

Walking the talk? A Micro-Sociological Approach to the Co-production of Knowledge and Power in Action Research

Birgitte Ravn Olesen, Helle Merete Nordentoft

This article is a contribution to the ongoing discussion in reflexive action research about how the 'co' in co-production can be understood in the nexus of epistemology and methodology. We apply a micro-sociological approach together with a Foucauldian conception of power/knowledge in the exploration of how knowledge and power relations are negotiated in a workshop which was a part of Action Research project in psychiatric setting. Few action research studies show in detail how power relations between participants affect the knowledge production and we argue that this theoretical and methodological combination has the potential to unpack the local workings of power. The analyses show how knowledge and power are intimately related and intertwined. Our orchestration of the workshop, for instance, bears consequences for the generated context and production of knowledge. It paradoxically becomes an exertion of power by which we in- or exclude certain voices in spite of our good intentions not to do so. In conclusion we assert that any involvement is a powerful act and that we as researchers have an ethical obligation to reflect on the complexity of and tensions involved in the co-production of knowledge in order to "walk the talk" and try to live up to the democratic ideals in Action Research.

Key words: micro-sociological approach, power, participation, knowledge forms, co-production