Reflections from an Action Researcher: Why We Do What We Do

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My reflections from the field are shared in an effort to assist others. I commence by describing a social problem that was the focus of an action research project. I then articulate the paradigmatic, methodological and method choices made. I share extracts of data collected during different stages of the project to illustrate cycles of learning, reflection, and the development of actionable knowledge. What is important for researchers who are contemplating choosing action research is to understand the philosophy behind their decisions; that they think carefully about “why we do what we do” in order to fully realise the outcomes of co-learning, developing actionable knowledge and, ultimately, making change.

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Why we do what we do

Philosophy: … a system or school of thought: the philosophy of Descartes; the critical study of the basic principles and concepts of a discipline: the philosophy of law; any system of belief, values or tenets (Wilkes 1979: 1101).

Many of the precepts of action research are not new, but neither are they well understood. I share here my thoughts about using action research from a philosophical perspective. Not that I am a philosopher, far from it. However, it would seem that if researchers wishing to use action research better under-