

AR

Call for Papers

Participation and Engagement in Health and Healthcare

Participation and public engagement in health and healthcare have received renewed attention in the healthcare arena, spanning clinical practice, public health, health promotion and service delivery (Chiu, 2007a). A participative orientation to health and healthcare is especially critical in contexts and societies characterized by ethnic and cultural diversity and in which the most vulnerable groups and minorities are frequently silent in public policy and research agendas. Research funding bodies have also increasingly emphasized the benefits that a participative approach can bring to patients and public (Gebbie et al., 2003; Minkler and Wallerstein, 2008). Although there has been scientific discourse and debate on the benefits of public participation and engagement in the wider scientific community, notably around concepts such as empowerment, social capital, and social networks, practical applications of these concepts have been more limited (Buchanan et al., 2007; Chiu, 2007b). Thus gaps between theory, research, and practice remain. In the last two decades, Action Research (AR), grounded in the philosophy of pragmatism, has emerged as an approach holding the promise of helping to close the theory-practice gap in order to create useful outcomes for communities, with a results-based approach to accountability (Buchanan et al., 2007; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Reason and Bradbury, 2006, Wandersman, 2003).

AR is multi-perspectival and focuses on the dynamism of action-process-outcomes, and has a wide appeal in the participatory and engagement movement. The approach has become increasingly popular amongst both researchers and practitioners for its potential for user-driven innovation and service transformation (Israel et al., 2005; Stringer, 2007). Despite its popularity, this approach remains largely unacknowledged and its value for guiding practice under-explored. Theoretical eclecticism and methodological flexibility are among the main features of AR. Mirroring these features is the corresponding development and integration of a whole host of research methods e.g. focus groups (Chiu, 2003), mixed-methods

(Chiu & West, 2007), visual methodology (Wang and Burris, 1997; Chiu, 2009), theatre, citizens' juries (Pimbert & Wakeford, 2003) etc., aiming to actively involve patients and community members in research and practice. While some of these methods claim to blur the boundaries of 'subject' and 'object' relations in research and to empower participants, there has been insufficient debate on how these are linked to substantive concepts and/or to the wider development of AR as an approach that can transform health promotion and healthcare practices. Moreover, the required skills for action research are largely neglected in the training of conventional researchers. The goal of this special issue is to provide a communicative space for researchers and practitioners to explore critically the linkages between participative concepts, methods and their own research practices, as well as underlying questions of principles and ethics. This issue will hopefully begin to consolidate many of the aspects of AR in health and healthcare into a coherent perspective that is vital for creating conditions in which patients and community members can be empowered and health and healthcare systems transformed.

We invite authors to submit paper that any of the following themes:

- The philosophical and conceptual groundings of participation and engagement,
- Participatory strategies and methods
- Interdisciplinary and international experience-based collaboration
- Methodological innovation for participation and engagement
- Co-researching with patients and communities
- Co-production of knowledge - validity, transferability, reflectivity, and reflexivity
- Tools and skills for participation and engagement
- AR training in health
- Ethics of participation

Please note that these themes are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. We expect some papers will explore the intersections among themes, and such papers will be most welcome.

The special issue editor team comprises: Drs. Lai Fong Chiu (UK), Meredith Minkler (USA), Manuel García-Ramírez (Spain), Arild Aambø (Norway), and Yosette Chor (HK, China)

Enquires should be directed to the special issue editor, Dr. Lai Fong Chiu, email: l.f.m.chiu@leeds.ac.uk

Full drafts of papers should be submitted through our on-line submission process (go to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ARJ> for details) no later than September 21, 2010. Please note: all papers should be accompanied by a cover letter indicating the response to this call for papers. We ask that authors follow regular ARJ submission recommendations, i.e., 5000-7000 words *inclusive*, using APA style.

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