Program Research Methodology Seminars
Please note: There may be changes to the programme

Friday 14.00 – 15.30 Research Methodology Seminar 1. Participatory and hermeneutic approaches

In this seminar (3) papers will be presented and the main discussion will centre on participatory and hermeneutic approaches. Delegates interested in developing research methodologies for diaconia are welcome to join the seminar.

Room: Sal 3, Second Floor
Charipersons:
Ulla Siirto, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki, (Ulla.Siirto@diak.fi)
Trygve Wyller, Oslo University, (t.e.wyller@teologi.uio.no)

Developing Good Practice in Diaconia through Participative Qualitative Research
Paper presenter: Andrew Orton, Durham University, UK (a.j.orton@durham.ac.uk)
Abstract;
This paper will reflect on the potential and challenges of using participative qualitative research to develop good practice in diaconia. It will do this by drawing on the case study example of an innovative two year project with Deacons in the Methodist Church in Britain. This project critically explored the Deacons' understandings and narratives of their ministry in a collective and dialogical way. Engaging in such research raises a range of methodological, ethical and interdisciplinary issues as it seeks to support participants' practical theological reflection in ways that may stimulate changes in their practice. Furthermore, such research involves engaging in multifaceted organisational and historical contexts that create the context for this practice. In addition to having an impact on the practitioners involved, research such as this which explores practitioners' narratives also raises questions about how these narratives interact with other perspectives, such as those of others within the Church and wider community, the normative perspectives of the denominations, and the perspectives of those with academic expertise in studying Biblical texts (Cameron et al 2010). In response to these issues, the paper will explore the importance of the reflective engagement of the qualitative researcher when using these methods. This reflective engagement includes considering how the ethics of research impact become an integral part of the researcher's involvement in such work.

Immigrants’ hermeneutics
Paper presenter: Lützen Miedema, University Amsterdam & Moluccan, (miedediac@gmail.com)
Abstract;
In many Western European societies, marginalized immigrants embody a changing economic, social, cultural and religious context. How do they see their own context? What is the hermeneutical approach of especially Christian immigrants to their believing and being church? How do they understand what Western churches call the diaconate? To learn to understand their approaches, Western diaconal researchers may require a specific learning process in hermeneutics. They could opt for a participatory approach to a certain extent. They could also learn from immigrant researchers (fortunately there are more and more). We will discuss these possibilities briefly. Secondly, we will discuss some results of both approaches in respect of Christian immigrants’ hermeneutics, especially in the Netherlands. Guiding questions: How do immigrants ‘read’ their own reality? How are they doing theology? Which place takes ‘the diaconate’ in their hermeneutics? Finally, we will explore briefly what Western diaconal studies possibly could learn for a further development of ‘diaconal’ hermeneutics.

Ethnographic action research as a tool for monitoring faith-based social activity in multicultural and multireligious settings
Paper presenter; Sari Hammar, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki (sari.hammar@diak.fi)
Abstract;
My earlier study dealt with the intercultural competency of Finnish authorities who are working within public social services. During this study I developed and utilized the method I named as Ethnography of Action. This method that combined ethnographic semi-structured interviews and participatory work among work communities is based on the research approach of Ethnographic Action Research. The essential element of this kind of a study is its effort for development and change. In this presentation I will reflect the social and integration activities done by the faith-based civic organisations in multicultural and multireligious settings. The empirical data introduced here is based on
the experiences of the JYVÄ -project, which aim is to strengthen civic organisations competence and create an evaluating and developing model suitable for them. The working method of the project consists of interviews, participatory workshops, cooperational planning and cooperational evaluation. The purpose of this work is to increase cultural and religious sensitivity and develop civic organisations activities more suitable and reachable for diversifying set of users. **Key words:** ethnographic action research, participatory methods, social and integration activities of faith-based civic organisations, multicultural and multireligious settings, evaluation, cultural and religious sensitivity
Saturday 9.00 – 10.30 Research Methodology Seminar 2. Empirical methods

In this seminar (3) papers will be presented and the main discussion will centre on empirical research methodologies. Delegates interested in developing research methodologies for diaconia are welcome to join the seminar.

Room; Sal 4, Second Floor
Chairpersons;
Annette Leis Peters, Diakonhjemmet University College (annette.leis-peters@diakonhjemmet.no)
Charlotte Engel, Ersta Sköndal University College (charlotte.engel@esh.se)

Abstract of research on diaconate in three orthodox Christian churches in the Netherlands
Paper presenter; Jeannette Slendebroek-Meints Centre of Expertise for Societal Issues, Vida Zwolle, Netherlands (j.slendebroek-meints@vvia.nl).
Commentator; Tiina Ikonen

Abstract;
At the end of 2013 a survey took place among church members (deacons and other church members, for example pastors, elders, commission members) of three orthodox Christian churches in the Netherlands. The reason for doing this research is a retreating Government which must result in a participation society in which people take responsibility for their own future and create their own social and financial safety nets, with less help from the national government. In other words this implies an increasing claim on citizens to help and care for each other, especially the vulnerable citizens. The response on the survey was overwhelming, namely 3206 church members. The research question was: To what extend is diaconate executed by church members, what is the role of justice and what actions must be undertaken to achieve a flourishing diaconate in 2020? Conclusions are that church members to a greater extent want to help their neighbors being no members of a church. Doing so church members think that Gospel proclamation is less important than helping your neighbor. They are motivated to help, but on the other hand declare that they do not always have time to help. Furthermore they proclaim that diaconate is a task for all church members, not only for deacons. This means that the tasks of deacons will change: more coordinating, stimulating, calling attention to and networking and less executing. Thereby church members wish that churches cooperate with relief organizations and local governments because they have contacts with vulnerable citizens. Finally it appeared that church members have to a great extent an attitude to do justice in the world, but that actions are (far) less shown.

The Others in Diaconia
Paper presenter; Tiina Ikonen, University of Helsinki, (tiina.h.ikonen@helsinki.fi)
Commentator; Tormod Kleiven

Abstract;
In my doctoral dissertation I have analyzed the international aspects of diaconia in the church of Finland in years 1993-2004. I have defined diaconia as the work of church that was called diaconia in the organization and administrative documents of the church. I have found out that the international aspects of diaconia can be divided into two main categories: international connections within diaconia, and intercultural diaconia that takes place on national level but has to do with cultural minorities living in Finland and coming to Finland. Together these categories form a field of work that has been called international diaconia in the church. One thing that is common to these two categories of international diaconia is that they are both talking about the others and about helping the others. Now I’m looking for ways to observe this otherness in diaconia. The presentation has got two purposes: 1) to outline the theoretical background of otherness in diaconia by pointing out some theoretical viewpoints: How do questions of social involvement and exclusion describe church as a diaconal community? The dilemma of helping – does diaconia need or produce otherness? 2) to open a discussion about searching the otherness in diaconia by sharing a research plan concerning social involvement of migrants in the church of Finland.

Empirical diaconal research and normativity. A discussion about methodology in Diaconal Science illuminated by the term “phronesis” and understanding of power
Paper presenter; Tormod Kleiven, Diakonova University College, Oslo (Tormod.Kleiven@diakonova.no)
Commentator; Jeannette Slendebroek-Meints

Abstract;
Diaconal research may be understood simply as research into a diaconal field. Diaconal research may also be interpreted as research using different academic disciplines, but still based on a chosen understanding of Diaconia anchored in a theological justification. Both approaches are legitimate. My approach is the last one. AIM: I discuss a methodological approach to empirical diaconal research by using a renowned social scientific approach called “Phronetic Social Science” (PSS). This approach is founded on the aristotelic knowledge concept called “phronesis”,...
and the understanding of power presented by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. "Phronesis" has its epistemological center of gravity in contextuality and experience. The understanding of power described of Michel Foucault is anchored in a relational and dynamic movement, where power exercises in a continuous exchange between persons in relation to each other influenced by systems, cultures and structures. Both these elements in PSS are challenging but also in dialogue with core elements in the being and acting of diaconia. The research question is: What kind of relevance has PSS as a methodological approach in diaconal scientific work?