
Lecture - Youth activists from Khayelitsha, Cape Town reflect on their experiences of activism for social justice

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Biographical note

Associate Professor Salma Ismail Teaches Adult Community Education and Training at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and supervises research. Her research interests include adult learning in informal contexts, namely development projects and social movements and how knowledge is produced in these sites and can lead to social transformation. She publishes in the field of feminist popular education, community-based research, equity, and institutional transformation. In addition, recent research has been on indigenous and decolonial knowledges in social movements and the challenges these present when these knowledges and practices are harmful to women. Part of an international and national network of popular educators (PEP). Taught literacy in communities and active in community-based movements. She has published a book on her research with women building their own houses in a social movement, see Ismail, S. (2015). *The Victoria Mxenge Housing Project-women building communities through social action and informal learning*. UCT Press/ Juta. Cape Town.

Abstract

This lecture will discuss reflections by six activists in Khayelitsha who were interviewed for an international collaborative research project which explored civic forms of youth-led activism which could lead to social change.

The research project was initiated and led by Professor Yvette Daniel from the University of Windsor, Canada. The project took place in different sites in Canada, in South Africa, Kosovo and Syria. The partnership reached out to marginalised youth (ages 16 to 25) from communities perceived as needing healing in these countries. The aim was to investigate different forms of civic engagement and youth activism in situations where youth had been traumatised due to past or ongoing structural violence.

In our discussion and analysis of the interviews, we will draw on radical adult education and social movement theories which argue that education has the potential and can act as a resource for resistance and transformation and in the process new knowledge is produced.

The research methodology was initiated as a participatory action research project and six activists were interviewed by Equalisers from the NGO Equal Education. Most of the activists interviewed were young, some have left social movements such as #Fees must Fall, and others have a history in community activism. Their activism were diverse and ranged from welfare to more militant forms such as Inkululeko in Mind (Freedom in the Mind).

This study demonstrates as Choudry (2014) argues that young people gain critical awareness through their own education and cultural practices and in this process new knowledge is produced.

Note: the article this lecture is based on is co-authored with Lyndal Pottier, School of Education, UCT