

About my learning journey with Action Research

Interview with Danilo Streck

Richard and Miren:

How did you first encounter Action Research during your own academic career?

Danilo:

Thank you, Richard and Miren, for granting me the opportunity to speak about my experience with Action Research. As with most action researchers, I did not come across Action Research in my formal education in undergraduate or graduate courses. Research methods were usually about statistics. I came to Action Research first through systematisation of experiences with popular education in Latin America, at that time (1970–1980) in connection with CELADEC (Comisión Evangélica Latinoamericana de Educación Cristiana), supported by the World Council of Churches and other international social and ecclesial organisations that intended to connect grassroots movements in churches, NGOs and schools and universities. It was supposed to be an exercise of critical reflection on practice to promote change, inspired in the liberation movement, in areas such as pedagogy, theology and communication. This practice was rarely integrated with the academic work, and the material produced was dedicated to group leaders and social organisations. It also provided inputs for teaching materials for use within these organizations. Still today in Latin America, popular education and Participatory Research go hand in hand, and sometimes it is difficult to identify where one ends and the other begins. Paulo Freire's study of the generative themes for the literacy programme, as described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is a good example of how research and education are intertwined in the same process of knowing and changing one's world. A formal project of Action Research started with the study of Participatory Budgeting in South Brazil where we understood that we needed a participatory methodology to study participation. At that time, however, the research group was already pretty well acquainted with the literature of Action Research, from reports of systematization of experience to academic writings.

Richard and Miren:

How has your view of Action Research changed since then?

Danilo:

At the beginning of my work, as mentioned above, I was not involved with Action Research. The intention has been, and still is, to bridge the gap between practice and theory, based on the assumption that changes will be promoted by people in their respective social, professional and cultural context. I guess that during these years I became more aware of the relevance of critical reflection on our practice as professional academics. There is a serious risk of action becoming activism, and I think that I became more aware of the researcher's role as being a