

A participatory paradigm for an engaged scholarship in higher education: Action leadership from a South African perspective.

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, Lesley Wood and Ina Louw, 2015,
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innovative

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As I have come to expect, Zuber-Skerritt, Wood and Louw have written a well-structured, well researched book that integrates existing and new knowledge. Their encouragement of engaged scholarship between universities and communities is timely in an age when traditional forms of 'education delivery' are being challenged by digital options. Their continued emphasis on the need for equity, collaboration and both joint and individual action for educational and community improvement are inspirational. They have regularly used the PALAR (Participatory Action Learning and Action Research) approach in this work. Foucault argued for power being exercised by all in an organisation or society: these authors not only encourage such action but provide processes and examples of how to go about it.

PALAR (Participatory action learning and action research) provides a framework to guide those taking such action. This process is well designed and illustrated to enable even newcomers to the approach to understand how it works. There is widespread use of helpful diagrams and acronyms. The language is very accessible. The authors encourage action leadership from within organisations and groups, using the PALAR approach, and demonstrate with reference to specific theories and case studies how this work is both justified and effective. A wide range of theories – both well known and innovative - is drawn on to support the work. A pleasing feature

of the book is its valuing of many kinds of knowledge, and of lifelong and professional learning as ways of overcoming rigid hierarchies and privilege in education.

While Africa has been widely acknowledged as the cradle of civilisation, it has gone through considerable turbulence in recent decades. This turbulence has obviously given rise to innovative forms of thinking and response, and these are evident in the case studies presented in the book. They also underpin the philosophy of collaboration, individual and collective action for social improvement and justice, and engagement with 'the third sector' (those not normally included in traditional educational institutions).

Overall, I believe this book richly deserves the attention of those to whom it is targeted – academics, researchers, staff developers, postgraduate students and consultants.

[Much of this review was included in the reviewer comments published with the book, and is reprinted with permission from the authors.]

References

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. (Gordon, C., Ed.). London: Harvester.