

**TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN DEVELOPING
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: REFLECTIONS IN CAPE
PENINSULA NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA**

BY

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PART I

FROM RHETORIC...

Abstract

In the new democratic era in South Africa (SA), South African National Parks (SANP), as with all other government related organizations, has had to undergo a restructuring and transformation process. In the process of reviewing policies and transforming the organization and its corporate image, the Social Ecology (SE) department was established in 1994, to play a key role in implementing the new mission and vision of the organization. While from the point of view of bio-diversity management SANP parks are regarded as the best managed in the world, the SANP is however influenced by the legacy of colonialism and apartheid (SANP Corporate plan, 1998). The SE department has thus been mandated to develop appropriate policy frameworks, to build the capacity of SANP personnel in articulating and implementing economic, cultural and educational empowerment initiatives that will benefit the local communities neighboring national parks. Recognizing the significance of community participation in conservation (SE policy, 1995), the department has continually strived to influence the SANP policies and practices to accelerate a shift from the traditional expert-driven conservation practices to a more holistic community oriented management of natural and cultural heritage resources.

From a practitioner's perspective, with an experience of working in two of SANP parks and involved in various debates of unravelling the concept and the philosophy behind SE within and outside the organization, the presenter will share her experiences on the challenges of implementing this relatively new approach in SA. In particular, the presentation will focus on challenges experienced in the process of developing Environmental Education (EE) programs in Cape Peninsula National Park (CPNP), a recently established park. It will further explain how these challenges have been transformed into a research opportunity.

Introduction

This paper is intended to reflect on a participatory process done in Cape Peninsula National Park (CPNP), South Africa, in the month of July 1999, as a process of involving communities around the park in the parks' activities, through Environmental Education (EE) program development. This is an initial phase of the overall strategy of developing EE programs for the park and the communities around, which is my responsibility as an Environmental Education co-ordinator in CPNP. The paper will outline this learning process in the context of the challenges and opportunities I have experienced working in a transforming organization in a recently democratic country. The motivation for this process is to document a process of learning through fieldwork, mistakes, sharing and as a participatory, collaborative and emancipatory research process, with the intent of improving the quality of programs (my job) as they develop in the park. Deshler and Selener (1991), and Tandon (1988), describe this form of research as participatory and transformational research in which, *active participation of people who are not trained as*

researchers focus on knowledge generation not as an end in itself, but as a means to empower themselves (and the people) to change the circumstances of their existence. Participatory and transformational research here is viewed as a research in which the primary goal is social action, and the researchers are actors in the context being studied, are examples of knowledge production that occurs outside the academy with the aim of moving beyond understanding to action. Deshler and Selener (1991) make very clear its action orientation: *Transformative research... is not a new research methodology, but a particular philosophical stance towards all research without distinction of fields of study: physical, natural, or social science. That stance towards transformative knowledge generation is one that views the focus, the process, and the outcomes of research as the means by which confrontation and action against the causes of injustice, exploitation, violence, and environmental degradation can occur through the research process and the use of research results (p.10).* So, the value of this research will be assessed within South African National Parks (SANP) by its practical utility in getting the job done, whether this process is helping people I work with, (and myself,) develop basic operational skills, learn new job-related procedures, and transform society. Part I of this paper, puts the participatory process in context, by exploring the national and the organizational policies. Part II outlines the challenges, lessons learnt in CPNP since my assumption of duty. The last part will briefly outline opportunities in CPNP.

2. Historical background

The creation of parks, reserves and game ranches in 20th century had left many rural black communities with limited access to own and manage natural resources (Wells 1996). Magome (1995) stated that most government conservation bodies in South Africa did not recognize the role played by rural communities in natural resources management. According to Magome (1995) this resulted in a polarized situation with conservation bodies preserving biodiversity and rural communities being excluded from the formal conservation of the country's wildlife resources. According to Wells (1996), South Africa's protected areas now find themselves under siege' and desperately seek

new roles to justify their future. The government of South Africa faces a serious dilemma with respect to wildlife conservation, particularly how to reconcile the extensive land and financial resources required by protected areas with the acute social and economic development needs of poor rural people with very limited access to any kind of resources (Wells, 1996). The challenge to the current government is on how conservation of natural resources can contribute to meeting the high expectations of South Africa's black population of a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities (Wells, 1996).

In the new era in South Africa, SANP as with all other government related organizations, had to undergo a restructuring and transformation process. The revision of its conservation policies has resulted in serious decisions being taken to review and transform the organization and its corporate image. Amongst other things, the Social Ecology department was established in 1994, to play a key role in implementing the new mission and vision of the organization. Recognizing the significance of community participation in conservation, the department has continually strived to influence the SANP policies and practices to accelerate the shift from the traditional expert -driven conservation practice to a more holistic community centered management of natural and cultural heritage resources. The World Conservation Strategy published in 1980 asserted that '*conservation cannot be achieved without development to alleviate the poverty and misery of hundreds of millions of people*. It further emphasized that conservation is not the opposite of development, rather it includes both protection and the rational use of natural resources, and is essential if people are to achieve a life of dignity and if the welfare of present and future generations is to be assured. IUCN/WWF/UNESCO (1991) suggest that:

Local communities are the focus for much that needs to be done in making the change to living sustainable, but there is little they can do if they lack the power to act. ...Living sustainable never will be while hundreds of millions live without enough of even the basic essentials of life. To make it possible for us all to think of the welfare of later generations and other species, we need a new kind of development that rapidly improves the quality of life for the disadvantaged. Further, the Constitution of South Africa, states

that, *'every person shall have the right to an environment which is not detrimental to his or her health or well being'*. The RDP takes this right of the Constitution further, by stating that *'it is the right of all South African citizens to have a decent quality of life through the sustainable use of resources'* (2.10.2). This could be achieved through equitable access to a safe and healthy working and living environment and participatory decision-making. The Constitution continues to argue that *'through education (2.10.63) an environmental ethic and understanding could be created among all people...which in turn will create a better understanding of the intricate relationship between environment and sustainable development'*.

It is now generally accepted that protected areas can significantly contribute to improving the lives of people (IUCN 1991, 1993), by utilized in sustainable development and not processes simply 'set aside' (McNeely 1989, Munasinghe & McNeely 1994). For conservation to be successful, the consent and co-operation of the neighboring communities, whose lives are inextricably linked with protected areas, is required (Bell 1996, Ghimire and Pimbert1997).

Educational Programs in SANP

While SANP from the point of view of biodiversity management is regarded as the best managed in the world, it is however marked by the legacy of colonialism and apartheid (SANP annual report, 1995). The historical development of education programs within SANP, and perhaps other conservation bodies, can in some respects be associated with the past approaches to EE. Environmental Education Policy Initiative (EEPI) document produced in 1993 outlines some key trends in Environmental Education. According to this document, in 1970's environmental education was basically teaching about nature and conservation problems through show- and tell methods, mostly organized around and in Environmental Education Centers. For instance, in Golden Gate Highlands National Park (GGHNP) in the Free State province, a park I also worked in, EE program which were offered, from 1979 until 1997, at Wilgenhof Youth Center was based on a similar approach. The program involved taking children (mostly from private schools) to

hiking trails, showing them videos and a series of lessons on conservation (Nangu, 1998). A large percentage of children from previously disadvantaged communities who could not afford educational tours did not participate in these programs. According to the EE course brochure developed at Golden Gate in early 80's, the development of these programs was aimed at changing behaviours by introducing children to nature.

Since 1994, the Social Ecology department within SANP has thus been mandated to develop appropriate policy frameworks, to build the capacity of SANP personnel in articulating and implementing economic, cultural and educational empowerment initiatives that will benefit the local communities neighboring national parks. This could be a measure of the determination and commitment of SANP to uplifting the lives of rural communities. The Social Ecology division seeks to ensure the community participation in conservation, by designing programs that link social and economic empowerment activities with conservation objectives. The process is inter-disciplinary, participatory, community oriented and educational in nature (SANP Corporate plan, 1998). Further, the Corporate Plan (p17) outlines several strategic areas that include, the development of community-oriented environmental education programs that recognize and incorporate cultural perceptions of the environment, so as to enhance the capacity of neighboring communities to participate in park activities. EE activities therefore had to be planned and implemented according to this new vision. This paradigm shift in conservation within SANP, underpinned by international trends and national policies and legislation, as outlined above, can be best summarized as follows:

Traditional conservation

- *Focussed solely on flora and fauna
- *Exclusion and removal of communities
- *Domain of natural scientists
- *Emphasis on fenced protected areas

New Social Ecology approach

- *emphasis on holistic integrated approach
- *sustainable utilization of national resources by previously disadvantaged communities
- *multidisciplinary, establishes partnerships
- *mutually beneficial to all stakeholders

As mentioned above, Social Ecology highlights SANP's primary aim and focus of moving away from the traditional conservation approach and practice, i.e. *'Keeping people away' to a more holistic integrated natural and cultural heritage management approach, that recognises the significance of community participation in conservation* (Symposium, 1998). Within this context, *environmental education processes are understood as an ongoing process of facilitating the development of the attitudes, knowledge and basic life skills necessary to make responsible decisions and take action about the environmental issues (biophysical, political, social, and economic) affecting our lives. These diverse socially critical and reflective processes might be enacted locally with a historically rooted symbolic capital that enables people to grapple with the socio-ecological risks encountered during the active learning contexts of everyday life* (O'Donoghue, et al, 1994). SANP perceives its role in EE as identifying partners in developing a conservation ethic, based on interdisciplinary and integrated programs, so as to promote sustainable living in a healthy environment. This philosophy is also embraced by the White Paper on Education and Training, (1995) which argues that;

- i) *Education is a crucial component in promoting sustainable development and in improving peoples' capacity to solve environmental and developmental problems, and*
- ii) *...EE involving an interdisciplinary, integrated and active approach to learning, must be a vital element of all levels and programs of the education and training system, in order to create environmentally literate and active citizens and ensure that all South Africans, present and future, enjoy a decent quality of life through the sustainable use of resources.*

It might be appropriate at this stage to clarify my position and my responsibilities as an employee of (SANP), my motivation of engaging in research.

Motivation for research

Since 1996, I have been working in SANP, and was based at GGHNP, as a manager of SE Department. With the establishment of the new park in Cape Town, in 1998, there

was a need to co-ordinate EE programs. I was then appointed to initiate and co-ordinate EE activities for the park. Whilst I was at GGHNP, I have been sharing and writing about my work in various local, regional and national academic and professional forums. It was through these information-sharing forums that mostly the academics challenged me to identify theoretical and conceptual framework that guide our practices as an organization.

This quest for theory aroused an opportunity to document my lessons from the field in a more academically legitimate and credible way. Because I was working full time, I enrolled in an international diploma on Environmental Education (EE) because I wanted to familiarize myself with EE theories and methods. It was as a result of this diploma that I discovered action research and participatory methods as appropriate in critically reflecting on the process of learning as an empowerment tool for me as a practitioner (Hart, et.al,1987). Hence, this learning process is geared towards a PhD research process.

Social Ecology (SE) as a concept and practice is relatively new, particularly in the SANP, and plays a key role in the organization's major step to review its conservation approach (SANP Corporate Plan, 1998). It is therefore my view that, reflections on lessons learnt, and challenges experienced by practitioners are necessary, so as to establish best practices for the organization. Thus, this study will reflect on Environmental Education programs as they develop in and around Cape Peninsula National Park (CPNP). Specifically the process seeks to lead to;

- do field analysis in terms of what other environmental organizations and communities around the park perceive of Cape Peninsula National Park
- critically reflect on the process of development of educational programs based on the outcomes of the field analysis
- find and develop analytic framework and conceptual tools to evaluate social ecology programs
- comment and inform SANP policy in relation to Social Ecology and Environmental Education. The management of the park and senior staff of SANP has endorsed this

research as they view it as a valuable exercise for SANP. I therefore do not envisage any institutional constraints as far as the approach to the development of SE programs is concerned.

Summary

This section of the paper forms the historical and contextual background of the participation process which follows in the following section (Part II). Within this context, a research process is used to guide the process of EE program development so as to seek knowledge as a means of clarifying for myself, my colleagues, the organization and perhaps the international community;

- a) Why SANP has adopted the new conservation approach,
- b) Whether it is an adequate approach in the historical, socio-economic context of South Africa,
- c) How is this approach reflected in CPNP's EE program development,
- d) Educational, theoretical framework that best describes our practice
- d) And lastly and maybe importantly to improve on the development of SE programs within SANP (i.e. to do my job better) not only for my personal reasons but also for the benefit of the South African community.

PART II

.... TO ACTION

Introduction

This section reflects on the participatory process towards the development of EE programs within a framework of SE as described in the previous pages. For each section challenges and lessons learnt in CPNP will be outlined. Further, I will explore opportunities that will inform the next phases of program development.

1. Cape Peninsula National Park

CPNP was established in May 1998. It is one of the 18 national parks managed by SANP, after a long, challenging negotiations dating back from 1929 (CPNP brochure). The park boundaries include the whole mountain range from Table Mountain and stretches to Cape Point for about 60km. As the millennium approaches, and the city swells around, the need to serve the mountain, for both its unique biodiversity and its spiritual and economic value, has become more urgent (Argus, June 1998). What makes the park so special is its rich store of indigenous plant life and associated animals- so rich in fact, that is rated by internationally respected ecologists as one of the greatest biological treasure chests. South Africa is the only nation on earth that contains an entire floral kingdom - the Cape Floral Kingdom- within its boundaries, and the Table Mountain and the rest of the Peninsula is at the heart of that kingdom. Not only the total number of plant species astonishingly high, but the number of endemic is also extremely high at 105. The area also hosts more endemic invertebrate species than it has endemic plants. The park is the only area in the world with such scenic beauty and varied biological diversity that lies in the city (Argus, 1998).

1.1 Challenges:

- *These **unique features** offer great challenges and opportunities for the development of Environmental Education programs for the park*
- *CPNP to **develop educational programs that are holistic in approach so as to** address both the management threats and public interest*

1.2 Lessons:

There is a lot of pressure from different stakeholders who have interest both in biodiversity management and educational programs. This sometimes results in conflicts between CPNP and some stakeholders. Some communities are impatient of the lengthy process of developing programs. With such pressure from the public, it is important engage in a public participation process so as to inform , clarify and incorporate major issues.

2. Historical development of the education programs in CPNP

The different municipal authorities that owned the different areas, which now belong to the park were responsible for running Environmental Education programs in centres, that now fall within the boundaries of the park. The programs were different in approach, as they were developed by different agencies. They mainly involved taking school pupils that were bussed into these centres for hiking trails with some ecological interpretation, showing videos, offering recreational activities etc. The programs were purely centre-based and full time officers were solely responsible for designing programs (pers.com E. Bester, 1999). This situation was not different from what happened at GGHNP as mentioned by Nangu (1996). The same groups that booked the centre the previous year would come the following year. In one of the centres, Skaife Centre, it was not only youth groups that utilised the centre; adults also used it for recreational purposes. All these were the groups that had the privilege to;

- (a) Know that there were centres located in these areas which offer alternative learning opportunities,
- (b) Afford transport and accommodation costs, and

(c) Have competent adult leaders or teachers that planned and execute such educational experiences.

When these areas were amalgamated through the establishment of the park in 1998, the park took over the management of these educational centres. It was clear that there was a need to revisit a number of issues around EE activities, which will be in line with the new organization's approach. These issues included amongst others;

- (a) the development of relevant centre or park-based educational programs
- (b) effective management of existing centres,
- (c) explore possible or alternative opportunities for use of centres,
- (e) Identify of other possible venues that can be used as educational centres
- (f) Access (including costs) of these of the centres to public transport

2.1 Challenges:

- *Promotion of the park and its activities to the wider Cape Peninsula community is still necessary*
- *CPNP have to use different languages and a variety of communication strategies to reach all stakeholders ,a special focus should be on the previously disadvantaged communities*
- *Extend services to a wider community so that the majority of people will know, access and derive optimal benefit from the existence of the park (SE policy, 1995).*
- *CPNP to embark on a public participation approach that so as to be sensitive to people's concerns. Educational activities should reflect the diversity of cultural and historical values of the surrounding communities.*

2.2 Lesson:

- *Even though the park was established in 1998, there were still people who were not aware of the existence of the park. Specifically, those people who were not affiliated with the different conservation bodies before, and those from the previously disadvantaged groups living away from the mountain range, were not aware of the latest developments of CPNP.*

- *The media (TV, news papers, radio) is not enough to communicate to the wider spectrum of people in the Cape Peninsula, as most of the people living in settlements are illiterate and some cannot speak English.*

3. Social Ecology department

Structure

It is very important to mention the structure of the department in CPNP, as it continues to offer challenges among staff, and also causes confusion to the public. The SE department in different parks is structured differently, depending on the programs in priority for that park. For instance, at Kruger National Park, a park with a bigger staff like in CPNP has a different structure. Its staff is divided into, community development, environmental education, Interpretation services, and cultural interpretation. At CPNP though, SE department has been structured into three units, Economic Empowerment (Ec.Emp.), Volunteer programs (VP), and Environmental Education (EE). Each unit is headed by a co-ordinator that report to Head of SE department. The co-ordinators are supposed to be work very closely, to manage 5 staff and co-ordinate the activities of SE.

EE projects

The EE coordinator (myself) was employed a year later (1999), after the other co-ordinators had started their projects. This meant that there were few EE activities in the park since the park's establishment, and there was a lot of pressure from the public to start EE programs. Further, other projects from the other units were already in process, and there was a need to look at identifying EE opportunities within those projects. Further, due to the different academic backgrounds of staff, there was limited understanding of the holistic approach of EE and its application. Some of the staff members perceived EE and interpretation as two different disciplines.

Staff composition and management

Five Social Ecologists (SE's) have been employed to work in teams and manage projects from each unit. The SE's were supervised by the co-ordinators; i.e. 5 SE's had 3 supervisors. The co-ordinators had to allocate their projects to all staff, and also to share management of staff. Moreover, the staff had different academic backgrounds, and

different orientations to organisational cultures, for instance, there are conservationists, teachers, social workers, environmentalists and people who worked in NGO's before. This diversity of experience and orientation can be viewed as strength of the department, but at the same time it continues to offer various challenges in terms of executing certain operations or tasks.

3.1 Challenges:

- *To develop a management strategy which will reflect an effective structure and project management of the various projects*
- *Proper management of staff by the different co-ordinators*
- *Developing common understanding of EE and SE amongst staff. This involves identifying training opportunities to build the capacity of staff in these areas.*
- *Integrating EE projects into Ec. Emp. and VP such that they reflect SE framework*
- *Allocating EE projects (or projects that are not in the staff's area of expertise) to SE's, adding on projects to their load of projects to manage*

3.2 Lessons:

Working in and with a diverse team can be both an opportunity and a hindrance to progress, especially if members do not share common. It needs constant communication and patience to build a team. It is not only management skills, but also strong leadership skills with charisma and enthusiasm that are needed to manage a team with diversity of academic and cultural background. All staff should be involved in the strategic planning of the department, so that everybody feel they are part (own) of the process.

4. Identification of partners and networking

As the park is located in the middle of the city, there are different NGO's, CBO's, interests groups, individuals and government organisations that are already involved in EE activities with communities around the park. The big question became; *how does the CPNP locate itself in this urban context (social structure)?* As a new organization, *How*

do we make an impact or rather what are the new skills and opportunities that CPNP brings to the communities? To identify environmental-related organizations in the region, was easy. There was a recently published booklet that listed contact numbers and persons of some of the organizations in the region. I visited those who showed interest in future collaboration of EE projects.

4.1. Challenges:

- *To identify organizations that had good reputation with the previously disadvantaged communities and have a similar philosophy with SANP*
- *To give priority to, and to be able discover the ‘neglected’ communities,*
- *To develop EE projects with a conservation objective that will be of mutual benefit both to the park and the communities*
- *To identify different educational and cultural forums in townships of disadvantaged so as to establish collaborative networks*

4.2 Lessons:

*The most difficult task was to identify partners that are interested in working in collaboration with CPNP to develop EE programs. It is important to **consult all** interested parties (in this case, conservationists, academics, activists, NGO’s, friends and people from the street). Even those regarded as enemies or are pushing their agendas need attention. There were very few community-based organizations (from the settlements and townships). Talk about your **job in informal gatherings** like churches, weddings and traditional ceremonies, you might find useful contacts. I also learnt that there **were politics** around the co-ordination of EE activities in the region, and I therefore had to be very cautious in my endeavors, so that my organization and me are not inheriting any problems or image by associating CPNP with a particular organization.t. Be aware of **political agendas! Patience is the key to the doors of conservatives.** Networking **takes time** and should be viewed as a process.*

4.3 Outcomes

From this process, there were people from different organizations who were interested in working with CPNP to act as an advisory board. With follow-up meetings this group of seven people was brought together informally to assist in taking the process further.

We agreed to refer to the group as a **reference group**. There was an informal agreement on the role of this group, which it will continue to work informally and will be formalized if necessary. Secondly, through informal contacts there were **youth groups from two townships** (Kayelitsha and Gugulethu) that were identified, that already had interest in environmental issues and needed guidance.

5. Strategic plan of EE

In view of the above challenges, I developed a strategic plan for my section, which I later discussed with my supervisor, colleagues and other people as well. A workshop was conducted for SE's.

5.1. Challenges:

- *To engage all staff especially SE's to participate actively in the process*
- *To develop projects that will reflect integration with other SE units*

5.2 Lessons:

Involve people from the beginning of the process so that they own the process. I think it would have been useful to develop the plan together with SE's initially, and even assign them to come up with an initial draft, than to do it myself. Later, I learnt that some staff saw the plan as complete and perfect, and therefore they felt it needed little input from them. So, they were not part of the process.!

5.3 Outcome:

*There was **not much** input from the SE's. That resulted in **frustration and disappointment** from my part, as I was expecting some critical comments from SE's. So my **expectations were not met**. However, valuable input from the co-ordinators and the reference group resulted in a final draft of the **strategic plan for EE** for the year*

6. Facilitation of community workshops

CPNP had not done public participation exercise before. It was clear that this was a daunting exercise that needed wider consultation and expertise than the staff could manage. With the assistance of my supervisor, a consultant, from the local council, Council of Cape Town (CCT), who had experience in conducting similar public

participation processes, was identified. It took two months of planning the process, before the workshops were conducted in June.

6.1 Challenges:

- *To inform and invite all stakeholders (CPNP staff, facilitators, public, media)*
- *To organize logistics for the workshops during election period*
- *To incorporate everybody's ideas in the agenda*
- *To train the staff or rather to motivate staff to present during the workshops.*

6.2 Lessons:

It is not everybody who welcomed this process with enthusiasm within Social Ecology department. Reasons for this may include;

- *It was **the first time** that CPNP was engaged in this process, although there was one remarkable staff member who was very enthusiastic.*
- *this was **bad timing within the department**, because this was the end of the evaluation time and most of the staff had not received a good assessment. The staff members were **so demotivated** and I was expecting them to be motivated and immediately start working. In fact, there was more going on and the team needed some team-building exercises.*
- *I would also dedicate maybe most of the problems of the timing to my departure to USA. I was scheduled to leave for a professional development program that was to take a year, and it was very important for me that the organization should have a base from which to develop the programs, before I leave. It was very important not only for me, but for the organization to engage in this process, and I **selfishly squeezed it within the time before my departure.***
- *The 2nd of June was the second election in the post-democratic period for a majority of South Africans. It was an excitement to some and disappointment to others. There was a lot of campaigning that was happening and a lot of people were more interested in the results of the election, especially in the Western Cape, because it was one of the regions that the ANC government was targeting to win the elections since it lost the previous elections. So at that time we were basically **competing with a political process.***

- *The arrangements of **logistics went relatively smooth**, although there were hiccups there and there e.g. during the workshops for NGO's and CBO's , the caterers arrived late for tea and came at the last minute for lunch.*
- *There were identified **mistakes in the printing** of some newspapers with the dates and venues of the workshops. A lot of community radios and papers advertised and invited the public for participation).*
- *Faxes were also sent to civics of all the sampled residential areas. This approach was not helpful at all. Perhaps it would have been useful **to meet the civic organizations in person and discuss the process** in detail so that they could be informed. They would have been confident in addressing questions from the public.*
- ***Attendance in workshops** started very well and dropped tremendously by the end of the month. This could have been due to a lot of external and internal factors as specified above.*

6.3. Outcomes

*The details of the context and **results of the public participation process** have been analyzed by the consultant as indicated in Appendix I, and will be distributed to the affected parties in Cape Peninsula for further public comments, and will inform further the development of EE programs. **This document** is only intended to reflect on the process and the lessons learnt for the planning of future public participation workshops.*

7. Opportunities

- i) As mentioned before, this is a new park in the region, and also this is one of the parks established during the transformation process of SANP. This is an opportunity of reflecting the best practices of involving communities in park activities.
- i) Secondly, there is a lot of contribution that we can make in the region. CPNP have the privilege of being in an urban context, where there is a lot of expertise around us. There is an opportunity to learn together with partners, and to establish good relations with our neighbors by meeting the needs of the people who participated in the public process. This will not only reclaim trust of SANP by the people, but also to be the pioneers in implementing the new mission of the organization.

- ii) The expertise of the variety of academic institutions in the region is one of the strengths of CPNP. The challenge becomes to work collaboratively so as to develop the park as a useful learning environment and a research institute for the benefit of all communities.
- iii) As a national conservation agency, we have the opportunity to engage communities in the Cape Peninsula in active environmental projects that will not only benefit the park, but also promote the conservation ethic within communities.
- iv) CPNP has an advantage within SANP in that it has the most academic qualified SE's. With the right attitude and team building strategy, there is an opportunity of documenting our learning through documents, publications, conferences and research.

8. We Make the Road by Walking

This participatory process of developing educational programs in CPNP is an opportunity to examine a program in its inception, and I found it to be a learning opportunity. Hart, et.al. (1987) supports this form of learning for the following reasons;

- a) it provides the participants the opportunity for self-directed improvement;
- b) it creates conditions for participants, not just for outsider researchers, to think critically about relationships among educational knowledge, institutional structures and educational actions;
- c) it is concerned with helping participants regards their professional work as problematic, heighten their awareness about the educational and social values embedded in the program, and attempt to live those educational values in their day-to-day actions;
- d) Attempts to be sensitive to cultural values of the participants (p203).

Hart,et.al. Al (1987) further argues that participatory research must be co-optable by participants. *To be participatory educational research at all, the research must be capable of being taken over by participants in their own interests, as these interests relate to perceived instances of oppression and injustice. Although the outside researchers are still present and assisting the internal researchers, the issues and concerns that the research focuses on are matters of educational (and political) interest to the insiders (p213).*

The action research orientation of the study is evident in the different phases of the study, which are as follows;

- Phase I** field analysis in Cape Peninsula
- Phase II** literature review of relevant concepts e.g. SE, EE, conservation, community development, adult-education, community-based natural resource management, etc., so as to develop conceptual tools and analytic framework to evaluate EE programs
- Phase III** critically reflect on the development phase of SE programs
- Phase IV** comment on and inform the existing SE policy and contribute in further development of EE policy framework

The approach to the study will be participatory action research (PAR). According to Greenwood and Levin (1998:4), action research (AR) is, *a social research carried out by a team encompassing a professional action researcher and members of an organization or community seeking to improve their situation*). They further argue that *AR promotes broad participation in the research process and supports action leading to a more just or satisfying situation for the stakeholders*. The broad participation on this process will include;

- a reference group consisting of individuals from different organizations and professional /academic backgrounds who will play an advisory and monitoring role .
- Public workshops within Cape Peninsula will continue to be organized to brainstorm environmental issues within their communities, perspectives about the park, and how can the park can work together with communities to solve environmental concerns.
- Meta-analysis (interdisciplinary) literature search will be done to identify conceptual tools for evaluation and development of EE programs with individuals and SE's from different disciplines
- The process of development of programs in CPNP will be constantly shared with colleagues inside the park and in SANP informally, and through workshops
- Subsequent reports and necessary documents which will be a critical reflection of each phase or activity as a process of program development (O'Donoghue and McNaught,

1991) will be used as an evaluative tool to inform the following phases of development. These documents will be shared with interested groups through media and publications to invite wider participation.

- The lessons from the program development process will be documented as a Ph.D. research document and subsequently
- Further the thesis will be shared for further critical analysis for possible adaptation into a process of policy development and further improvement of EE programs in CPNP and hopefully for SANP.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods will be used to collect data so as to gain as much information as possible. I also want to emphasize that the phases as listed above are not prescriptive, the process may change, as the input and collaboration from other stakeholders will inform the process. This research experience is viewed as a learning process, in a learning organization. According to Chambers (1997, p162-74), *accepting a learning process as the mode of operation in (rural) development is to recognize the nature of reality, locally variable, and continually changing.* So the process might take longer than anticipated, more challenges might arise in the process, all these will be reflected as a learning process.

There isn't a better expression I find appropriate that I can use to explain this experience than; 'We Make the Road by Walking', an inspirational conversation between Myles Horton and Paulo Freire (1990), about their experiences in Education and Social Change. They advocate that the only way to learn is through mistakes, field lessons, practice and participation. Paulo (1990:220) argues.... *One of the fears we have as educators is the fear of experiencing new things, of exposing ourselves to mistakes... We are afraid of risking. And it is impossible, just impossible to create without risking. It's absolutely impossible, but it takes time to begin to risk. We must be free; we must be free to believe in freedom.*

*Traveler, there is no road,
The road is made as we walk.*

*As we walk, the road is made,
And on looking back we
see the path that
we shall never tread again.*

Antonio Machado, 1910

Campos de Castilla, 1917

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