Poster Walk: Interventions that work

PT-067

Participatory Action Research (PAR) in support of research integrity: engaging the parties concerned

P.F. Feldmann1, S.B. Blangy2, J.M.C. Chevalier3
1Cirad, Montpellier, France
2Cnrs, Montpellier, France
3Carleton University, Gatineau, Canada

Objective: Given the mixed results obtained from conventional training and educational strategies, a PAR approach is proposed to achieve greater rigor and effectiveness in addressing issues of research integrity.

Method: This presentation focuses on the development and testing of a PAR methodology to support collaborative thinking and action in the field of research integrity. It has been developed in the context of meetings hosted by the GDR PARCS (Groupement de recherche Participatory Action Research and Citizen Sciences), based in Montpellier, in partnership with a Canadian-based PAR lab known as SAS2 Dialogue. It has been first applied within this network and then further tested with a population of PhD students, from different disciplines and backgrounds, in the course of Agreenium’s International Research School.

Results: The proposed methodology allowed participants to identify, in less than two hours, the key moral principles usually involved in addressing matters of research integrity, without any prior lecture based on received knowledge in the field, such as the ANR’s Policy for ethics and research integrity. Participants also generated and discussed a list of possible misconducts, covering most of those otherwise appearing in the National Charter for Research Integrity. Interestingly, participants raised concerns not always reflected in official documents, as they relate to data theft, access and quality, for instance. The doctoral candidate population insisted on the importance of involving senior researchers in using the proposed methodology to further explore issues of research integrity in their own work.

Conclusions: Our approach to research integrity assumes that improvements in this field require the authentic engagement of all those concerned. Our first experiment in using PAR shows highly promising results. Participants quickly identified the moral principles and usual forms of misconduct reported in the literature. The full methodology, to be further tested, invites participants to identify the main drivers or determinants of research integrity and develop appropriate recommendations suited to their context. Further methodological testing is also needed to ensure that the proposed methodology creates safe space for all those involved such that they may engage in group-based ethical discussions constructively.

PT-068

Departmental Ethics Screening: an ethics review intervention that works in more than one way

M.G. Fouché1, L.M. Horn2
1Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa
2University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa

Objective: Formal ethics review is regarded by many researchers in social, behavioural, economic and management, and education research as an unnecessary relic from the Health Sciences imposed on them. Add to this, comments on scientific design from the review committee, and delays in feedback due to an overburdened ethics office and committee and you have a recipe for revolt. We present an intervention designed to locate scientific review and ethics risk level determination in the relevant departments.

Method: A Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) process was launched in January 2012. The aim of this ‘bottom-up’ intervention was to triage the ethical review of projects in the social, behavioural sciences according to an assessment of ethical risk, rather than other criteria such as level or type of degree (for student research), or seniority of applicant. The natural progression of this intervention and its advantages and disadvantages will be presented as a case study.

Results: After five years, the DESC process has matured significantly, but still presents some challenges. A surprising outcome has been its role in raising accountability for and awareness of ethical research at all levels in the institution, from undergraduate student level to seasoned academics and researchers.

Conclusion: Designing an efficient ethics review system remains a challenge. It is however possible to create processes that can reduce turn-around times for low risk research proposals, build ethics review capacity, increase awareness regarding the ethics of research involving human participants and broadly add value to the research endeavour.