

Negotiation as a way to emphasize participative learning processes in social work research

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Background: Experiences in defining and using practice research as a learning process
Purpose: To present and discuss understandings to develop participative learning processes
Abstract: Practice Research is a meeting point between practice and research where both common understandings, different interests and powerful positions are to collaborate. Although having a joint goal for establishing knowledge based social work there are in between the participants both culturally and professionally differences in the perception of what knowledge is and how it is established. On top of this partners have different positions: while practice has a powerful position concerning knowledge from social work and putting knowledge into action, research has a powerful position as a base for knowledge production and creation of new findings. These differences and positions cannot be hidden or overlooked – on the contrary they have to be clarified and used. To prevent the collaboration from being a mission impossible both parts have to focus on negotiation using the different knowledge and positions in an active and respectful process. From this point of view negotiation becomes a central part of developing collaborate research initiatives between the participants. In these negotiations all partners must balance to make it possible both to hold on to their interests, to open up for new understandings, new traditions and new learning processes and to make it possible to learn as a part of the process. To establish the negotiation partners hold on to some of their central interests, while they at the same time have to be interested in learning from the other partners. In this way all partners must accept to be disturbed in their traditional understandings, to exchange perspectives and to accept to work with 'otherness' as a positive and challenging part of the collaboration.

Keywords: Negotiation, learning, disturbance, otherness