Contents

Transforming welfare institutions through social innovation and action research in Denmark

John Andersen and Annette Bilfeldt

Abstract

The article will present how action research may contribute to social innovation and empowerment in public welfare and cultural institutions (nursing homes and libraries) in a manner that supports the interests of marginalised citizens and local communities, and creates opportunities for positive change. First, we introduce the concepts of empowerment, action research and social innovation along with the roots of these concepts in critical social theory. Secondly, two case studies are presented to analyse two different methodological variants of action research in two different contexts. The first case is about action research in nursing homes, where the objective was to improve elder care through more autonomy and better quality of life for residents and employees. In this project (inspired by critical utopian action research), so called 'future workshops' were applied to create "free space" for reflection and creation of concrete suggestions of social innovation in elder care. The second case is about the transformation of a public library into a community centre. In this case, the aim was to break down barriers between citizens and public institutions in a deprived, multicultural urban area and thereby promote local community empowerment. In this project, 'empowerment evaluation' was used as an action research method. In the final part we compare the two approaches (utopian action research and empowerment facilitation), and discuss the danger of falling into the trap of localism, where successful social innovations: instead of being *up-scaled* and widely distributed, end up as one-offs or simply die out at the very local level

Keywords: action research, social innovation, public libraries, elder care, empowerment evaluation

Transformando instituciones de bienestar a través de la innovación social y la investigación-acción en Dinamarca

Resumen

El trabajo presentará cómo la investigación-acción puede contribuir para la innovación social y el empoderamiento en instituciones culturales y de bienestar público (hogares de ancianos y bibliotecas), de una forma que apoye los intereses de los ciudadanos marginados y las comunidades locales y crie oportunidades para un cambio positivo. En primer lugar, introducimos los conceptos críticos de 'empoderamiento', 'investigación-acción' e 'innovación social', junto con las raíces de estos conceptos en la teoría social crítica. En segundo lugar, se presentan dos casos de estudio para analizar dos variantes metodológicas diferentes de la investigación-acción en dos contextos diferentes. El primer

caso es sobre la investigación-acción en hogares de ancianos, cuyo objetivo fue mejorar el cuidado de ancianos mediante una mayor autonomía y una mejor calidad de vida para los residentes y empleados. En este proyecto (inspirado por la investigación-acción utópica crítica) se aplicaron los llamados "futuros talleres" para crear un "espacio libre" para la reflexión y creación de sugerencias concretas de innovación social en el cuidado de ancianos. El segundo caso es sobre la transformación de una biblioteca pública en un centro comunitario. En este caso, el objetivo fue romper las barreras entre los ciudadanos y las instituciones públicas, en un área urbana multicultural privada, y así promover el empoderamiento de la comunidad local. En este proyecto se utilizó la "evaluación del empoderamiento" como método de la investigación-acción. En la parte final, comparamos los dos enfoques (investigación-acción utópica y facilitación del empoderamiento), y discutimos el peligro de caer en la trampa del localismo, donde las innovaciones sociales exitosas – en vez de ser en mayor escala y ampliamente difundidas – terminan en una sola aplicación o simplemente mueren en el nivel local.

Palabras clave: investigación-acción, innovación social, bibliotecas públicas, cuidado de ancianos, evaluación del empoderamiento.

Introduction

The first International Handbook on Social Innovation was published in 2013 (Moulaert et al. 2013). In the handbook, 'social innovation' is defined as processes that generate a) the provision of resources and services in response to social needs b) the development of trust and empowerment within marginalised populations and c) the transformation of those power relations that produce social exclusion through the transformation of governance mechanisms (Miquel et al. 2013, p. 155). According to this understanding, social innovation concerns "not just particular actions, but also the mobilisation-participation processes and (…) the *outcome* of actions which lead to improvements in social relations, structures of governance, greater collective empowerment, and so on" (Moulaert et al. 2013, p. 2).

The term 'social exclusion' concerns the mechanisms and conditions that fully or partially exclude individuals or groups from self-determination and influence over their own life situations and living conditions, and that fully or partially exclude them from participation and social rights that the majority of citizens have access to in society. The opposite of exclusion is inclusion, meaning processes through which marginalised or excluded groups may acquire more power over their own life situation, self-determination and access to the same living conditions and rights as the majority of society has access to (Larsen & Andersen 2013). Processes leading from exclusion to inclusion can be seen as 'empowerment processes', leading from relative powerlessness to a situation of increased self-determination and influence. 'Social innovation research', then, is studies of social innovative initiatives that provide a response to social exclusion and social inequality (Moulaert et al. 2013, p. 3). In social innovation research there is a collaboration between researchers and stakeholders on social experiments that can support social change that is progressively inclusive and democratic.

The purpose of this article is to show how action research can contribute to social innovation and empowerment in public welfare and cultural institutions (nursing homes and libraries) in a manner that facilitates marginalised citizens' and local communities' power position and creates opportunities for positive change. The article first introduces the criti-

How to reconcile work and university studies – An action research case from Finland

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Abstract

University traditions are confronted by continuous global competition and are challenged to provide a larger and faster highly educated labour force. On the other hand, many adult students work along their studies which prolong earning their degrees. The study explores the perspectives of employers and students, teachers and student advisors coming from two University Consortia, on the need to reconcile work and studies, and on the potential practices to do that. The research setting is that of Action Research applying Democratic Dialogue. The study examines the dialogues of all participant groups, action plans made, practical outcomes after five years of a dialogue based intervention and the learnings about the method used. The study concludes that instead of study-friendly practices at the workplaces, the universities are adopting work-friendly practices, including e-learning, to support their students. The dialogue based method proved to be malleable enough to capture the diverse ideas of participants.

Keywords: Democratic Dialogue, action research cycle, adult students, reconciling work and studies

Cómo conciliar trabajo y estudios universitarios – Un caso de investigación-acción de Finlandia

Resumen

Las tradiciones universitarias se ven confrontadas por una competencia global continua y son desafiadas a proporcionar, de forma rápida, una mayor fuerza de trabajo con una excelente formación. Por otro lado, muchos estudiantes adultos trabajan a lo largo de sus estudios y los prolongan para obtener su grado. El estudio explora las perspectivas de empleadores y estudiantes, profesores y consejeros estudiantiles provenientes de dos Consorcios Universitarios, sobre la necesidad de conciliar el trabajo y los estudios, y sobre las prácticas potenciales para hacer eso. El escenario de investigación es el de la Investigación-Acción aplicando el Diálogo Democrático. El estudio examina los diálogos de todos los grupos participantes, los planes de acción realizados, los resultados prácticos después de cinco años de intervención basada en el diálogo y los aprendizajes sobre el método utilizado. El estudio concluye que en lugar de prácticas de estudio amigable en los lugares de trabajo, las universidades están adoptando prácticas de trabajo amigable, incluyendo la educación a distancia, para apoyar a sus estudiantes. El método basado en el diálogo demostró ser lo suficientemente maleable como para captar las diversas ideas de los participantes.

Palabras clave: Diálogo Democrático, ciclo de investigación-acción, estudiantes adultos, conciliación de trabajo y estudios

Introduction

The traditions of higher education institutions are confronted in many ways by continuous global economic competition. Higher education institutions are expected to contribute to the improvement of the competitive edge of nations. This claim is supported for example by the expansion of higher education, providing more a qualified workforce although the rapid changes in the economy challenge the notion of qualifications leading to lasting careers (Brooks & Everett 2009). Also, the transformation of universities in Europe, and worldwide, towards the entrepreneurial university (Sam & van der Sijde 2014) is one aspect of higher education contributing to the national economic growth. However, also other perspectives have been presented. Kauppinen (2012) argues that emergent collaboration between transnational corporations and research universities gives rise to intermediate organisations and that these phenomena challenge the notion of the universities as being primarily promoters of national economic competitiveness.

In Finland, there are also more levels of economic competition, namely regional and local. University Consortia are one way to take part in this competition. They are network organisations that bring academic activities of their region together and co-operate with regional and local actors. In their efforts to accelerate economic growth, and in some cases also in internationalisation, their main asset is raising the level of education. Some of them offer bachelor and doctoral level education, although the emphasis is on the Open University studies and continuing education in the form of master's degree programmes catered to mature-age students. (University Consortia 2013) As many of them have families and full-time jobs when enrolling in further study, the issues of students working are among important topics discussed at the Finnish University Consortia.

It is hardly an overstatement that higher education institutions are expected to give their input also to the lengthening of working careers, which is seen as a must in ageing western societies. This presents a task to prevent the prolonging and abandoning of studies (Mäkinen, Olkinuora & Lonka 2004) and to accelerate the speed of earning a degree, leading to early entry into the labour market. In the debate on education policy in Finland, where there are no tuition fees in higher education, student employment has been suggested to be one of the main reasons why students prolong their studies (Saari, Mikkonen & Vieno 2013).

Although dependent on the cycles of the economy and the fluctuating demand of a highly educated labour force, the final decision to complete, or not complete, studies are made by students individually. Encouragement, and sometimes pressure, to enforce these decisions, may take place in the form of new legislation and government level steering, followed by university level development activities and projects, and by study-friendly practices of the employers. They could resemble family-friendly practices recommended by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The family-friendly practices may include a large selection of arrangements regarding work and working hours or situation-bound flexibility (OECD Family Database). Respectively, the study-friendly practices, supported by study-friendly organisation culture, could contain many type of working time arrangements, human resource practices in study leaves, and rewards after the completion of studies, as well as fair rules and instructions at a workplace.

Field-configuring events and action research:
A case study from Sparta

Helge Svare, Eugenia Vathakou

Abstract

FCE theory was developed within neo-institutional theory, the aim of which is to understand how institutions and organisations function and change. In this paper, we match this theory with another theoretical tradition: that of action research. We use this theoretical framework to analyse and reflect upon the SpARTathlo event in the Greek town of Sparta. We demonstrate how the framework enables both a more multifaceted and more comprehensive understanding of the event, and how this has practical implications for the improvement of such events.

Key words: field-configuring events, action research, innovation, regional development.

Eventos de configuración de campo e investigación-acción: Un estudio de caso de Esparta

Resumen

La teoría de eventos de configuración de campo (FCE, por sus siglas en inglés) fue desarrollada dentro de la teoría neo-institucional, cuyo objetivo es comprender cómo funcionan y cambian las instituciones y las organizaciones. En este artículo, comparamos esta teoría con otra tradición teórica: la de la investigación-acción. Utilizamos este marco teórico para analizar y reflexionar sobre el evento SpARTathlo en la ciudad griega de Esparta. Demostramos cómo el marco permite una comprensión más multifacética y más amplia del evento, y cómo esto tiene implicaciones prácticas para la mejora de tales eventos.

Palabras clave: Eventos de configuración de campo, investigación-acción, innovación, desarrollo regional

1.   Introduction

During the last 10-15 years there has been a growing interest in the concept and theory of Field-Configuring Events (FCEs). FCEs are settings in which people from diverse organisations and with diverse purposes assemble either periodically or on a one-time basis, under some common agenda (Lampel and Meyer, 2008). According to FCE theory, such events have significant effects on the field in which they function as *temporary focus points*. During a FCE, relationships emerge, discussions are initiated, information is shared, project

ideas are proposed, etc, all of which continue to have effects even after the event, as participants follow up the various initiatives that were initiated during the event, or act upon the information that they got access to. In this sense, the FCE *configures* its corresponding field, i.e., gives it structure and form. Or, as a field is never static, but should rather be conceived as a complex and dynamic web of trajectories, we may say that the FCE gives structure and form to such dynamics, functioning as a temporary, dynamic hub to a multitude of emerging developmental trajectories. To introduce a simile, we could compare the FCE to a stone dropped in water, creating motion where it hits the water, but also concentric circles moving outwards in an increasing distance.

FCE theory was developed within the neo-institutional theory, the aim of which is to understand how institutions and organizations function and change. In this paper, we match this theory to another theoretical tradition: that of action research. The idea of a connection between the two traditions is based on the insight that they both address the phenomenon of *change* in social fields, albeit in a complementary way.

Action research is typically motivated by an endeavour to initiate change or to organise a change process, preferably in order to improve conditions for a group, an organisation or a community (Eikeland & Finsrud, 1995; McNiff, 2013). When action researchers and stakeholders join forces to initiate an action research project, thus, producing the *contexualised knowledge* that is typical of action research, this knowledge is not sought for merely, or even primarily, theoretical reasons; it is from the start dedicated to serve as the basis for the change process that the project aims to accomplish. As has already been stated, FCE theory aims to understand how institutions and organisations function and change. Both FCE theory and action research, thus, are oriented at change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

Another commonality is the emphasis on events. In FCE theory this is the very centre of the theory. However, events also have a significant function in action research, for instance, in the form of dialogue conferences that are organised to collect and reflect on knowledge, make decisions, and design plans for common action (Ekman Philips & Huzzard, 2007; Gustavsen & Engelstad, 1986). Our idea, thus, was that by matching FCE theory and action research, one could use FCE theory to achieve better and more insightful descriptions and analyses of how such conferences, and other events, function within action research, which in the next round could lay the ground for designing even more successful events. A central aspect of FCE theory, is that it is not insignificant how an event is organised. If, from the start, one takes into account that the purpose of the event is to promote an optimal, productive effect, not only *during* the event, but also *after* the event, in the field that the event configures, then one may design the event with this in mind, and thus be able to design more productive events.

In the present paper we will explore the productivity of this perspective by applying it on an event organised as part of an action research project located at the Greek town of Sparta. The aim of the participatory action research (PAR) project was to empower and mobilise local unemployed and underemployed citizens and related local actors, by jointly addressing un/under-employment as a collective problem. It sought to tackle the problem of un/under-employment through a bottom-up action for sustainable economic recovery and local development. As part of this project, an event was organised under the heading of "SpARTathlo – Routes of Taste, Trade and Art" (from now on SpARTathlo). SpARTathlo

Action research with John Dewey's poetic and rhetoric pedagogy

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Abstract

In this article, we describe action research to test the hypothesis that the comprehension of John Dewey's philosophical and educational conceptions can help teachers to construct significant possibilities in teaching artistic languages and forming creative subjects. We consider that Dewey was a precursor of action research as a method for the constitution of the knowledge in the humanities, especially in education, and that the core of his ideas lies in an aesthetic theory. For this reason, his pedagogy can be called poetics, or rhetoric. So, we developed action research with a group of university students from a teacher training course, taking music as an object of reflection and articulation of practical activities. The theme of this experience was the Baião, Brazilian musical genre, chosen as an expressive way to produce aesthetic, rhetorical and poetic experiences. The results emphasise the potential of musical language to promote the association between aesthetic concepts and the Deweyan educational propositions, in order to provide aesthetic appreciation experiences and to foster the constitution of individuals aware of their potential.

Key words: John Dewey, art, education, music, rhetoric

Una investigación-acción con la pedagogía poética y retórica de John Dewey

Resumen

En este artículo relacionamos una investigación-acción para probar la hipótesis de que la comprensión de las concepciones filosóficas y educativas de John Dewey puede ayudar a los profesores a construir posibilidades significativas en la enseñanza de los lenguajes artísticos y en la formación de temas creativos. Consideramos que Dewey fue un precursor de la investigación-acción como método para la construcción de conocimiento en las humanidades, especialmente en la educación, y que el núcleo de sus ideas se encuentra en una teoría estética. Por esta razón, su pedagogía puede ser llamada como poética, o retórica. Así, desarrollamos una investigación-acción con un grupo de estudiantes universitarios de un curso de formación de profesores, tomando la música como objeto de reflexión y articulación de actividades prácticas. El tema de esta experiencia fue el Baião, un género musical brasileño elegido como una forma expresiva de producir experiencias estéticas, retóricas y poéticas. Los resultados enfatizan el potencial del lenguaje musical para promover la asociación entre conceptos estéticos y proposiciones educativas de Dewey, con el fin de proporcionar experiencias de consumación estética y promover la constitución de identidades conscientes de sus potencialidades.

Palabras clave: John Dewey, arte, educación, música, retórica

Introduction

Tripp (2005) reports that there are several types of research which seek to integrate actions performed in practical situations with the search for knowledge about the reality in which such actions take place. The general procedure consists in identifying a problem, formulating hypotheses, planning solutions, producing interventions, and finally monitoring and evaluating such interventions, always aiming to achieve objective improvements in a given reality, the increase of knowledge about the practice investigated, and also about research. The presentation of the method called *action research,* which is attributed to Kurt Lewin, includes theoretical studies and research techniques validated by scientific communities, not only aiming at knowledge of the reality studied academically, but also to transform the current situation through actions that are continually problematised and evaluated.

Action research and other similar forms of research have been highly valued and used in the human sciences, especially in education, because in contrast to the usual methods, they promote conscious, intentional, dialogical and innovative actions, capable of contributing to the realisation of democratic ideals, and also to the possibility of improving the quality of teaching work, and the re-elaboration of the individual and social life of all those involved in the pedagogical process. Despite Lewin being the creator of this method in the 1940s, it may be said that other thinkers and researchers have previously adopted principles of argumentative and active *práxis*, and even methods that combined investigative and reflexive reasoning, research, mobilisation, and action; further studies have expanded the foundations of action research, causing proposals for the training of professionals, notably reflective teachers, and contributing to the emergence of new academic approaches that argue that action is essential (André 2001; Tripp 2005; Silva 2008; Rocha et al. 2016).

It is possible to place the American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859-1952) as a precursor of action research, as a defender of the relevance of this method to the constitution of the knowledge in the humanities. What supports this statement is the Deweyan concept of *reflexive thinking*, or *inquiry*, whose definition includes a general procedure that is very similar to action research. Dewey characterises reflexive thinking as a tool to guide everyday life, as well as guiding the complex formulations of science; it is from a significant problem that the individual seeks a solution, which involves raising information: theoretical, experiential, technological, historical, etc., to reason and articulate hypotheses that answer the initial question, to choose a course of action, and finally, to evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen hypothesis. The process of investigation is completed with the formation of a judgment, which is a moral judgment about the solution of the problem, and can be systematised for the elaboration of theoretical speculations. The solution is never definitive, because in the face of a new problem, albeit similar to the previous one, a new investigation should be initiated (Cunha 2005).

Considering Dewey's conceptions and procedures, we developed action research to test, in a practical way, the hypothesis that the comprehension of Deweyan principles related to the artistic development are able to help teachers to construct significant possibilities in the teaching of artistic languages and to form creative, expressive subjects, participants in the culture. The choice of artistic languages as the subject of this research was based on the thesis that the core of Deweyan ideas lies in an aesthetic theory, which originates a ped-

An action research approach to introduce Dalcroze Eurhythmics Method in a community of older adults as a promising strategy for fall prevention, injury recovery and socialization

Rodney Beaulieu, Hyun Gu Kang and Shoko Hino

Abstract

A community health programme was piloted at San Marcos Senior Activity Center in California over a two-year period, patterned from the Jaques-Dalcroze Eurhythmics method known to reduce fall rates by half, and improve cognition and mood in older adults. The programme involved live improvised music to cue synchronised and improvised body movements, memory and attention tasks, and cognitive-motor games, with collaborative support from older adult participants and kinesiology students. This article presents the older adults' perceptions on the strengths and challenges of the programme, and their recommendations for making improvements in the next action research phase. (Feedback from the kinesiology students appears in a follow-up article.) Focus group interviews revealed that the strengths of the programme included: 1) social and physical pleasure; 2) improved health, including balance, gait, recovery after an injury, confidence in mobility, metamemory skills, and a greater understanding of health promotion and fall prevention strategies; and 3) the collaborative nature of individualized support. Challenges during the first year included transportation, scheduling, and differences in skill levels among participants, however, these were resolved by the second year. Recommendations for improving the programme in the next action research phase include: continuing the current practice, attracting more participants who could benefit from the programme and retaining them, and securing funds to offset costs.

Un abordaje de la investigación-acción para introducir el método Dalcroze Eurhythmics en una comunidad de adultos mayores como estrategia prometedora para la prevención de caídas, recuperación de lesiones y socialización

Resumen

Un programa de salud comunitaria fue desarrollado en el Centro de Actividad Senior de San Marcos en California durante un período de dos años, modelado a partir del método Jaques-Dalcroze Eurhythmics, conocido por reducir las tasas de caída a la mitad, y mejorar la cognición y el estado de ánimo en los adultos mayores. El programa envolvió música improvisada en directo para señalar movimientos del cuerpo sincronizados e improvisados, tareas de memoria y atención, y juegos cognitivo-motores, con apoyo colaborativo de participantes adultos mayores y estudiantes de kinesiología. Este artículo presenta las percepciones de los adultos mayores sobre las fortalezas y los desafíos del programa, y sus recomendaciones para hacer mejoras en la próxima fase de la investigación-acción. (La devolución de

los estudiantes de kinesiología aparece en un siguiente artículo). Las entrevistas con los grupos focales revelaron que las fortalezas del programa incluyeron: 1) placer social y físico; 2) mejora de la salud, incluyendo el equilibrio, el modo de andar, recuperación después de una lesión, confianza en la movilidad, habilidades de metamemoria, y una mayor comprensión de las estrategias de promoción de la salud y prevención de caídas; y 3) la naturaleza colaborativa del apoyo individualizado. Los desafíos durante el primer año incluyeron transporte, programación y diferencias en los niveles de habilidad entre los participantes, aunque, estos fueron resueltos en el segundo año. Las recomendaciones para mejorar el programa en la próxima fase de la investigación-acción incluyen: continuar con la práctica actual, atraer a más participantes que podrían beneficiarse del programa y conservarlos, y asegurar fondos para compensar los costos.

Palabras clave: programa basado en la comunidad, Jaques-Dalcroze Eurhythmics, prevención de caídas, adultos mayores, kinesiología, salud, ejercicio.

Introduction

About one in three U.S. Americans aged 65 or older falls each year, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study (Stevens et al. 2012). In 2014, about 27,000 older adults died as a result from a fall, 2.8 million required emergency treatment related to a fall and of those, 800,000 had to be hospitalised. Bergen et al. (2016) found that 28.7% of older adults experienced at least one fall a year. Of those, 37.5% required medical treatment or had to restrict activity for at least a day. One in five falls results in a serious injury, such as broken bones or a head injury (Alexander, Rivara & Wolf 1992; Sterling, O'Connor & Bonadies 2001) and falls account for the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries (Jager, Weiss, Coben & Pep 1992).

Without intervention methods to prevent falls, we can expect the frequency of injuries to increase as the number of adults over 65 continues to grow. For example, in 2010, 13% of the population was 65 or older and in 2015 the percentage grew to 15. Given that life expectancy is now longer than ever historically (Arias 2015), and that the death rate from fall injuries for United States older adults nearly doubled between 2000 (29.6 per 100,000) and 2013, from 29.6 to 56.7 per 100,000 (Kramarow et al. 2015), preventing falls is an urgent health agenda priority. Research has shown that exercise programmes can reduce the risk of falls among older adults in the community (Gillespie et al. 2012; Lord et al. 2000). In their study of ambulatory and cognitively intact adults aged 60-75 years, Province et al. (1995) identified several techniques to be beneficial: endurance training, flexibility exercises, balance platform, Tai Chi (dynamic balance), and resistance training.

Older adults experience decline in cognitive function and higher rates of depression, and therapeutic intervention has been shown to improve wellbeing (Hill & Stigsdotter-Neely 2005; Hyler 2013). This finding fits the numerous sociological studies summarized by Umberson & Montez (2010) about the value of social relationships and its connection with health and wellbeing. Because enjoyment is positively correlated with cognitive functioning, as Theone and her colleagues found (2016), we assume our programme, Jaques-Dalcroze Eurhythmics (JDE), was a cognitive benefit for the participants in this study as confirmed by their own accounts.