

Learning along with Participatory Action Research – A Finnish Perspective

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Many definitions of action research, especially of participatory action research, include the idea of learning as one core result of the interventions. These definitions cover the learning of all people involved, and present an interesting learning challenge for the researchers applying action research. In Finland, the first action research projects in working life research were started as late as in the 1980s. Since then action research has held its own as a significant tool in the development of work organizations, particularly in the enhancement of employee involvement and learning at work. This paper provides an example of the interaction between theory and practice as a part of action research processes in the Finnish municipal sector, and consequently as a part of the learning of the action researchers. The learning process is captured by re-reading of, and reflection on, the earlier publications. The findings are presented in the form of a conceptualization-oriented learning narrative that complements the learning taken place, either on the government policy level or on the programme level, depending on the larger organizational background of the action research conducted. Parallel to learning, this paper focuses on participatory action research employing dialogue forums and especially on its particular characteristics that give a voice and, to a certain extent, also offer a choice to the employees in using their discretion in the formulation of organizational change.

Key words: learning of the researchers, learning at work, employee involvement, participatory action research, dialogue forums, organizational change, dialogue forums