CONSIDERAȚII PRIVIND PRINCIPIILE METODEI CERCETARE-ACȚIUNE

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Rezumat

Cercetarea - acțiune este o aplicație a teoriei generate din științele sociale și comportamentale, dar este, de asemenea și o construcție atentă a situației, care este ținta cercetării și schimbării.. Acțiunea-cercetare este un model de cercetare care se ocupă cu crearea schimbării în sistemele umane. Procesele de schimbare a proceselor și produselor sunt evaluate până când sistemele sunt în funcțiune în serviciul tuturor părților interesate.

***Cuvinte cheie**: cercetare - acțiune, științe comportamentale, cercetători și practicieni.*

Cercetarea necesară pentru practica socială poate fi cel mai bine caracterizată ca o cercetare pentru management social, sau pentru ingineria socială. Aceasta este un tip de acțiune-cercetare, o cercetare în funcție de condițiile și efectele diferitelor forme de acțiune socială, precum și o cercetare care să conducă la acțiune socială.

Principiile cercetării - acțiune sunt următoarele:

1.Acțiunea-cercetare combină un studiu sistematic, uneori experimental, al unei probleme sociale cu eforturile pentru a o rezolva.

2. Acțiunea-cercetare include un proces în spirală de colectare a datelor pentru a stabili obiectivele, măsurile pentru punerea în aplicare a obiectivelor, precum și evaluarea rezultatelor intervenției.

3.Acțiunea-cercetare presupune feedback-ul cu privire la rezultatele de intervenție pentru toate părțile implicate în cercetare.

4.Acțiunea-cercetare presupune o cooperare continuă între cercetători și practicieni.

5.Acțiunea-cercetare se bazează pe principiile de dinamică a grupului și este ancorată în fazele sale de schimbare. Procesul decizional este reciproc și se realizează în public.

6. Acțiunea-cercetare ia în considerare problemele referitoare la valori, obiective și nevoile de putere ale părților implicate.

7.Acțiunea-cercetare servește pentru a crea cunoștințe, să formuleze principii de intervenție, precum și să dezvolte instrumente de selecție, de intervenție și de formare.

8. În cadrul cercetării acțiune, se pune un accent pe recrutare, formare, precum și pe susținerea agenților de schimbare.

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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PRINCIPLES OF ACTION RESEARCH

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Abstract: Action research is about applying theory generated in the social and behavioral sciences, but it is also concurrently a careful construction of the situation that is the target of research and change. Action research is about a paradigm of research that deals with the creation of change in human systems. The change processes and products are evaluated while the systems are in the process of functioning in the service of their stakeholders.

Key words: action research, behavioral sciences, researchers and practitioners.

The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management, or social engineering. It is a type of action research, comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action.

Action Research Principles[3]

1. Action research combines a systematic study, sometimes experimental, of a social problem as well as the endeavors to solve it.

2. Action research includes a spiral process of data collection to determine goals, action to implement goals, and assessment of the results of the intervention.

3. Action research requires feedback of the results of intervention to all parties involved in the research.

4. Action research implies continuous cooperation between researchers and practitioners.

5. Action research relies on the principles of group dynamics and is anchored in its change phases. Decision making is mutual and is carried out in a public way.

6. Action research takes into account issues of values, objectives, and power needs of the parties involved.

7. Action research serves to create knowledge, to formulate principles of intervention, and to develop instruments for selection, intervention, and training.

8. Within the framework of action research, there is an emphasis on the recruitment, training, and support of the change agents.

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[3] Bradbury, H., & Reason, P. (2003). Action research: An opportunity for revitalizing research purpose and practice. Qualitative Social Work.

Regarding each of these principles, we will point out how the principle was applied to our project.

1. Action research combines a systematic study, sometimes experimental, of a social problem as well as the endeavors to solve it.
Contrary to scientific models[4], in which the main task is to explore and understand the social problem, in action research the main goal is to understand the problem to execute interventions for its solution. In the study stage of the problem, the action researcher may offer methodologies that are experimental in nature.

The problem at the focus of our action research was the creation of an educational intervention within two high schools, to reduce intergroup conflicts and tensions, and to raise the awareness of their students and staff about these issues to prevent their manifestations. In the past, interventions to reduce intergroup conflicts and tensions within high schools consisted mainly of students engaging in short-term encounters.

According to this theory, the following conditions may strongly contribute toward the improvement of intergroup relations between people who represent different ethnic groups:

(a) contact in an intimate, pleasant, and rewarding organizational climate;

(b) an equal status between the groups;

(c) the existence of cooperative, superordinate goals, which participants in the groups work together to accomplish; and

(d) a strong institutional support for the program.

Unlike the short-term small-group programs that are typical of most educational interventions, our project has sought to create an ongoing organizational culture that will foster an atmosphere of tolerance for differences as well as focus on the solution of conflicts in a peaceful and cooperative way.

2. Action research includes a spiral process of data collection to determine goals, action to implement goals, and assessment of the results of the intervention.

In contrast to many scientific research designs that are usually of a "one shot" nature (apart from longitudinal studies), action research designs are, as a rule, long-range interventions. Action research has been conceived of as a problem-solving process that occurs in ongoing, changing environments that are the targets of the intervention. Theoretically, there is no end to the intervention because problems that need to be addressed arise all the time. The guiding principle of action research, which rests on a problemsolving sequence, is that the process is dynamic and changing, so that the project is also constantly changing.

The notion of a spiral process is embodied in our intervention, which has been implemented for 4 consecutive years. Each year, the intervention has been modified so that it reflects the insights gained by the project directors, facilitators, and participants. The empirical data are derived from questionnaires, interviews, and focus group dialogues, which has led

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[4] Boog, B. (2003). The emancipatory character of action research: Its history and the present state of the art. Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology

to continuous improvement and adaptation of the program to the needs of the actors and parties involved.

3. Action research demands feedback, regarding the results of the intervention, to all parties involved in the research.

Feedback is a central mechanism of learning that draws on the concept of an open system. The term carries two principal meanings: as a means of correction and for choosing action directions while the system is in motion. With regard to corrections, when a system is in action, the project may deviate from the original course. In the literature on individual therapy that examines changes occurring on a system level, we fiind references to feedback mechanisms.

In the organizational change literature[5], the feedback measure, according to Burke, can be powerful because it is based on data, it involves organization members directly; and it provides information about what to change and in which priority. The emphasis here is on the active role played by all parties in the research enterprise-including clients and participants who are, as a rule, excluded from power positions and do not have access to the information available to those in charge of the intervention.

4. Action research implies continuous cooperation between researchers and practitioners[6].

In the conventional scientific model of research, the researcher is the director of the operation. She or he is typically the

only one familiar with the research hypotheses, procedures for selecting participants, and so forth.

In action research, in contrast, practitioners are equal partners in all the decisions arrived at in the research. The underlying principle of cooperation is that the participants should be responsible for decisions that affect their lives and who need, therefore, to understand the rationale underlying the intervention. Being equal partners in the research project, and knowing the content and rationale for decisions, enables the participants to maintain a high level of motivation to participate.

There are several ways in which this cooperation was attained in our project.

One was the creation of a policy committee comprising researchers, school personnel, and students. This committee met first in the year before the project began to create the program manual. It did not yet include students, as they were to be drawn from the students who would participate when the project began. Once the project was underway, this committee met once or twice a month to review the program's progress and to determine project modifications[7].

On an annual basis, the policy committee was joined by the principals and superintendents who reviewed program data, supplied monetary resources to continue the program, and made suggestions for the next iteration of the program. In addition, the program staff met regularly with the principals to inform them of program progress and to obtain their inputs. Finally, the school

[5] Boog, B. (2003). The emancipatory character of action research: Its history and the present state of the art. Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology
[6] Bradbury, H., & Reason, P. (2003). Action research: An opportunity for revitalizing research purpose and practice. Qualitative Social Work.

[7] Pettigrew, T., & Tropp, L. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. Journal ofPersonality and Social Psychology

administrators (who were assistant principals) also reported regularly regarding the program to the principals. In addition, program staff facilitators and junior facilitators met weekly to debrief on the previous session and to make plans for the next session.

5. The small group plays a central role in decision making and in achieving change in people.

In action research, the small group serves as the most important vehicle for democratic decision making. The small group is also one of the most effective means to achieve change in people.

Some of the group activities were conducted in a group with all students present. Others were conducted in small groups, in which the larger group was divided into groups of five to six students.

Small groups were used to encourage discussion of personal material and to allow all students in the small group to speak within the allocated time. At times, small groups comprised students of similar identities (such as of the same gender or ethnic background) so that those students with that status could share their experiences with others of similar backgrounds. In this latter circumstance, the subsequent large group discussion allowed students to learn the reactions to the issue discussed by students of different backgrounds.

6. Action research takes into account issues of values, objectives, and power needs of the parties involved.

Because action research is a collaborative enterprise comprising several parties, it implies that each party will base its actions on its own sets of priorities and values. For example, in an intervention such as ours that takes place within two high schools, there are several parties: the

principals, the teachers, the students of the school, the students participating in the project, and the facilitators. Each of these parties, some of whom even did not take an active role in the project, carries its own image of how to educate for intergroup tolerance. For example, generally, the teachers will tend to believe that a course-like structure is sufficient to turn students into culturally sensitive people. The facilitators, inspired by the project directors, know that imparting knowledge and information regarding prejudice and intolerance is not enough to affect attitudes and behavior. The difference between the parties' conception regarding what is the appropriate intervention may create conflicts and disagreements. The only way for the research project to implement its goals is to deal openly with conflicts that arise. An ongoing process of managing and solving these conflicts guarantees that the project will proceed as planned.

7. Action research serves to create knowledge, to formulate principles of intervention, and to develop instruments for evaluation.

In an action research project, it is expected that two sources of knowledge will be generated. The first is data, such as that collected in every scientific study. It is usually quantitative in nature. The second is actionable knowledge[8].

In our project, we collected data through structured instruments administered at the first and last sessions. We also collected qualitative data through (a) narratives of every group session that included the observers' impressions of such things as the emotional climate at the session and (b) qualitative interviews of

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[8] Pettigrew, T., & Tropp, L. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. Journal ofPersonality and Social Psychology

students as the program was ending. The former set of data indicated how students viewed their identities as well as those of others, how they viewed the conditions of their society with reference to intergroup relations, how they viewed the intergroup conditions in their schools, and how they saw their own ability to create change. The latter sets of data indicated how students react to various kinds of programmatic stimuli presented to enable them to reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes, what they became aware of with respect to the beliefs and attitudes of others, what stimuli produced this awareness, what programmatic events enhanced their awareness of conditions in their schools and communities, and how actions of group facilitators affected them (see Spencer et al. in this issue).

8. Within the framework of action research, there is an emphasis on recruitment, training, development, and support of the change agents (the facilitators).

The main objective of action research is to bring about change in human organizations and communities and in particular in the attitudes and behavior of their members.

Conclusion

Action research is about a paradigm of research that deals with the creation of change in human systems. The change processes and products are evaluated while the systems are in the process of functioning in the service of their stakeholders. Action research is about applying theory generated in the social and behavioral sciences, but it is also concurrently a careful construction of the situation that is the target of research and

change. It is not a mechanical act of classifying the situation as a class of behavior not based on authentic and relevant data. It is a set of systematic research and intervention activities that emphasizes reflection "in action" and "on action".

It combines theory and practice in an effective way, taking into account the relative advantage of each. Action research is also about a different model of relations between actors and parties who participate in it. It is open, egalitarian, and just. And last, action research embodies a distinct ideology: It is humanistic, it emphasizes the empowerment of its participants, and it is critical.

We applied the action research paradigm to help solve a serious contemporary problem. We used the paradigm in conjunction with contemporary schools operating under all the opportunities and constraints found in public educational systems today. We further wished to demonstrate the ability of contemporary adolescents to participate in and benefit from action research.

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