

Participatory research - a contribution to learning in innovation processes?

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This paper is about participatory research and learning in organizations. It addresses a critical and analytical view of how collaboration between researchers, practitioners and users can contribute to learning and innovation in social work in Social Services / NAV office. Innovation in public services is now on the agenda in different contexts in Norway. Innovation processes can be on different levels. It can be about changes in service practice in relation to the users and the structural changes in the organizations services are rooted in. Major reorganizations affecting many businesses, like the creation of Nav and Coordination Reform in Norway can be understood as examples of a third level that can be described as social innovation. Based on experiences from two sub-projects implemented in HUSK- Agder, are the first two levels, service innovation and organizational innovation central in this paper. The sub- projects; "The Conceptual Project" and "On the trail of user involvement", were inspired by action research where learning processes is central. The main question is if these projects have helped to initiate learning processes. In the first project the group of community between staff from both the public service and the municipal social services was arena for individual learning processes. Also in the second project the individual learning takes place in dialogue with others. Here the learning takes place in dialogue with users. In line with action research thinking the researchers took the initiative to bring the experience and knowledge to all employees of the participating services. A closer cooperation with the nearest management services on the specific work of the sub-projects could facilitate that the learning processes could give a more permanent nature in the organizations.

Keywords: participatory research learning processes innovation