

## Health, quality, tangible transformations, and experimentation with aesthetics: diversity and connections within action research

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This first issue of International Journal of Action Research in 2024 combines diverse perspectives and still, there are threads that connect the different contributions. To begin with, it is a pleasure for me to introduce the interview and the book review of this issue, as they help us understand the trajectory in action research of two women that have recently joined the group of editors of this journal.

In her interview, Lone Hersted shares her experience, and tells us about her education as an actress at an experimental theatre school, her studies in dramaturgy and theatre studies, and how all that is useful in her action research in the Alborg environment, in Denmark, where they combine systemic or narrative inquiries, arts-based and aesthetically informed approaches, and philosophical approaches based on existential, Socratic dialogues. The focus on aesthetics emerges later, again, in the paper by Aina Landsverk Hagen & Sara Berge Lorenzen.

The second woman that has joined the group of editors of IJAR is June Bam, and her work is addressed in this issue through the review written by Carolina Schenatto da Rosa, Danilo R. Streck and Richard Ennals of her book entitled “Ausi Told Me: (Re)inventing Action Research from South African Tradition”. The authors of the review argue that in this book June Bam helps us understand how people’s actions, thoughts and feelings are based on life stories that are renewed and recreated from generation to generation, revealing the leading role of women in producing knowledge of resistance and transformation. They also highlight how the historical, cultural, and political richness of South Africa offer new dimensions of participatory engagement and critical reflection to research, revealing the full potential of (re) invention and re-signification that Bam’s work offers to action research.

The first of the articles, by Mark Howard is entitled “Insider action research in palliative care – the challenges of implementing digital health in a hospice organisation in the UK”. It is based on the author’s first-person experience of being a medical consultant and novice action researcher in a UK hospice setting. It addresses how the use of technology in healthcare can affect social processes and, more specifically, how in this case it affected the way the hospice staff felt about the loss of their role and identity. Healthcare is one of the main fields where action research is used by practitioners and this paper helps understand the connections between digital change and productivity and performance, and how action research can help by reconfiguring connectivity, control, and knowledge.

This last paper, however, is not the only paper in this issue that focuses on healthcare. Mary Casey, Aine Carroll, David Coghlan and Diarmuid Stokes, in their paper “Appraising

Quality in Action Research in Healthcare Settings” address criteria for establishing the quality of action research in this sector. They present the results of a scoping review on the quality of action research studies in the healthcare sector and, after summarising standards of quality in the publications they analyse, the authors suggest best practices for designing, undertaking and reporting high quality action research. The four core features they assess in these publications are context, quality of relationships, quality of the action research process and outcomes; and they conclude that there is a significant gap in the monitoring and reporting on the quality of action research studies regarding how these factors are discussed in relation to each of the others.

The third article, entitled “From Participatory Research to the Co-construction of Actions: Reflections on how to Reinforce Action Research for Social Inclusion based on the experience of the Parole d’excluEs’ University Incubator” is written by Isabel Heck and it shares with the first paper by Mark Howard its approach to practitioner research. The core argument by Isabel is that an important part of the action research literature focuses on the participatory dimension of the research process and is much less explicit on the connection of research and action, or on how researchers contribute to tangible transformations. Consequently, she addresses this connection by sharing her action research experience in an anti-poverty organization in a low-income neighborhood in Montreal (Canada). She presents four functions of research that are at the core of this connection: produce and mobilize knowledge; document, analyze and systematize practice; codevelop projects, models and practice and enhance reflexivity. Finally, she proposes five characteristics to bridge the gap between research and action.

The fourth and final article in this issue, entitled “Chasing balloons as scientific practice: On transformative co-creation and relational ethics of care in the emerging field of youth citizen social science” is authored by Aina Landsverk Hagen and Sara Berge Lorenzen. It connects with Lone Hersted’s invitation, in the initial interview, to experiment with art and aesthetics, as the authors experiment with form in order to make us not only learn about the process they describe, but immerse ourselves in that process to feel it. The article is based on empirical research with a group of young people in Oslo, Norway, and after experiencing this process Aina and Sara argue that they have witnessed closely how an epistemic ethics of care is integral to securing the epistemic justice of youth. They also conclude that citizen social science can promote both epistemic justice and epistemic abundance by including youth in all parts of a rigorous research process that produces new scientific knowledge. The article is the third and last of a thematic series on action research and citizen social science, based on the YouCount project and introduced by Patricia Canto and Reidun Norvoll in their Guest Editorial in the second issue of 2023.

By bringing these papers together International Journal of Action research aims at addressing diversity in action research. We also want to make space for the exploration of art and aesthetics as vehicles to transform action research through a generative interaction between reason and emotion. We hope the readers appreciate this effort.