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Look both ways before crossing: Using a triangulation of art-based methods to transform student – staff relationships as it relates to school climate

Jennifer Beaudoin, Miranda D'Amico

Abstract: By engaging in an art(s)-based action research case study, youth from a Montréal school considered student-staff relationships as they relate to school climate. Three arts-based data collection methods (timeline, relational map, and photovoice) were used to gain awareness on how relationships with staff constituted the primary determinant of student behavior, student engagement, and a robust school climate. Positive relationships were found to be facilitated by staff who authentically engage with students' lives outside the classroom, demonstrate equity and discretion in classroom management practices, and allow for redemption following rule infractions or conflicts. With the goal of enacting sustainable change in the school environment, participants collaborated in drafting a *Call to Action* addressed to the school's administration, advocating for the creation of a student council as a space to voice their positions, build better communication with staff, and foster a healthy school climate. The paper thus illustrates how art(s) based action-research can contribute to transforming school environments.

Keywords: Participatory Action Research; Arts-based methods; Student – staff relationships; School climate; Student council

Mira a ambos lados antes de cruzar: Utilizando la triangulación de métodos de investigación-acción basada en las artes para estudiar las relaciones entre estudiantes y personal en relación con el clima escolar

Resumen: Al participar en un estudio de caso de investigación-acción basado en el arte, los jóvenes de una escuela de Montreal consideraron las relaciones entre estudiantes y personal del centro educativo en relación con el clima escolar. Se utilizaron tres métodos de recopilación de datos basados en las artes (línea de tiempo, mapa relacional y fotovoz) para generar conciencia sobre cómo las relaciones con el personal constituían el principal determinante del comportamiento estudiantil, la participación de los estudiantes y un clima escolar sólido. Se descubrió que las relaciones positivas son facilitadas por el personal que se involucra auténticamente con la vida de los estudiantes fuera del aula, demuestra equidad y discreción en las prácticas de gestión del aula y permite la redención después de infracciones o conflictos. Con el objetivo de implementar un cambio sostenible en el entorno escolar, los participantes colaboraron en la redacción de un *Llamado a la Acción* dirigido a la administración de la escuela, abogando por la creación de un consejo estudiantil como un espacio para expresar sus

posiciones, construir una mejor comunicación con el personal y fomentar un clima escolar saludable. Por lo tanto, el artículo ilustra cómo la investigación-acción basada en el arte puede contribuir a transformar los entornos escolares.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción participativa, métodos basados en las artes, relaciones entre estudiantes y personal de centros escolares, clima escolar, consejo estudiantil

1. Introduction

Despite their often-common roots, school climate research is reflected in the diversity of climate typologies that have evolved (Marraccini et al., 2020). “Generally accepted as the quality and character of school life, the discussion around school climate is linked to differences among researchers in theory base, the hypothesized interrelationships of variables, unit of measurement choices, and the validity of subjective and qualitative data often based on participant or observer perception” (Cohen, et al, 2009, p. 182). Rather than shy away from the task of situating new research within the existing literature, here we move beyond viewing school climate as an undesirable albatross or an unattainable unicorn, but rather stand with Anderson (1982) in her seminal review of envisioning school climate as a phoenix, born of the ashes of past school effects research. Here, school climate is positioned as a “multidimensional construct consisting of a combination of interrelated school characteristics shown to determine student learning and behavior, and one that schools could [and should] successfully target for change” (Anderson, 1982, p. 372).

While the importance of school climate has been established, discerning the quality of a school climate has remained largely rooted in the data associated with office referrals or student grades (Daily, et al., 2019; Gietz & McIntosh, 2014). While academic success and a decrease in office referrals and suspensions merit accolades, how is one to determine the cause(s) of these fluctuations, or if these are even the criteria we should be using as a barometer to a healthy school climate? To address this query, we focus rather on the social dimension of school climate, specifically, student-staff relationships, as this rapport is seen to correlate with academic achievement, preventing behavior problems, and promoting social and emotional well-being (Bear, 2020).

Giving pride of place to students as active stakeholders and experts on their own experiences, this examination propels against traditional research, which can be self-serving, extractive, and where the “passive participation of children have historically been instrumentalized” (Loignon, et al, 2020, p. 211). Employing an Action Research methodology, youth are invited to participate in creating a space where, while learning the research process, “they could potentially transform themselves, those they work with, and the systems of which they are an intrinsic part” (Seeley, 2011, p. 84). With the goal of seeking insight beyond the intellectual, but rather through socially constructed experiential knowing, youth participants in this study were immersed in three arts-based data collection methods; relational map, timeline, and photovoice. “Recognized for engaging communities in action research processes that transcend age, education, language, and cultural barriers,” arts-based methods lean into children’s natural gifts for self-expression to “re-thread relationships, re-encounter themselves, and develop sensitivities to the complex challenges facing their community, in a space

How does the collaboration work?

An Analysis of Power in the Disabled in Politics Cooperative Project and its Implication for Action Research

Claudia Spiess, Suna Kircali

Abstract: The article addresses the problem of power relations in cooperative and action research projects. The Disabled in Politics project, a cooperative research project, was conducted in Switzerland by three institutions: 1) the Tatkraft Association, an association of disabled people; 2) the Centre for Social Law at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW); and 3) the Chair of Special Education: Society, Participation, and Disability at the University of Zurich. However, the different resources of the cooperation partners led to practical problems with power. Therefore, we analyze the collaboration within the project through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital and reveal power relations and shifts based on critical project decisions. This article examines the influence of the partners' institutional backgrounds on the collaboration and how their positions changed throughout the project. Finally, Bourdieu's template is proposed to better understand power relations in action research projects.

Keywords: collaboration, cooperative projects, power analysis, political participation, disability, Pierre Bourdieu, theory of capital

¿Cómo funciona la colaboración?

Un Análisis del Poder en el Proyecto Cooperativo *Disabled in Politics* (Discapacitados en la Política) y sus Implicaciones para la Investigación-Acción

Resumen: El artículo aborda el problema de las relaciones de poder en proyectos cooperativos y de investigación-acción. El proyecto *Disabled in Politics*, un proyecto de investigación cooperativa, fue llevado a cabo en Suiza por tres instituciones: 1) la Asociación Tatkraft, una asociación de personas discapacitadas; 2) el Centro de Derecho Social de la Universidad de Ciencias Aplicadas de Zúrich (ZHAW en sus siglas en inglés); y 3) la Cátedra de Educación Especial: Sociedad, Participación y Discapacidad de la Universidad de Zurich. Sin embargo, los diferentes recursos de los socios cooperantes provocaron problemas prácticos vinculados al poder. Por lo tanto, analizamos la colaboración dentro del proyecto a través de la teoría del capital de Pierre Bourdieu y revelamos relaciones de poder y cambios basados en decisiones críticas del proyecto. Este artículo examina la influencia de los antecedentes institucionales de los socios en la colaboración y cómo sus posiciones cambiaron a lo largo del proyecto. Finalmente, se propone la plantilla de Bourdieu para comprender mejor las relaciones de poder en proyectos de investigación-acción.

Palabras clave: colaboración, proyectos cooperativos, análisis del poder, participación política, discapacidad, Pierre Bourdieu, teoría del capital

1 Introduction

This article analyzes the project *Disabled in Politics* conducted in Switzerland from 2019 to 2022. It aims to portray and critically reflect on the cooperation between the three project partners. The article was initially intended as a field report on practical cooperation issues; however, an important insight regarding the partners' diversity was obtained. From the beginning, the partners considered their diversity one of the project's strengths; nevertheless, it also created an uneven distribution of resources and power.

The power distribution issue motivated us to examine Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, which is fundamentally a theory of power (Swartz, 2013), and consider the project partners' collaboration within this theoretical framework. Interestingly, Suna had already proposed Bourdieu's theory of capital in the project and discussed it with the team to better understand power structures between people and institutions in the research field and to find a more conscious way of handling unequal resources as a working team. For various reasons, however, the idea was shelved at the time.

The sensitive issue of the distribution and exercise of power in research related to disabled people has been discussed for participatory research (e.g., Bergold & Thomas, 2012; Kubanski & Goetze, 2018; Reisel, Egloff & Hedderich, 2022). In contrast, this analysis examines the distribution and exercise of power in a collaborative project with participatory elements. Although not initially labeled as an action research project, this project has some commonalities with action research. Therefore, we believe that our considerations could be relevant to researchers in the field of action research.

Claudia was the operational manager of the qualitative interview study (one element of the project) and the cooperation coordinator for the overall project. At the same time, Suna was responsible for *Tatkraft's* project management. Although this adds a second perspective to this analysis, Suna could not be equally involved in analyzing power and capital relations due to limited resources. To frame the article's perspective precisely, Claudia is a non-disabled woman with a degree in special education, and Suna is a disabled non-binary person with a degree in political science and sociology.

We first examine how power relations can manifest in action research projects, then briefly explain the concept of disability applied in the project. The article then introduces the *Disabled in Politics* project and presents seminal events and decisions that reveal the practical problems with power that arose. Subsequently, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital and power is outlined, followed by a discussion of relevant power fields, the field shares of the project partners, and relevant forms of capital within the project. Moreover, we discuss the shifting balance of power and consider how Bourdieu's capital theory might contribute to a better understanding of power relations in action research projects.

Struggles for power or a better position in capital distribution often occur unconsciously and without dishonest intentions (Bourdieu, 1986). This article aims to highlight these power struggles.

Participatory Action Research for Educational and Social Inclusion

Experiences in scenarios of social segregation and unwanted isolation

Imanol Telleria, Maria del Mar Lledó

Abstract: The article compiles the knowledge generated in various areas of social exclusion such as social segregation and unwanted isolation, through participatory action research processes carried out in the context of the internships of the Master's degree in Community Participation and Development of the University of the Basque Country. It is the relationship networks that are established that give rise to new knowledge, based on the analysis of the feedback that arises between the most socially vulnerable, the associations in which they participate and university students and academics. Social and tangible challenges are set out on which to strengthen individual and collective competences and promote an awareness that has an impact on both personal change and the environment.

The systematization of the experiences and the critique of the process, carried out by the tutors with the role of researchers, allows us to identify the characteristics of the spaces from which values are developed and consensus on common interests, rights and needs is reached. An assessment of their own and common learning, by the different participating agents (educational, professional and community) highlights the weaknesses, strengths and opportunities that need to be faced in order to be competent in the development of social cohesion dynamics. The aim is to contribute to greater participation of people in vulnerable situations.

Keywords: Social transformation, social inclusion, action-research, citizen participation

La investigación acción participativa como metodología educativa y para la inclusión social

Resumen: El artículo recoge el conocimiento generado en diversas áreas de exclusión social como la segregación social y la soledad no deseada, a través de procesos de Investigación-acción participativa realizados en el contexto de las prácticas del Máster en Participación y desarrollo comunitario de la Universidad del País Vasco. Son las redes de relación que se establecen las que dan lugar a nuevos saberes, basados en el análisis de la retroalimentación surgida entre las personas socialmente más vulnerables, las asociaciones en las que participan y estudiantes y académicas universitarias. Se exponen desafíos sociales y tangibles, sobre los que fortalecer las competencias individuales y colectivas y promover una conciencia que impacte tanto en el cambio personal como en el entorno.

La sistematización de las experiencias y la crítica del proceso, realizados por las personas tutoras con el rol de investigadoras, permite identificar las características de los espacios desde los que se desarrollan valores y se llega a consensos de intereses, derechos y necesidades comunes. La valoración del aprendizaje, por parte de los diferentes agentes participantes (educativos, profesionales y comunitarios), pone de manifiesto a qué debilidades, fortalezas y oportunidades es necesario hacer frente, a la hora de ser competentes en el desarrollo de

dinámicas de cohesión social intentando incidir en la mayor participación de las personas en situación de vulnerabilidad.

Palabras clave: Transformación social, Inclusión social, Investigación-acción, Participación ciudadana

1. Introduction

The ethical and social commitment that needs to be included in research processes to ensure social inclusion calls for new sources of knowledge, as well as cultural knowledge, to be included under the principles of action research. The social groups and public entities working in the field of social exclusion must be connected so that those who are marginalised can be trained and become independent (Riedy et al., 2023). Learning and improving their skills are aspects that need to be addressed for organised participation.

This article analyses participatory processes developed between 2018 and 2024, in various areas of social segregation, in which environments were generated where life experiences were shared. The projects on which the article is based are a result of the collaboration between the academic committee of the Master's degree in Community Participation and Development of the UPV/EHU and EAPN-Euskadi's participation group, with specific topics being set for the students to develop during each course, under the supervision of professionals from the participating entities together with teachers of the Master's degree. The aim is twofold: on the one hand, the training of the people enrolled in the Master's degree and of all those involved; and, on the other, transformation, seeking, through participation, an empowerment of the groups furthest from power. Thus, tangible social challenges can be addressed, as well as those involving social exclusion and segregation, which require complex responses formulated with the help of the feedback between social organizations and society.

Last of all, the article monitors the emotional and relationship dynamics that arise in the participatory process as key aspects of the transformative power and of the development of both an individual and collective consciousness, with an aim to demonstrate how these elements can be a major contribution to the transformative potential of action research.

2. Conceptual theoretical framework

The concepts that inspired the processes were (i) community development in spaces of social exclusion, (ii) social segregation expressed in exclusion and unwanted isolation, and (iii) fraternity and emancipation in the dynamics of social transformation. These three concepts are related from the perspective of transformative action insofar as they propose a diagnosis (segregation understood particularly as fragmentation), a scenario (spaces of exclusion in community dynamics) and a proposal for transformative action (driven by the idea of fraternity and emancipation). Therefore, feedback processes between agents must be reinforced, so that dialogue and active participation are facilitated as a result of the interaction between the different levels and with the help of an integrated vision (Mollo Flores & Deroncele Acosta, 2022)

Initiating a Dynamic Co-Constructed One Health Project: reflections from Participatory Action Research in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo¹

Eloïse Dagneau, Fanny Procureur, Krizia Vieri, Davide Olchini, Louisa Ben Abdelhafidh, Anne-Laurence Franzini

Abstract: In an era of interconnected global challenges, the One Health (OH) approach emerges as a beacon of collaborative resilience in the face of emerging pandemics. The implications are particularly profound in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a known hotspot for infectious diseases. Recognizing this, we employed Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a community-centered approach to implementing the OH framework to address environmental, animal, and human health issues in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park (KBNP) area. Through a structured process of knowledge integration, we enhance our comprehension of underlying issues while establishing a sustained partnership with the community. This approach ensures that solutions are not only contextually relevant but are the product of a collaborative co-construction, thereby reinforcing long-term resilience at the community level.

This article explores the application of this approach, detailing the co-construction process and sharing challenges regarding power dynamics, and lessons learned from the project implementation in a humanitarian context.

Keywords: co-construction, community involvement, cross-sectoral collaboration, One Health, participatory action research, power dynamics

El Inicio de un Proyecto *One Health* Co-construido: Reflexiones desde la Investigación-Acción Participativa en el Parque Nacional Kahuzi-Biega, República Democrática del Congo

Resumen: En una era de desafíos globales interconectados, el enfoque One Health (OH) emerge como un modelo de resiliencia colaborativa frente a las pandemias emergentes. Las implicaciones son particularmente profundas en la República Democrática del Congo (RDC), un conocido punto crítico de enfermedades infecciosas. Reconociendo esto, empleamos la Investigación de Acción Participativa (IAP) como un enfoque centrado en la comunidad para implementar el marco de OH para abordar problemas ambientales, de salud animal y humana en el área del Parque Nacional Kahuzi-Biega. A través de un proceso estructurado de integración de conocimientos, mejoramos nuestra comprensión de los problemas subyacentes y al mismo tiempo establecemos una asociación sostenida con la comunidad. Este enfoque garantiza que las soluciones no sólo sean contextualmente relevantes, sino que sean el producto de una co-construcción colaborativa, reforzando así la resiliencia a largo plazo a nivel comunitario.

1 Project financed by the “ Direction générale de la coopération au développement et de l’aide humanitaire (DGD) ”

Este artículo explora la aplicación de este enfoque, detallando el proceso de co-construcción y compartiendo desafíos relacionados con la dinámica de poder y las lecciones aprendidas de la implementación del proyecto en un contexto humanitario.

Palabras clave: co-construcción, compromiso comunitario, colaboración intersectorial, One Health, investigación acción participativa, dinámicas de poder

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled a reassessment of our healthcare strategies to more effectively manage future crises. Outbreaks are expected to escalate as human populations expand into new geographic regions, with increased interactions between wildlife, domestic animals, and their ecosystems (Costello et al., 2011; Lainé & Morand, 2020; Mpandeli et al., 2018). This heightened contact creates more opportunities for pathogen spillover events, resulting in the emergence of zoonoses (Fontanet, 2007; Deivanayagam et al., 2023; Fasina et al., 2021). Faced with the complexity of the challenges we encounter in terms of health and the environment, it is necessary to act through an integrated approach, such as a One Health (OH) approach: *“OH is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment are closely linked and interdependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development”*. (Adisasmito et al., 2022)

This interconnectedness is most keenly felt by the world’s most vulnerable communities who disproportionately bear the consequences of climate change, despite contributing the least to greenhouse gas emissions. These populations are hit hardest by environmental degradation, extreme weather events, and resource depletion, which in turn deepen poverty and exacerbate social inequalities (Hickel & Slamersak, 2022; Oxfam Report, 2022; Kelly-Hope et al., 2023; Tollefson, 2020). Their precarious conditions and limited resources make them particularly susceptible to the health impacts of environmental shifts, including the spread of zoonotic diseases, decline in crop yields, decreased livelihood sources, ... which disproportionately affect regions with limited access to healthcare (Paltriguera et al., 2024) A striking example of this dynamic can be seen in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park (KBNP) in eastern DRC, where deforestation and land use changes have significantly disrupted both human and ecosystem. Since the 1970s, autochthonous populations were displaced from their ancestral lands leading to tensions over land access (Bombwe et al., 2021). This region of South Kivu experiences an annual deforestation rate of 1200 000 Ha/year on average, causing ongoing erosions and landslides that are particularly harmful to natural resources and endogenous species. These events severely affect the socio-economic welfare of the local society (ADMR Bukavu, 2024; C. & T.T., 2023; Kelly et al, 2022). The local populations, already facing high levels of poverty and with 74 % dependent on agriculture for employment, are losing their main source of income (Kasaïs & Kivu, 2023). In response to these economic

Exploring (safe) spaces to communicate and connect¹

Patricia Canto, Danilo R. Streck, Miren Larrea

Danilo and Miren:

Thanks, Patricia, for this interview in International Journal of Action Research (IJAR). You have now been editor of this journal for some time, and it is exciting for us to have the opportunity to get to know you better and get to know your perspective on action research and, more specifically, IJAR.

As an introduction to the interview, could share your trajectory with the reader?

Patricia:

Thank you, Danilo and Miren, for inviting me to do this interview. Yes of course, I can share some things about my trajectory that connect to how I approach action research. I was born in Mexico City in 1964, in a middle-class family with progressive values. My parents shared a profound love of our country, our traditions and culture and were also very open to the world around them. My father travelled frequently within Latin America through his job and used to keep his left-over bills and coins in a little black chest. I loved to play with them, imagining other countries and their ways. My mother is half Lebanese, and although I did not meet my grandfather because he died when she was young, his culture was present through the stories she shared about him, and in her sweet tooth! My mother and my father were great readers and actively encouraged their children to find pleasure in reading and to be aware of and understand world developments and how they affected our country. Among my fondest memories are our late and long family breakfasts on Sundays, sipping coffee and sharing the newspapers sprawled on the table. Slipping into this routine with them every time I went back to visit was always very soothing. The last time I experienced it was in 2019, a year before my father passed away.

When I was in primary school we moved to Darien Connecticut because my father was offered a position in the New York City office of the place he worked in. It was the 1970's and we were the only Mexican family there. I did not speak English, but I learned fast, as children do. My mother tells the story of how the blonde little girl next door, and I, spent the first months playing together in the attic without saying a word. I have fond memories of our time as a family there, where I played in the snow for the first time, heard about the Vietnam war and read Charlie Brown comics. Back in Mexico my parents were careful that we did not lose the new language we had learned (as they had been careful that we did not lose Spanish while living in Darien), and since I loved reading, they bought books in English for me on every occasion, opening a whole new world of literature for me. I later became part of the International Pen Pal Association and established written correspondence by post, with young

1 The title of my interview is inspired in a book of autobiographical essays by Mexican writer Olivia Teroba, titled *Un lugar seguro*, published in 2021 Editorial Las Afueras, Barcelona.