

Centre for Qualitative Research

DEMAND-LED QUALITATIVE INNOVATIONS SESSIONS

SESSION THREE Participatory Action Research

Dr Jo Howard

Tuesday 19 May 2021

Session Summary

The session began with introductions via a worldmap in Padlet, to get a sense of the geographical spread of participants, which crossed 3 continents. The presentation began by defining Participatory Action Research (PAR), emphasising its constructivist, pluralist, co-produced, value-based and action-oriented features, and comparing these to traditional research approaches. The origins of PAR were explained, including pedagogy of the oppressed and participatory action research traditions from Latin America, European and North-American strands, and the evolution of Participatory Rural Appraisal in India and Africa. This set the scene for understanding PAR as an approach and process, within which a range of participatory methods can be applied. A zoom poll identified which of 9 participatory methods participants were aware of: World Café, Appreciative inquiry, Storytelling, PRA, photovoice, participatory video, participatory theatre, digital storytelling, participatory GIS mapping. We discussed how the action research cycle is central to PAR, supported by an extended epistemology (Heron & Reason) which enables different ways of knowing to be accessed through visual, dialogic and creative methods such as drawing, photos, theatre and storytelling. Participants then broke into small groups to practice a drawing method which involved individual drawing (experiential) sharing (presentational) and dialogue (conceptualising). In the final plenary we reflected on the power of drawing as a medium for sharing experiential knowledge. Finally, we co-constructed the principles of PAR and reflected on quality and rigour in PAR.

Recording

Find the link below to access the recording of the session

<https://vimeo.com/554307495>

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Summary

- PAR is an epistemological challenge to positivism and prioritises the active participation of the research 'subject' as co-researcher
- Using PAR requires iteratively reflecting on its principles of democratic dialogue, action-orientation and valuing of lived experience
- A PAR design can incorporate a range of creative methods which can be adapted to context
- PAR engages deeply with power relations and seeks to shift power to the participants

Reading List

- SAGE Handbook of Participatory Research & Inquiry (Burns, Howard & Ospina, Eds.) <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-sage-handbook-of-participatory-research-and-inquiry/book260608> Forthcoming (August 2021)
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice. Sage. SEE ALSO 2ND AND 3RD EDITIONS.
- IDS participatory methods website <https://www.participatorymethods.org/>
- Brydon-Miller, Mary, Michael Kral, and Alfredo Ortiz Aragón. "Participatory Action Research: International Perspectives and Practices." (2020): International Review of Qualitative Research 13(2) 103-111. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1940844720933225>
- Liamputtong, P. and Rumbold, J. (eds) (2008) Knowing differently: arts-based and collaborative research methods. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Heron, J., & Reason, P. (2008). Extending epistemology within a co-operative inquiry. The Sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice, 366-380.
- Wicks, Patricia Gayá, and Peter Reason. "Initiating action research: Challenges and paradoxes of opening communicative space." In SAGE Handbook of Action Research (2009): 243-262.
- Reason, P. (2006). Choice and quality in action research practice. Journal of management inquiry, 15(2), 187-203.
- Williams, B. T., & Brydon-Miller, M. (2004). Changing directions: Participatory action research, agency, and representation. Ethnography unbound: From theory shock to critical praxis, 241-258.

Animation

<https://biteable.com/watch/3023905/003d182092f3acc11435012482dcc7b6>

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