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From working with theatre to action research for more regenerative ways of living and organizing: Interview with Lone Hersted

Lone Hersted, Danilo R. Streck, Miren Larrea

Danilo and Miren:

Thanks, Lone, for this interview in International Journal of Action Research (IJAR). Considering you have recently joined us as an editor of IJAR, it is exciting for us to have the opportunity to get to know you better and share that with the readers of IJAR.

As an introduction to the interview, could you give the reader a perspective of your trajectory?

Lone:

Thanks Danilo and Miren for inviting me to this interview! You asked about my trajectory... Well, to make a long story short... I was born in Denmark in 1969 where I grew up. At the age of 16 I went to Peru as an exchange student and did theatre with a local theatre group. As a young woman in my early twenties, I was educated as an actress at an experimental theatre school and afterwards I studied dramaturgy for five years at Aarhus University (in Denmark) where I took a Master's degree in theatre studies. I worked with experimental theatre for around ten years in Denmark, Norway, Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador, and for a short period I was also involved with actors from Poland from whom I've learned a lot. My work has always been driven by curiosity, a strong social commitment, and the urge to experiment with new approaches and new ways of expression. I've never been interested in just reproducing the old tradition. For a period, I also worked with interactive digital media in relation to performance theatre and installation art. That was several years before the use of digital media in the art world became more widespread.

After becoming a mother to a lovely son, I started working as a consultant in the field of organizational development informed by systemic, narrative and social constructionist ideas and practices. In particular, I worked with team development based on dialogue and creative approaches to learning and collaboration, including the use of roleplaying. I also worked for a period at Aarhus Municipality as a family therapist with refugee families from many different countries.

In 2016 I submitted my PhD dissertation on relational leading and dialogical processes at Aalborg University. The American professor in social psychology, Kenneth Gergen, was my PhD supervisor. My PhD project was carried out within the frame of action research combining roleplaying with reflexive dialogues and reflecting team in small groups of leaders and employees. The aim was to enhance relational and dialogical competences among leaders and

Insider action research in palliative care – the challenges of implementing digital health in a hospice organisation in the UK

Mark Howard

Abstract: This paper describes the first-person experience of being a medical consultant and novice action researcher in a UK hospice setting. A new digital IT system resulted in unexpected changes to productivity. An action research methodology using cycles of co-operative inquiry with hospice staff was chosen to investigate. The new technology caused fears among hospice nurses that the authenticity of the hospice ethos would be lost. The hospice staff were concerned about the loss of their role and identity. Action cycles were used to positively transform the hospice nursing structure and admission process.

Keywords: insider action research, palliative care, digital health, identity

Investigación acción interna en cuidados paliativos- los retos de implementar sistemas digitales de salud en un hospicio en el Reino Unido

Resumen: Este artículo describe la experiencia en primera persona de ser simultáneamente un consultor médico y un investigador en la acción novato en un entorno de cuidados paliativos en el Reino Unido. El punto de partida para el caso fue un nuevo sistema de tecnologías de la información digitales que generó cambios inesperados en la productividad. Para investigar estos cambios se eligió una metodología de investigación-acción que consistió en ciclos de investigación cooperativa con el personal de cuidados paliativos. La nueva tecnología había hecho, a las enfermeras de cuidados paliativos, temer que se perdiera el auténtico espíritu de los cuidados paliativos. El personal del hospicio estaba preocupado por la pérdida de su rol y su identidad. Los ciclos de acción permitieron transformar positivamente la estructura de enfermería de cuidados paliativos y el proceso de admisión.

Palabras clave: investigación acción por internos, cuidados paliativos, salud digital, identidad

1. Introduction

This paper aims to describe the endeavours of a novice action researcher in a healthcare environment. A period of staff upheaval and conflict arose after the introduction of a digital

patient record into the inpatient unit of a hospice. The nursing staff found their workload increase, and the digital system limited their ability to admit patients to the ward. Through action, reflection, and learning, the hospice team explored this paradoxical reduction in organisational efficiency that the technology brought to their working lives and how it affected their perception of their role. It allowed the frontline staff a voice and communicative space so senior management could understand the unintended consequences of information technology (IT) investment.

Throughout the project, the inquiry group's perception of technology changed. Instead of being seen as a novel solution to improve efficiency, they recognised it as a significant factor in the crisis. The creation of the communicative space allowed the co-participants to express their voice and challenge the structures of power that wished to modernise hospice practices using technology. It enabled them to have agency in how they shifted their working practices to account for the technology and bring back the sense of identity in their role as hospice nurses.

Action research has been implemented in palliative care to bring about change and gain knowledge from practice (Hemberg & Bergdahl, 2020; Hockley & Froggatt, 2006; Hynes et al., 2012b; Jack et al., 2009; Kaiser et al., 2019; Molloy & Phelan, 2022). It recognises that participants have a say in how learning is gained about them and the decisions that may affect them. It is intensely political and requires the practitioner-researcher to understand the organisation's power structure and politics.

The World Health Organisation defines palliative care as “an approach that improves the quality of life of patients (adults and children) and their families who are facing problems associated with life-threatening illness. It prevents and relieves suffering through the early identification, correct assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual” (World Health Organisation, n.d.). Although this definition is accepted, in a health organisation, several views about a particular operational problem or process exist. On the other hand, according to Bradbury (2015), action research is

“a democratic and participative orientation to knowledge creation. It brings together action and reflection, theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern. Action research is a pragmatic co-creation of knowing with, not about, people.”

Action research lies within the critical social theory paradigm and differs from the ontological standpoint of positivism (Hockley, 2012). The researcher does not study the issue through their lens; rather, the problem is studied with other participants in a process of joint meaning-making. Coghlan (2019) argues that

“action research focuses on simultaneous action and research in a collaborative manner.”

and describes how researchers can move between theory and practical knowing (the concept of “interiority”). Action research includes a self-knowledge process, allowing one to reflect and critique one's insights. A spiral of action research cycles (action, learning and reflection) guide the project. Reflexivity is a crucial feature of participatory action research and involves examining one's existing ways of thinking, assumptions and underlying patterns of values and worldviews (Kjellström & Mitchell, 2019). An action research approach was used because of the participative principles that lie at its core and to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Appraising Quality in Action Research in Healthcare Settings

Mary Casey, Áine Carroll, David Coghlan, Diarmuid Stokes

Abstract: Criteria for establishing the quality of action research is of increasing interest to researchers and practitioners however, it is not known how well these criteria are used. This review addresses this issue by appraising extant measures that assess quality in action research. Taking Coghlan and Shani's (2014, 2018) four quality factors: context, quality of relationships, quality of the action process and outcomes, this scoping review examines if and how these factors have featured as quality criteria. While all studies included in this review reported on the four quality factors, no study reported in any detail on how any of the factors were integrated with one another. Findings therefore highlight a significant gap in the monitoring and reporting on the quality of action research studies. Addressing these gaps will support the development of future action research aimed at mitigating the lack of quality associated with action research approaches.

Keywords: Quality factors in action research; healthcare, scoping review

Mejorando la Calidad de la Investigación Acción en contextos Sanitarios

Resumen: Los criterios para establecer la calidad de la investigación-acción son de creciente interés para los investigadores y profesionales, sin embargo, no se sabe qué tan bien se utilizan estos criterios. Esta revisión aborda esta cuestión mediante la evaluación de las medidas existentes que evalúan la calidad de la investigación-acción. Tomando los cuatro factores de calidad de Coghlan y Shani (2014, 2018): contexto, calidad de las relaciones, calidad del proceso de acción y resultados, esta revisión exploratoria examina si estos factores han aparecido como criterios de calidad y cómo. Si bien todos los estudios incluidos en esta revisión informaron sobre los cuatro factores de calidad, ningún estudio informó en detalle sobre cómo se integraron entre sí los factores. Por lo tanto, los resultados ponen de relieve una brecha significativa en el seguimiento y la presentación de informes sobre la calidad de los estudios de investigación-acción. Abordar estas brechas apoyará el desarrollo de futuras investigaciones de acción destinadas a mitigar la falta de calidad asociada con los enfoques de investigación-acción.

Palabras claves: Factores de calidad en la investigación-acción; atención médica, revisión panorámica

1. Introduction

Over the past 20 years, action research in health professions education has increased significantly, both in practice and publication. Today, a wide variety of health professions research journals have published at least one article that includes some type of action research,

whether a full study or the inclusion of an action research component more commonly within a mixed methods study. Simultaneously, there have been recurrent calls for enhancing quality in action research, taking quality to refer to a grade of excellence. As members of the academic community, we share responsibility for ensuring quality in action research, whether as researchers and practitioners who design and implement research projects, as manuscript reviewers who critique for journals, as colleagues who discuss and learn from each other, or as scholarly practitioners who draw upon results to enhance and innovate clinical practice. Therefore, a scoping review was performed to establish how the quality of action research studies in healthcare is addressed and to summarise standards of quality and suggest best practices for designing, undertaking and reporting high quality action research.

2. Background

Although, Waterman et al., (2001) recognised action research as a promising strategy for organisational change and health care improvement, nevertheless, healthcare systems across the globe are struggling to cope with the dual challenges of emerging and increasing demands and system constraints (WHO, 2016). A systematic review (Montgomery et al., 2015), examined implementing action research in hospital settings and identified action research as having the potential to optimise operational performance by guiding staff toward a salutogenic (as opposed to pathogenic) approach to the organisation. Previous authors, compliment these findings and show that action research has the potential to facilitate organisational change, teamwork and the empowerment of health care professionals in hospitals and communities thus contributing to improvements in the quality of care (Beringer & Fletcher, 2011; Clark, 2009; Moxham et al., 2010; Viswanathan et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2008).

Key tenets of action research can be summarised as follows (Argyris et al., 1985; Coghlan, 2019).

1. It involves tests of change on real issues in socio-ecological systems. It focuses on a particular issue of concern and seeks to resolve the issue.
2. It involves iterative cycles of steps: constructing an issue, planning action, taking action and evaluating action.
3. The intended change typically involves the positive disruption of established patterns of behaviour.
4. It is a participatory and collaborative endeavour undertaken by individuals who share a mutual concern.
5. It contributes simultaneously to basic knowledge in social science and to social action in everyday life.

Reason and Bradbury (2001) preferred to use the term ‘quality’ in action research rather than validity. They suggest the judge for quality action research be on the basis that it develops a praxis of relational knowledge and knowledge generation reflects co-operation between the researcher and participants. Morrison and Lilford (2001) proposed five key tenets of an idealised version of action research, Levin (2003) has four. Eden and Huxham (1996) developed fifteen characteristics of ‘good’ action research, as a checklist to guide thinking about

From Participatory Research to the Co-construction of Actions – Reflections on how to Reinforce Action Research for Social Inclusion

Isabel Heck

Abstract: An important part of the action research literature focuses on the participatory dimension of the research process and is much less explicit on the connection of research and action or on how researchers contribute to tangible transformations, in particular outside organizational or education settings. Drawing from seven years of experience as an action researcher within an anti-poverty organization dedicated to improving living conditions in a low-income neighborhood in Montreal (Canada), this article seeks to enhance our comprehension of how action researchers can more effectively contribute to transformational action. Our study identifies four primary functions of research within the examined model and underscores three core characteristics to strengthen the integration of knowledge production and action. These characteristics encompass expanding the role of researchers to actively participate in both the co-development and implementation of action; engaging in long-term commitments and partnerships in a given setting, preferably being even a researcher based in the setting; and fostering collaborations with universities. By elucidating these key elements, this article intends to offer insights into improving the impact of action research, ultimately advancing our ability to contribute to transformative change for more inclusive and sustainable societies.

Keywords: Action research, co-construction, reflective practice, social change, social inclusion, Montreal, Canada

De la investigación participativa a la co-construcción de acciones – Reflexiones sobre cómo reforzar la investigación acción para la inclusión social

Resumen: Una parte importante de la literatura sobre investigación-acción se centra en la dimensión participativa del proceso de investigación y es mucho menos explícita en la conexión entre la investigación y la acción o en cómo las personas investigadoras contribuyen a transformaciones tangibles, en particular fuera de los entornos organizacionales o educativos. A partir de siete años de experiencia como investigadora en la acción dentro de una organización contra la pobreza dedicada a mejorar las condiciones de vida en un vecindario de bajos ingresos en Montreal (Canadá), este artículo busca mejorar nuestra comprensión de cómo las personas investigadoras en la acción pueden contribuir de manera más efectiva a la transformación. Nuestro estudio identifica cuatro funciones principales de la investigación dentro del modelo examinado y subraya tres características centrales para fortalecer la integración de la producción de conocimiento y la acción. Estas características abarcan ampliar el papel de las personas investigadoras para que participen activamente tanto en el codesarrollo como en la implementación de acciones; participar en compromisos y asociaciones a largo plazo en un entorno determinado, preferiblemente como persona investigadora local; y fomentar cola-

boraciones con las universidades. Al dilucidar estos elementos clave, este artículo pretende ofrecer ideas para mejorar el impacto de la investigación-acción y, en última instancia, mejorar nuestra capacidad de contribuir al cambio transformador para sociedades más inclusivas y sostenibles.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción, co-construcción, práctica reflexiva, cambio social, inclusión social, Montreal, Canadá

De la recherche participative à la coconstruction d'actions – Pistes de réflexion pour renforcer la recherche-action pour l'inclusion sociale

Résumé: Une part considérable de la littérature sur la recherche-action est axée sur la dimension participative du processus de recherche et aborde peu le lien entre la recherche et l'action ou sur la façon dont les chercheur·e·s contribuent à des transformations tangibles. Cela est particulièrement le cas pour les recherches qui se situent en dehors des contextes organisationnels ou éducatifs. Cet article vise à améliorer notre compréhension de comment les chercheur·e·s peuvent contribuer plus efficacement à l'action transformatrice, en nous appuyant sur notre expérience comme chercheuse ancrée au sein d'un organisme de lutte contre la pauvreté à Montréal (Canada). Nous identifions quatre fonctions principales de la recherche dans le modèle examiné et soulignons trois caractéristiques clef pour renforcer l'imbrication entre la production de connaissances et de l'action. Ces caractéristiques consistent à élargir le rôle des chercheur·e·s jusqu'à l'élaboration et à la mise en œuvre d'actions, à investir des engagements et des partenariats avec des acteurs terrain à long terme, pouvant aller jusqu'à un ancrage même de la recherche sur le terrain, et, finalement, à bâtir des partenariats avec les universités. En abordant ces éléments clés, cet article entend offrir des perspectives pour améliorer les retombées de la recherche-action et renforcer ainsi notre capacité à contribuer à transformations sociales vers un monde plus inclusif et durable.

Mots-clefs: Recherche-action, coconstruction, réflexivité, changement social, inclusion sociale, Montréal, Canada

1. Introduction

The goal of action research is to resolve a specific problem in a given social setting through collaborative and iterative processes between knowledge production and transformative action. Action research “ultimately exists to enhance the capacity of everyone to play a significant role in determining the conditions of their own lives” (Fricke et al., 2022:15), underscoring a commitment for empowerment, democracy and social justice. While there is a great variety of approaches in action research (Reason and Bradbury, 2015; Anadon and Savoie-Zajc, 2007), most have in common to be much more explicit on the research than the action component. There is detailed literature of how to engage communities as active participants in knowledge production through participatory methods (such as Gélinau et al., 2024; Skelton et al., 2024; Fanjoy and Bragg, 2019; Fine and Torre, 2021; Larsson and

Chasing balloons as scientific practice: On transformative co-creation and epistemic ethics of care in the emerging field of youth citizen social science

Aina Landsverk Hagen, Sara Berge Lorenzen

Abstract: How does including youth in research within a citizen social science framework challenge and transform our participatory action research practices and approaches? Through a storytelling journey we unravel how the training and subsequent conducting of a co-creative research process with young citizen social scientists are evolving from a cacophony of traditions, approaches and disciplines, among them youth participatory action research, action research in organizations, citizen science and social anthropology. The article is based on empirical research with a group of young people in Oslo, Norway, involved in a large collaborative citizen social science project on social inclusion of youth in Europe. We have witnessed closely how an *epistemic ethics of care* is integral to securing the *epistemic justice* of youth and argue that citizen social science can promote both epistemic justice and *epistemic abundance* by including youth in all parts of a rigorous research process that produces new scientific knowledge. Yet, we found that performing an ethics of care is (close to) impossible within the current conditions and structures of social sciences, as our ideals and views on what science is, delimit the practices of relational care necessary for inclusive processes. The implications of our findings call for an ethics of care framework for both citizen social science and action research practices.

Key words: Youth, ethics of care, citizen social science, action research, co-creation

La persecución de globos como práctica científica: Sobre la co-creación transformadora y la ética relacional del cuidado en el emergente campo de las ciencias sociales ciudadanas desarrolladas por personas jóvenes

Resumen: ¿Cómo desafía y transforma nuestras prácticas y enfoques de investigación de acción participativa la inclusión de jóvenes en la investigación dentro de un marco de ciencia social ciudadana? A través de un viaje narrativo desentrañamos cómo la formación y posterior realización de un proceso de investigación co-creativa basada en la ciencia social ciudadana con jóvenes están evolucionando en el marco de una cacofonía de tradiciones, enfoques y disciplinas. Entre ellas destacan la investigación-acción participativa juvenil, la investigación-acción en organizaciones, la ciencia ciudadana y la antropología social. El artículo se basa en una investigación empírica con un grupo de jóvenes de Oslo, Noruega, involucrados en un gran proyecto colaborativo de ciencias sociales ciudadanas sobre la inclusión social de los jóvenes en Europa. Hemos sido testigos de cómo una ética epistémica del cuidado es un elemento integral de la justicia epistémica de la juventud y argumentamos que las ciencias sociales ciudadanas pueden promover tanto la justicia epistémica como la abundancia epistémica al incluir a la juventud en todas las fases de un proceso de investigación riguroso que produce nuevo conocimiento científico. Sin embargo, descubrimos que llevar a cabo una ética

del cuidado es (casi) imposible dentro de las condiciones y estructuras actuales de las ciencias sociales, ya que nuestros ideales y puntos de vista sobre lo que es la ciencia delimitan las prácticas de cuidado relacional necesarias para procesos inclusivos. Las implicaciones de nuestros hallazgos exigen un marco de ética del cuidado tanto para las ciencias sociales ciudadanas como para las prácticas de investigación-acción.

Palabras clave: Juventud, ética del cuidado, ciencias sociales ciudadanas, investigación-acción, co-creación

Prologue

Frederick (research assistant): How does it feel today?

Maryam (Youth Citizen Social Scientist, YCSS): It was a lot of fun, actually. I'm a little impressed too. That we have come this far. At the start I was like, shit, I am not able to come up with any ideas. And look where we are now. So, I like it, it's fun. I am very lucky to have been a part of it.

Frederick: And we are lucky to have you with us.

1. Walking an article: An invitation to a storying journey

How should we write this article, I, Aina, ask my colleague Sara. She looks at me with indetermination written in her face and hesitates before answering. “Maybe use the IMRaD model?” The what model?, I reply. “The IMRaD model, the way they taught us in the interdisciplinary writing course at the university. Introduction, Method..., what was the R?”, Sara ponders. We look at each other, skeptically. No, that’s not something we were taught as students in social anthropology. The discipline that hails the empirical narratives before all else and that treats theory as the necessary, but invisible soft nails weaving meaning from the stories people “tell” us by living their daily lives. Let’s do it our way, meaning we will experiment with form and process simultaneously¹, by developing our thoughts alongside our writing, thus exposing our “bumpy road” experiences of facilitating for a co-creative citizen social science process with youth belonging to an inner city district in Oslo; Norway, in rhythmic interference with (urban) nature and our material surroundings. We will practice narrative inquiry as an ethical commitment towards making meanings move², with the intent of finding the story in the experience³ and making mindfully sense of the processes together⁴. We therefore invite you, the reader, as a co-participant of this research story, in “thinking with, not about”⁵ what science and scientists are “becoming with”⁶ when engaging with non-academic interlocutors as partners – and sometimes leaders (we will get back to this provoking

1 Tolstad et al. 2017, Hagen & Osuldsen 2021.

2 Bochner & Herrmann 2020.

3 Stone 1997.

4 Weick et al. 1999, Bradbury et al. 2019.

5 Bochner & Herrmann 2020:298.

6 Haraway 2008.