

Knowledge co-creation within the complexity of a collaborative action research project

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Levin & Martin (2007) point out that CAR has a twofold objective: on the one hand the professional development of practitioners, with an emphasis on practical output. On the other hand a striving for more generic knowledge. This twofold objective is the strength as well as the major challenge for CAR projects. In this presentation we will discuss this challenge by introducing the Pro Sense project, a Collaborative Action Research (CAR) project in which university researchers work together with practitioners from the field of primary education. Practitioners contribute actively to the process of knowledge creation, both in the operationalization of the key concepts of the study as the selection of the measuring apparatus. In the second phase of the project they will execute small-scale action research in their own schools, connected through a shared conceptual framework. The university research team has the task to supervise the action research projects and analyse the data collected within them in close collaboration with the practitioners. We, as the coordinating research team, experience difficulties that relate to differing assumptions, languages and goals among the participants and organizations we are working with. These and other factors make the dialogical co-construction of a coherent conceptual framework rather complex.

This paper presentation will consist of three parts. First of all, we will present the ideal of dialogue and co-construction within CAR and strategies and dilemmas proposed in the literature. Secondly, we focus on the collective exploration and operationalization of one of the central concepts of the study, i.e. child development, within the first stage of the Pro Sense project as part of the larger goal of knowledge co-creation in CAR projects.

Finally, we will link our experiences and dilemmas to more generic questions. How do complex processes in CAR relate to scientific criteria for conceptualization? Or do we need alternative strategies for conceptualization for complex CAR?

Levin, M. & A.W. Martin (2007). The praxis of educating action researchers. The possibilities and obstacles in higher education. *Action Research*, 5(3): 219–229.