

Participatory research: A new methodology for adult educators?

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PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH:

A NEW METHODOLOGY FOR ADULT EDUCATORS?

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Introduction

Participatory research is a term which has been appearing within the past several years in international adult education conferences and which some commentators believe has the potential of redirecting research within the field of adult education. The International Conference on Adult Education and Development held in Dar-es-Salaam in June, 1976, proposed that "all adult educators should receive training in the theory and practice of participatory research as well as in complementary quantitative research techniques" (Dar-es-Salaam Design for Action, 1976, p.32). The UNESCO program action plan for 1977-1982 includes the support of future participatory research (Hurly, 1976). Cain states "the forces producing the demand for something called 'participatory research' are numerous and compelling" (Cain, 1977, p.7).

The Participatory Research Project

The network which is responsible for the coordination and promotion of participatory research in adult education throughout the world is the Participatory Research Project centered in Toronto, Canada. This network arose within the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) in 1976. The ICAE is a voluntary, non-governmental council of about 50 members in all regions of the world (International Council for Adult Education, 1977). The coordinator of the Participatory Research Project is Budd Hall, Research Officer of the ICAE. Five regional representatives have been designated to promote the development of participatory research. These regional coordinators are Francisco Vio in Caracas for Latin America; Yusuf Kassam at the University of Dar-es-Salaam for Africa; D. Sundaram at the University of Madras for Asia; Arthur Stock and Helen Calloway, pro tem, at the National Institute of Adult Education, England and Wales, for Europe, and Budd Hall at the ICAE headquarters in Toronto for North America.

The Participatory Research Project is sponsored by the ICAE. The overall objective of the project is to "investigate methods of research in adult education and related social transformation programmes which focus on the involvement of the poorest groups or classes in the analysis of their own needs" (Status Report on the Participatory Research Project International Meeting, 1977, p.1). The project involves activity in research of a participatory nature; analysis of the experience of others through examining case studies and a review of the literature; producing guidelines for participatory researchers; deepening the theoretical framework surrounding this work; and identifying the remaining practical and theoretical problem areas (Status Report on the Participatory Research Project International Meeting, 1977).

According to an ICAE news announcement, funding for the Participatory Research Project has been obtained through the Research Unit for the ICAE and includes funds from the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, UNESCO, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the Canadian International Development Research Centre, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

This enthusiasm for participatory research raises a number of fundamental questions. What is participatory research? Who has been doing it? How does the methodology compare with established research methodologies? Is it, in fact, of such potential utility that all adult educators should be taught to carry out such research? In this paper an attempt will be made to answer these questions through an analysis of the relevant literature.

Background

Adult education, often regarded as marginal activity of educational institutions, is particularly susceptible to the beginning rhetoric of passionate speakers and writers who offer arguments and conclusions which carry the promise that the field can become much more central to the entire field of education or that it can begin to lead other departments of the university in the areas of teaching or research. Such claims which are put forth with great furor by individuals who speak with the authority of university professors or representatives of major adult education organizations sometimes delude guileless adult educators and may divert them from their productive work into approaches and activities that are romantic diversions.

An Old False Dichotomy

Nearly twenty years ago the adult education field became impressed with the claim that andragogy and pedagogy are polar opposites. A superficial comparison between adult education and childhood or youth education was presented as the central basis for establishing adult education as a unique field of practice. The comparison was not, in fact, between the education of children and the education of adults. What was compared was the formal in-school education of children carried out according to a single stereotypic view of the process and the out-of-school informal voluntary education of adults in settings chosen by the adults and carried out by expert adult educators. No one knows how many novice adult educators and impressionable graduate students and practitioners have been misled into believing that the fundamental distinction which justifies the existence of their field is a dichotomy between andragogy and pedagogy. It seems inconceivable that the eminent adult educator who posited the dichotomy was unaware of the informal education of youth in clubs, teams and other voluntary organizations or that he did not know about the formal highly didactic education of adults found in business and industry, the armed services and other formal settings. Nevertheless the simplistic dichotomy was presented with such conviction and skill that the amateurs in the field were deluded into believing that adult education is the polar opposite of youth education.

The posing of a false dichotomy such as andragogy versus pedagogy may succeed in its primary purpose of calling attention to aspects which had previously been overlooked, but it also discourages thinking and research which might develop the concept of lifelong learning. It would be illogical to search for commonalities of effective teaching and learning after one had accepted the notion that adult and youth education are polar opposites. To

the extent that an adult educator has internalized the concepts of andragogy and pedagogy as dichotomous his ability to examine the processes is correspondingly impaired.

A New False Dichotomy

The adult education field is now confronted with a new pseudo-dichotomy: participatory research versus traditional research. The posing of this dichotomy is insidious in that the sophistry of its proponents will delude the naive and attract the dilettantes in adult education research. Because the participatory research term has the endorsement of the International Council of Adult Education, has been enthusiastically embraced by an international conference, and has promoters on five continents it cannot be taken lightly.

The dichotomy will be shown to be false because the term "participatory research" is a misnomer, applied idiosyncratically to activities not conducted primarily to advance knowledge, but rather to promote community development. As such it is clearly not a new kind of research, but instead is a variety of activity which aims to produce changes in people and then communities as its primary purpose and which shows little potential of adding to knowledge.

In fairness to the International Council for Adult Education it must be acknowledged that even though the Design for Action which was adopted at Dar-es-Salaam insisted that "research should be recognized as an integral part of adult education for development and be participatory in nature," the conferees also advocated that "all adult educators should receive training in the theory and practice of participatory research as well as in complementary quantitative research techniques" (Dar-es-Salaam Design for Action, 1976: 31-32). It is to the credit of the International Council that, although some of its spokesmen adopt a doctrinaire stance toward research, its major policy statement acknowledges the value of quantitative research rather than urging the cessation of all traditional research which employs conventional methodology.

An Attempt to Correct Weaknesses of Social Science Research

Participatory research was developed, according to its advocates, in an attempt to overcome weaknesses in the use of conventional quantitative research methods. Colletta criticized traditional research designs, claiming that they were based on preconceived theories, concepts, categories and modalities of analysis which lie outside the frame of reference of the subjects being studied (Colletta, 1976, p.38). Pilsworth and Ruddock asserted that the weakness of the questionnaire method that is so commonly employed in survey research is that the investigator imposes his own understanding and his own definition of the system he investigates upon his subjects. This imposition, even though unintentional, greatly increases the likelihood that the responses he obtains will simply confirm his own preconceived view of the situation (Pilsworth and Ruddock, 1975, p.36).

Hall identified four so-called shortcomings of survey research:

1. the survey approach oversimplifies reality and is therefore inaccurate;
2. survey research is often alienating, dominating or oppressive in character;
3. survey research does not provide easy links to possible subsequent action;
4. survey research methods are not consistent with the principles of adult education (Hall, 1975, pp.25-28).

Survey research, like all other kinds of traditional research, concentrates its attention on a selected number of variables and attempts to obtain measures of those variables. No competent survey researcher would ever pretend that his instrument was capable of capturing all of any social reality. Accordingly, to call a method inaccurate because it is to some degree incomplete and therefore not a perfect reflection of reality is a foolish criticism because no method of study, including participatory research, is capable of dealing with the infinite number of variables in any social setting.

There can be little doubt that there have been adult education researchers who have conducted their research in alienating, oppressive and dominating ways. Undoubtedly others have employed the results obtained through research in alienating, oppressive and dominating ways. Nevertheless these criticisms have to do with the ways some individuals have employed survey research or the findings produced by such research. There is nothing inherent in the methodology of survey research which compels it to be alienating, oppressive and dominating. Accordingly this criticism is misdirected, professing to describe the shortcomings of survey research while it in fact only identifies some researchers' misuse of the methodology.

Survey research does not provide easy links to possible subsequent action. Since the purpose of such research is only to obtain valid, reliable data, as objectively as possible, the researcher does not commit himself in advance to some application of the data. In this regard all research in the ordinary sense is directed toward obtaining data to enlarge or refine the knowledge base in an area. To fault survey research, or any other kind of well established research procedure because it does not provide an easy link to subsequent action is simply to reject the basic purpose of research and to capriciously insist that another basic purpose must be served.

The notion that there is something wrong with survey research methods because they are not consistent with the principles of adult education is puzzling. Although one would be hard pressed to identify the principle of adult education, even if one of the arbitrary listings were employed, the

principles would deal with the practice of adult education, not the conducting of research. It seems most unlikely that there are principles of knowledge generation which are peculiar to adult education knowledge.

The practice of condemning or rejecting a research methodology because it has been misused is scarcely an example of clear thinking. Critics of survey and other so-called traditional research designs delude themselves and others by confusing the inept researchers with the basic characteristics of research models. No doubt there are a number of persons who are engaging in research in adult education who are not particularly well qualified to do so on the basis of their training and experience. Rutstein addresses the ethical dimension of research designs succinctly when he says:

It may be accepted as a maxim that a poorly or improperly designed study involving human subjects--one that could not possibly yield scientific facts (that is, reproducible observations) relevant to the question under study--is by definition unethical. Moreover when a study is in itself scientifically invalid, all other ethical considerations become irrelevant. There is no point to obtaining "informed consent" to perform a useless study. A worthless study cannot possibly benefit anyone, least of all the experimental subject himself (Rutstein, 1969: 524).

The account of the development of the idea of participatory research may be instructive. Hall, who had attempted to apply what he regarded as standard social science research methods in an African country for four years, found himself trying to interpret data from questionnaires he had not designed about a culture that was alien to him. He concluded an alternative approach to adult education research was needed which avoids what he saw as oppressive ideological pitfalls, provides what he regards as a more accurate reflection of social reality, assumes what he believes is a more complete involvement of the community, is linked to principles of adult education and is "more scientific" (1975). He felt that participatory research is more scientific because it produces a more complex and thereby more accurate picture of reality than commonly accepted research methodologies. He explained that participatory research is a combination of the idea of community participation in decision making with the methods of social investigation (Hall, 1977, p.10).

Principles of Participatory Research

Asserting that "adult education is rooted to a concept of social justice and equality in a way in which other disciplines are not" (Hall, 1975: 27) Hall proposed a set of principles of participatory research which he says are derived from experience:

1. research methods have ideological implications;
2. a research process should be of some immediate and direct benefit to a community and not merely the basis for an academic report;

3. a research process should involve the community or population in the entire research project from the formulation of the problem to the discussion of how to seek solutions and the interpretation of the findings;
4. if the goal of the research is change, then the research team should be composed of representatives of all elements in the situation that have a bearing on the change;
5. the research process should be seen as a part of the total educational experience which serves to establish community needs and increase awareness and commitment within the community;
6. the research process should be viewed as a dialectic process, a dialogue over time and not as a static picture from one point in time;
7. the object of the research process, like the object of the educational process, should be the liberation of human creative potential and the mobilization of human resources for the solution of social problems (Hall, 1975: 28-30).

Six of the seven so-called principles of participatory research include the use of "should," while only one is written in the "if ... then" style, a fact which reveals that the author is expressing a set of personal beliefs rather than attempting to provide a factual, objective description.

Cain offered some cogent criticisms of Hall's principles:

Involved in these principles are research pedagogy and mobilization and it is not clear what purpose is served by combining these three operations in one concept. Further, some of the outcomes described in these principles--the goal of research is change, liberation of human potential, etc.--are not clearly the results of participation or of research. Neither research nor participation can produce change without appropriate action in an environment supportive of that action; humans liberate themselves in a time and space appropriate to themselves. To load 'participatory research' with these mystical powers may make the package too heavy to be functional and obscure the usefulness of adding the dimension of participation to research (Cain, 1977, pp.12-13).

Criteria for Participatory Research

In formulating criteria for participatory research Cain concluded that what is required is a research process which "Changes the subject-as-object research approach; asks questions concerning values and motivation rather than or as well as quantifiable factors; facilitates the design, implementation and interpretation of research by insiders; provides for the development of reciprocity among researchers, insiders, and agencies, and permits the benefits

of the research to be felt by the insider/'native'" (Cain, 1977, p.7).

The extent of involvement of the members of the social system being studied in the planning, execution and interpretation of the study is a focal point for those who write about participatory research. Hall asserted that "We need not more highly trained and sophisticated researchers ... but whole neighbourhoods, communities and nations of 'researchers'" (Hall, 1975, p.30). Yet the criticisms which are offered of traditional research are typically directed at studies conducted in unsound ways by researchers whose training was inadequate.

In one of his attempts to define participatory research, Hall stated, "The term refers to the efforts along several lines to develop research approaches which involve those persons who are the expected 'beneficiaries' of the research. The term deliberately focuses on involvement of those who are traditionally the 'researched' in the formulation, collection of data (widely interpreted) and interpretation of information" (Hall, 1977, p.10).

At the International Planning Meeting of the Participatory Research Project, September, 1977, regional representatives of the Project agreed "that participatory research means a change in the status of the powerless who formerly have been 'objects' of social science research" (Participatory Research Planning Meeting Announcement, 1977, p.7). Participatory research was further defined as a three-pronged activity: a method of social investigation involving the full participation of the community; an educational process; and a means of taking action for development.

The Meaning of Participation

It may be useful to examine the terms participatory and research. Cain said that the words themselves offer little hint of what the developers of the concept are talking about. Cain observed, "Participation in our society can be much different from the participatory interactions of other societies. Since the concept depends on a relativistic view of all societies, it is impossible to say that participation means ... " the same thing in all cultures. Cain also argued, "The fact that participation is a North American, Western European ideal for a pluralistic society and the fact that research is defined through a rationalistic Western conception of science make the task of the participatory researcher even more difficult in societies that adhere to neither concept. They perceive neither the benefits of participation nor the desirability of research" (Cain, 1977, pp. 8-10).

Colletta's experience helps to point out the difficulty of applying the Western idea of participation in traditional Indonesian culture:

First, and foremost, we learned to modify our Western ideas about participation. We found that we were not able to interact readily with the villagers themselves; instead we were forced to deal with a mediating group consisting primarily of village and district level

persons from the official authority structure. Although these persons participated in the discussions, this would not necessarily ensure their having a say in later decision-making pertaining to the overall project. If experience holds, it seems more likely that the traditional Indonesian way would prevail. The consensus of the group will be taken into consideration, but 'outsiders' will make the actual decisions. Thus, a clear distinction must be made between participation in discussions for obtaining information from villagers (research), and village level participation in planning, implementation, evaluation and other key decision-making phases of a project (Colletta, 1976, p.43).

Colletta also questioned the value of outsiders' encouraging the subjective input of villagers, feeling that it may be another way of directing community development:

We had brought together a group that would probably never have collected to discuss ideas that may never have occurred to them. It was difficult to determine how much of the group participation really came from the group and how much came from the group's sensitivity to what we were attempting to have them do. In other words, is participatory research another exercise in self, and other, delusion, a new term for 'outsiders' directing community development? (Colletta, 1976, p.44).

This last question is a penetrating one for it directs attention to the manipulative possibilities within participatory research.

The Meaning of Research

Now, let us examine the term research as used in participatory research. Cain feels the word research is used in a "fuzzy" way and that its proponents are not talking about research per se but about community involvement in problem solving carried out within a development project (Cain, 1977, p.10). This perception of participatory research places it in opposition to existing scientific research.

The proponents of participatory research are not the only persons who have become disenchanted with the use of conventional research methodologies and have attempted to do something about it. A more disciplined approach to the establishment of a methodology that deals systematically with the complexity of the culture in which the behaviour of human subjects is to be studied is exemplified by an approach known as participant observation.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a research method which was devised to overcome the problems resulting from the amateurish use of questionnaires by researchers who were only minimally acquainted with the population they were studying. Such

unsound social science research produced data devoid of meaning, strictly speaking, because the items intended to measure the dependent and independent variables had quite different meanings to the researchers from the meanings they had for the subjects of the study.

Participant observation refers to "research characterized by a prolonged period of intense social interaction between the researcher and the subjects, in the milieu of the latter, during which time data, in the form of field notes, are unobtrusively and systematically collected" (Bogdan, 1972, p.3). The method is intended to develop informed understandings of complex relationships and social settings based on the investigator's immersing himself in the social setting he wishes to study. In some cases the reports of participant observations are regarded as complete investigations; in other cases the period of participant observation is used to generate hypotheses which are tested subsequently by rigorous quantitative approaches which possess both construct and content validity, the major characteristics which are often judged to be lacking in simplistic quantitative field studies.

Qualifications of Researchers

The collection of valid data would seem to be a process that could best be conducted by trained and adequately self-disciplined investigators. Bogdan places great stress on the preparation and attitude of the researcher who engages in participant observation. He emphasizes that the researcher must be trained in the craft of observation and analysis:

He (the researcher) has become familiar with the problems of observation and has developed certain skills and techniques to help him. He has also developed a unique perspective in which the research act and the role of observer dominate his interests while in the field (Bogdan, 1972, p.5).

Bogdan's understanding of participant observation is in marked contrast to Hall's understanding of participatory research. Bogdan states:

The methodology of participant observation ... is based on the assumption that a researcher can enter a situation with the subjects' knowing who he is and why he is there, and can establish with them a relationship characterized by trust and a free and open exchange of information. Ideally, the research is perceived as a neutral figure, having no special alliances with any subject in the situation and having no relationships outside the situation which might hurt the subjects. The observer is passive in the sense that he does not change the situation in any way that might affect the data.... The goal of the researcher is to see the world accurately from the point of view of each subject in the organization without affecting that view (Bogdan, 1972, p.21).

The Purpose of Research

Bogdan believes, as do most researchers, that the primary purpose of research activity is to add to the common body of tested knowledge which is available to be employed by anyone regardless of his goals. He cautions against the phenomenon of going native in the field--that is, the researcher's becoming so actively involved in the activities and life of his subjects that he becomes one of them, regarding his research role as secondary to his active involvement as a partisan (Bogdan, 1972, p.28).

Participatory research differs from research conducted by the participant observation method in that the former is primarily concerned with activity intended to change the life situation of the lowest socioeconomic class whether or not any contribution is made to the body of tested generalizable knowledge while the latter is not intended to be used with any particular socioeconomic level and its most important product is defined as its contribution to knowledge. The responsibility for applying the knowledge acquired through participant observation is not assigned to the researcher as it is in participatory research. Finally the education of those being observed is not the responsibility of the participant observer while the participatory researcher sees the education of the members of the group he seeks to serve as one of his primary responsibilities.

Participatory Research as Education

The educational process proposed in the definition of participatory research reveals that the research process is "seen as a total educational experience which serves to identify community needs and to increase awareness and communication within the community" (Dar-es-Salaam Design for Action, 1976, p.32). According to Swantz, participatory research has motivational and educational benefits related to community development.

It shows that surveys can be planned so that their exploitative aspects are eliminated and they become both educational and motivational (Swantz, 1975, p.51).

The method was used as a means whereby those participating could be motivated to greater action and educated to greater awareness of their potential and to find ways for solving their development problems. The whole process had an educational element (Swantz, 1975, p.49).

Swantz identified the following six educational elements as outcomes of a participatory research project: (1) leaders learned more about communicating with people and how to solicit people's own ideas and to have them plan their own village; (2) coordinators learned skills in handling questionnaires and in processing data; (3) leaders and villagers learned the benefits of self-analysis and how to engage in the process; (4) people learned the skill of answering questions and writing their thoughts; (5) people who were unable to fill in the

forms experienced negative learning and this experience turned out to serve as a motivational force for self-improvement; (6) in those villages not operating as a unit, the beginning of a common thinking process was created which prepared people for future planning on a village basis. All of these educational and motivational elements were identified through reports made by the villagers at the final meeting and from statements made by participants.

Jackson (1977) identified some of the learning which emerged in the land and occupancy participatory research study material reported by Nahanni et. al. (1976). No doubt such learning occurred, but what is to be gained by blurring the distinctions between research and education processes?

Participatory Research as Community Development

Another distinction which is blurred is the difference between participatory research and community development approaches. Hall reported that the Community Development Trust Fund in Tanzania began a process of participatory research in June, 1976, in response to a local concern about food spoilage. Using attempts at what he reported as the usual research approaches to this problem he claimed produced inconsistent and expensive results. Then he said an analytic team was organized, including the people who were faced with the problem, and they engaged in a guided discussion process which produced an effective solution. No doubt this method of problem solving was effective, but the justification for calling the procedure research is not persuasive. A more appropriate term than participatory research would be participatory problem solving which Jackson used at one point in his discussion of the participatory research process (Jackson, 1977, p.12). It is still unclear what logic leads to the conclusion that participatory research as it is described in the reports analyzed in the preparation of this paper is not adequately described under the name community development. The reason, apparently, has less to do with the characteristics of the method than it has with the ideological baggage of its advocates and the enhanced possibilities of obtaining financial support from foundations and other sponsors who like to feel they are supporting innovative ideas and who may already have come to regard community development as traditional.

Components of Participatory Research

No definitive description of participatory research has been adopted by those who assert that they are engaging in that activity, but in 1977 at a meeting of the Participatory Research Project International Planning Meeting in Canada the following seven components of participatory research were agreed upon:

- (1) the problem originates in the community itself and the problem is defined, analyzed and solved by the community;
- (2) the ultimate goal of research is the radical transformation of social reality and the improvement of the lives of the people involved. The beneficiaries of the research are the members of the community itself;

- (3) participatory research involves the full and active participation of the community in the entire research process;
- (4) participatory research involves a whole range of powerless groups of people--the exploited, the poor, the oppressed, the marginal, etc.;
- (5) the process of participatory research can create a greater awareness in the people of their own resources and mobilizes them for self-reliant development;
- (6) it is a more scientific method of research [than?] in that the participation of the community in the research process facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality;
- (7) the researcher is a committed participant and learner in the process of research which leads to a militancy on his/her part, rather than detachment (Status Report on the Participatory Research Project International Meeting, 1977).

Commitment to Community Involvement

The issues, who should be doing research, and who should benefit from research activities and findings complicate discussions about participatory research. Hall asserts that social science research is done for administrators and policy makers to get information to use in making decisions for those who are not permitted to make decisions or to produce research reports as a commodity to be sold by researchers. He regards the conducting of research or the creation of knowledge as a monopoly of the powerful which should be taught to the poor and powerless so they can employ participatory research against those who oppress them. Hall acknowledges that "the use of the term participatory research" will not prevent someone from using similar methods to help a group of landlords work out a set of 'tenant-tight' rules and living arrangements" (Hall, 1977: 13). So, on one hand participatory research is presented as a new approach to conducting research but on the other hand it appears that the major distinguishing characteristic is that unlike traditional research which produces knowledge which may be employed by anyone who acquires the information for either selfish or humanitarian purposes, the participatory research process by definition can only be used properly by, with, or at least in the name of the powerless.

Commitment to Action

The basic problem is that the proponents of participatory research begin with the assumption that the proper role of adult education is to aid those who seem to be powerless in their struggle against their oppressors. This ideological commitment makes it impossible for them to deal with the process of research simply as a means of adding to the sum of tested knowledge. The participatory research enthusiasts fail to distinguish a process of seeking useful data and the process of applying that data and it is this analytical deficiency which leads to so much of the legitimate criticisms of the literature on this approach.

Commitment to an Atheoretical Approach

Lindsey, a sociologist at the University of British Columbia, is critical of the approach taken by those who say they are engaging in participatory research. He characterizes them as being idealistically well-intentioned but doomed to failure in the achievement of their grand objectives. Lindsey asserts that "especially in a traditional society, a non-theoretical empiricist approach, as suggested by Hall, leads to the maintenance of the status quo, of the existing power relationships within the given social structure, and hence, sooner or later, to frustration and disillusionment" (Lindsey, 1976: 48). In his critical analysis of the participatory research approach, Lindsey characterizes it as experimentation without control groups. The direct involvement of the researcher may lead him to have a feeling of significance and importance, but the belief that the existing power relationships and social structures will become apparent to a well-meaning outsider just because he deals with those who seem to him to be the least powerful members of a society is regarded by Lindsey as naive. He warns, "one must define in the greatest possible detail every facet of the theory of society beforehand in order to be better able to confront it with empirical observations" (Lindsey, 1976, p.49). He treats the chronic amateurism of some adult education researchers as a serious factor limiting the advance of knowledge in this field.

An Attempt to Redefine Research

The champions of participatory research are engaged in rethinking and redefining research as is shown by the following comment by Swantz:

Research as an academic exercise is an elitist concept. The prestige attached to scholarship, the status of a scientist, and the financial outlay needed for carrying it out, all tend to develop class-consciousness in those engaged in research as well as those who become the object of research.... Research in its goals, methods, and approach can become a basic tool in the transformation process of a society. It does not need to be limited to those with higher education, trained in methods and techniques, in organization of thought or formulation of problems and discursive logic. Ordinary villagers, administrators and teachers can become participants in, not only objects of, research (Swantz, 1975a, p.45).

But what is left of research if one removes logic, competency gained through education, and training in its methodology and techniques, as well as organization of thought?

Swantz continues: "Research can become a means of communication, an education process in which the roles of educator and the educated are constantly reversed and the common search for solving common problems unites all those engaged in the common endeavour" (Swantz, 1975a, p.45).

But, one wonders, why fuse education and research into a single concept, especially after ruling out the conditions essential for producing valid

knowledge? If the activity which is being called participatory research is an educational process, why not call it so? Participatory education? Or perhaps, because of the emphasis on problem solving, participatory problem solving. Surely it is wiser and more precise to give the process an appropriate name than to make what will ultimately prove to be a futile attempt to redefine research.

Practical Considerations

Other practical considerations stand in the way of conducting participatory research.

Lindsey offers reservations and objections regarding the situation of the people who are to be participant researchers. He feels that the subjects are people usually vitally involved in the process of production as a means of earning a living. This involvement leaves little time and energy for extensive participation in research. Another consideration is that the people lack "a perspective of the social structure in which they are imbedded and of possible alternatives to it" (Lindsey, 1976, p.48).

Cain also questioned, "How can participation, if accepted as a valid goal, be obtained from people not accustomed to such interaction? What methods can be used to insure participation?" (Cain, 1977, p.7). She reasoned further that even if the goal is accepted of making the native the researcher, "we still come up with a big 'how'. To be unclear about what research is, what we/they are looking for, makes the 'how' even more obscure. There must be a clearer understanding of what participation in research means before the 'how' can be adequately developed" (1977, p.3).

Participatory Research Studies

The criteria which distinguish participatory research are not particularly obvious or logically sound. A survey was employed in a study by Swantz which was self-proclaimed participatory research. What made it qualify as participatory research is that the questionnaire was administered and scored by African villagers instead of trained researchers. Apparently, then, the participatory researchers' dissatisfaction is not with the use of a survey method but with who is using the research tools. If a survey is designed and administered and the results analyzed by villagers untrained in research methodology, its value rises in the opinion of the advocates of participatory research, whereas the opposite occurs when such tools are in the hands of trained researchers. The logic of the position is difficult to follow especially in considering the results obtained from the participatory questionnaire: "As could be expected, rather serious inaccuracies occurred both in filling in the forms and in summing up the statistics" (Swantz, 1975a, p.49). Participatory research advocates appear to have developed a survey research method which results in serious inaccuracies but which they believe is superior to conventional survey research methodology because it involves the villagers. Such an approach places a far higher value on participation than it does on producing sound data and conclusions.

Fordham used a participatory research questionnaire which qualified as participatory research because it was "posted to all respondents [?] but collected by a team of local volunteers in order to provide a human element in the survey" (Fordham, et. al., 1975, p.62). Using local volunteers to increase the rate of return of questionnaires is surely a way of obtaining survey data, but it does seem a bit odd to regard the collection of questionnaires by volunteers as a characteristic which in itself changes survey research to participatory research.

Most of the participatory research studies utilize some form of discussion in the design of a study, in its implementation or in the interpretation of the results. This discussion may take the form of humanizing a traditional questionnaire, or it may involve the development of a new-data collection instrument, its administration, the interpretation of its results or any combination of these. Much the same sort of involvement would be considered essential by rigorous researchers as they pilot tested an instrument and assessed its construct and content validity in the best tradition of social science research.

Native fieldworkers were trained in the use of interview techniques in which responses were recorded in writing, on tapes, or in both forms in a participatory research project reported by Nahannie et. al. (1976). Outside experts were used to help in designing the research methodology as well as to help in the training workshops. Outside experts were also involved in translating the quantitative data resulting from Nahannie's study (1976) into "whiteman's tongue" (Jackson, 1977, p.9). Some participatory research allows for the use of experts so long as they are controlled by the otherwise powerless.

In Colletta's (1976) study, the people were divided into discussion groups to answer three questions posed to them about community learning resources. The results of the discussion groups were reported by each group secretary and a list was developed which identified community resources. This list, when classified into patterns such as human, institutional, socio-cultural, economic, and natural mass media was the product of the study. These opinion gathering approaches seem useful as educational and developmental processes. They do not, however, measure up to the demanding standards of objectivity, reliability, and validity associated with first rate classical research studies.

Participatory research may be distinguished from other kinds of research in part by its place on a continuum of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Copeland and Grabowski (1971) discussed two contrasting approaches in adult education research: one emphasizes rigour in empirical experimental methodology; the other draws heavily upon inductive approaches such as participant observation and case studies. The attention given to qualitative strategies by those who profess to be engaged in participatory research indicates that this method belongs at the qualitative end of the continuum.

The processes of participatory research do not meet the rigorous standards of objectivity required in properly conducted quantitative or qualitative investigations. Instead the subjectivity of the process is put forth as one of its strengths. Nevertheless, quantitative data are sometimes produced by participatory research and decisions are based on inferences drawn from these data.

Some distinctions can be identified between participatory research and other qualitative research strategies. Participatory research differs from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which is based on a general sociological perspective with the purpose of generating theory. Participatory research is concerned with a specific problem, rather than theory generation, and has the primary purpose of obtaining a solution to a problem.

There is confusion, or at least a lack of precision, in the participatory research literature regarding the difference between participatory research and participant observation. Hall (1975, p.28) cited Pilsworth and Ruddock's 1975 study as a participatory approach to research, yet their approach is clearly that of participant observer. In participant observation " ... the researcher participates in the situation under study either openly, in the role of researcher, or covertly, and observes the behaviour of the people involved" (Pilsworth and Ruddock, 1975, p.39). The researcher is involved in prolonged interaction with the subjects " ... in the milieu of the latter, during which time data, in the form of field notes, are unobtrusively and systematically collected" (Bogdan, 1972). While it is true that participant observation is a methodology which is generally used to develop an understanding of complex institutional forms, to generate sensitizing concepts, and to study social change, it differs from participatory research in a fundamental way, that is, its primary purpose is to add to knowledge, not to intervene in the functioning of a social system as a means of producing change in the system. Overlooking this critical distinction is to fail to comprehend the essential nature of participant observation.

Pilsworth and Ruddock, who contributed an article to the issue of Convergence which featured participatory research, did not propose to supplant all existing research methodologies with that of participatory research. Instead they counselled:

Whenever possible the researcher should 'triangulate' or use more than one method. It should be acknowledged that all research methods involve valuations of behaviour, and different methods provide different types of knowledge. We are not advocating a reliance on any single method; rather the qualitative and phenomenological research methods should gain a wider acceptance in teaching and research in adult education (Pilsworth and Ruddock, 1975; p.41).

These authors acknowledged that either purely quantitative approaches have inherent limitations and are only incomplete reflections of social reality.

So, logically, they urge the use of both approaches as a means of obtaining two different kinds of perceptions of any situation under study.

Conclusions

Given the nature of the literature either describing or claiming to be participatory research in adult education, and the apparent growing popularity of the term, what inferences might professional adult educators draw? The following conclusions are offered for the consideration of those who are engaged in research, those who are preparing others to conduct adult education research, and finally those who are now enrolled in such training programs.

1. The emergence of participatory research is partly explained by the chronic amateurism which characterizes an appreciable proportion of the research in adult education as well as in other social sciences. Dissatisfaction with the results of research or the lack of application of the results understandably leads to a desire for a more effective research methodology that is closely linked to the application of the findings.
2. Some critics of conventional social science research have not distinguished between the characteristics of various research methodologies, quantitative or qualitative, and the characteristics of the researchers who claim to be employing the methodologies. Accordingly, criticisms which should properly have been directed at the naive perpetrators of poor research have instead been misdirected at the methodologies.
3. Anyone who makes a serious effort to comprehend the research which has been conducted by presumably adequately prepared adult educators might be expected to exhibit some measure of humility and to conclude that the researchers, on the whole, were probably as adequately trained, technically skilled, and unselfish as their critics. But one of the hallmarks of the champions of participatory research has been hubris, not humility. It takes a fair amount of hubris for a researcher to proclaim that he has a method which is superior to all other research methodologies. Yet the participatory research literature is weighted down by oracular pronouncements.
4. It is not evident how participatory research activity differs from the activities which have been associated with community development. A possible distinguishing feature is that community development is not restricted to serving those of the lowest socioeconomic status as the ideals of participatory research require. Community development, in theory at least, may regard the involvement of representatives of all social levels in a given community in discussions and decision making as essential while participatory research seems directed toward involving only the powerless in an attempt to gain power.

5. The conducting of research and the application of the findings have traditionally been regarded as distinct processes. This assumption acknowledges that the findings of any investigation may be employed in either a humane or an exploitative manner. The proponents of participatory research acknowledge that their methodology could be used by oppressors as well as by the oppressed so the process itself is not by nature any more humane than any conventional method of research. Working directly with the powerless is defined as true participatory research while the use of the identical methodology with the powerful would be regarded either as a misuse of participatory research or as lying outside of the boundaries of participatory research.
6. If the purpose of research is to make incremental additions to the body of tested knowledge, then the process called participatory research is improperly named because its purpose is direct action to improve the lot of the disadvantaged.
7. If those who are enthusiastic about participatory research are interested in communicating effectively with other social science researchers, then they have made a poor choice of a name for the process they advocate because they are apparently expecting everyone else to abandon existing definitions and conceptions of research and to accept a radical definition which lacks both precision and clarity.
8. The enthusiasm with which the idea of the participatory research approach is being accepted by adult educators in the third world is evidence that those who have employed traditional research methodologies in these settings have not succeeded in relating to those indigenous adult educators whose primary interest is in development. Whether rigorous adult education research will be sacrificed for action oriented community development schemes under any label cannot be predicted. The outcome will be determined not only by those who propose a methodology inseparably tied to an ideology but also by those who are conducting rigorous research on variables influencing the quality of life and development.

The proponents of participatory research have performed a useful service in calling attention to the negative value of poorly conducted social science research in the developing world. In doing so they have, unfortunately, made rash claims for a kind of community development approach which they have erroneously called research. If the approach they advocate can be appreciated for what it is rather than for what it is purported to be, then the approach may yet make a significant contribution to community development and to the process of adult education.

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