluation including peer-mentor program, research opportunities, leadership opportunities, and additional programming models.
- Evaluation is a student driven approach, evaluated by students and researchers, redesigned for year 3-5.

Data Collection

- Qualitative interviews (students) and focus groups (faculty)
- Quantitative descriptives
- Entrance and exit interviews/surveys
- Student driven evaluation in years 2-5

Ideal Outcomes

- Student research skills and knowledge increased both in STEM and in sociological research
- Increased enrollment of racially marginalized students in STEM
- Increased leadership capacity of all student participants
- Stronger pathways between local schools and Loyola Chicago

Program

- College student helps plan program and mentor high school students; high school students mentor middle school students. High school students engage in research.
- Financial aid, mentorship, cohort-model, and research and evaluation development
- Family and community engagement
- Shift to holistic admissions

Practitioner and Student as Researcher

This approach requires that “the roles of the researched and researcher are reversed to some extent. That is, practitioners/students take the role of researchers, and researchers assume the roles of facilitators and consultants” (Bensimon, et al. 2004, p. 108).

The practitioner/student-as-researcher model is one approach for social justice praxis. It influences how some practitioner-as-researchers conceptualized inequity on their college campuses and how they thought about research and the data uncovered in the research process.

Participants began to “realize the seriousness and enormity of the problem” with racial inequity on college campuses (Bensimon, et al. 2004, p. 115). The shift is attributed to the participant-researchers’ own creation of knowledge. Bensimon, et al. (2004) noted that “when practitioners are the researchers, the knowledge they generate is more likely to produce a conceptual shift” (p. 116) through the process of doing research.



CAPSTONE PRESENTATION & GRADUATION

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Dian Squire, PhD

Biography

Dian is an Associate Professor and the founding Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence in the Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing at Loyola University Chicago. In his role he is in charge of spearheading new initiatives and policy transformation around Inclusive Excellence issues including faculty/student/staff diversity, educational and health equity, campus inclusion, and anti-racism. He is a critical higher education and student affairs scholar guided by a belief that structural oppressions in higher education institutions must be scrutinized, understood, and addressed if higher education institutions are to realize their commonly held missions as places for personal development and service to the public good.

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