
Of some pitfalls and deadens of participatory applied research: A critical reflection on common principles and techniques of reform within disability service networks

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Abstract

Although researchers and practitioners are forever seeking to improve the state of partnership within disability networks, a state of non-collaboration often persists between client, family, and professional stakeholders. Using the Saskatoon Partnership Project as a case study, the current article explores some of the challenges associated with conventional approaches to participatory research and reform (Boudreault & Kalubi, 2006). The authors reflect on the limitations of propositional, participant-driven, parsimonious, problem-centered, and majority-based reform tactics and question the capacity of these devices to engender meaningful change within complex social institutions. By interrogating the pitfalls and deadens of their own research, the authors provide some insights about the challenges associated to the reform of large disability service networks. They also propose alternative avenues of research and reform in order to improve partnership within such networks and argue that a more critical, dialogical, and pragmatic (Habermas, 2011/1968; Ladmiral, 2011/1990) approach is capable of revealing unrecognized nodes of resistance and novel opportunities for service improvement.

Keywords: partnership, participatory research, disability service reform, professional collaboration, decision, making models

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