

Action Research and Collaborative Management Research: More than Meets the Eye?

A. B. (Rami) Shani, David Coghlan, Stefano Cirella

Action research and collaborative management research emerge from different traditions and each begins from a different foundational position in regard to action and to collaboration. Both are different from the traditional research, evaluative research or practitioner research orientations. From a grounding in a philosophy of practical knowing as social science, this article engages in a comparative theoretical exploration of action research and collaborative management research through a focus on the operations of human knowing which yield a general empirical method. It reviews the origins of each approach and how they differ significantly from each other in the context in which they operate, with consequent differences in how the research is implemented and how the relationship between the parties is structured. The general empirical method provides a critical perspective on assessing the quality of action research and collaborative management research in terms of dimensions of real-life action, the quality of collaboration, the quality of inquiry in action and sustainability. The aim is to develop understanding of how these two approaches relate to one another so as to advance knowledge of the different modalities or expressions that comprise the broad field of action- and collaborative-oriented research as a social science of practical knowing.

Key words: action research, collaborative management research, general empirical method