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Abstract

If you are looking for a simple, straight forward book for conducting an action oriented research in an educational setting than Craig's 2009 Action Research Essentials is for you. This book provides the “essentials” for this type of research . She provide s clear and concise information assisting students that may be using this approach for the first time. Good examples are given for the novice of action oriented research. The author presents the information in an orderly fashion. In this review, I will give my initial appraisal and content analysis regarding the intended audience, objectivity of the author and the writing style presented

Keywords

Action - Oriented Research, Methodology, Education, Kurt Lewin

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Action Oriented Research in Education

Lisa Kaufman

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If you are looking for a simple, straight forward book for conducting an action oriented research in an educational setting than Craig's 2009 Action Research Essentials is for you. This book provides the "essentials" for this type of research. She provides clear and concise information assisting students that may be using this approach for the first time. Good examples are given for the novice of action oriented research. The author presents the information in an orderly fashion. In this review, I will give my initial appraisal and content analysis regarding the intended audience, objectivity of the author and the writing style presented. Keywords: Action-Oriented Research, Methodology, Education, Kurt Lewin

Action Research Essentials by Dorothy Valcarcel Craig is a good handbook for beginners in action oriented research. She explains the process of this research very well. She uses examples representative of action research in education. An excellent introduction into action oriented research is also provided which includes how this methodology is defined, the reasons to use this methodology, phases and how to collect data while conducting education research. Though culture is not discussed in this text, it is not of primary importance. What is provided; however, are the "essentials" of action oriented research in the field of education. This text is a good "go to" for quick reference and provides good solid information for conducting action oriented research in the field of education. She provides step by step guidance on an action plan rubric which includes the target design, relevancy and connectedness to the action research findings, as well as the evaluation of strategies and tools.

Providing the basic information for beginners or a novice student in the field of education wanting to learn more about action oriented research and looking for a brief overview or quick reference of this methodology this book should be their choice. However, doctoral students in the counseling profession, who have chosen an action oriented approach for their dissertation, must be aware of the basic philosophical assumptions for "first person research" or Galilean stance, which was characteristic to Lewin's research. Coghlan and Jacobs (2005) define the Galilean stance as follows, "As a form of inquiry and practice that one does on one's own. It addresses the ability of the individual to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act out of awareness, and to act purposefully" (p. 447). Lewin does not say that the researcher must remove any biases or preconceived notions regarding what is to be studied. He further suggests that one must be keenly aware of their culture (in this regard shared assumptions), in order to have a frame of reference from which to draw inferences upon.

The objectivity of the author is representative of her philosophical assumption as expressed in this text. Craig (2009) uses the term "epoche" which, upon completion of a key word search in the primary online data bases of the social sciences, there was limited information found. This leads me to believe that this philosophical stance regarding the role of the researcher is not frequently used in the social sciences. In her text, Craig (2009) references the definition of "epoche" to the work of Patton (1990); "epoche" is Greek for "suspension of judgment." Patton further defines "epoche" as "a process that requires the action researcher to reflect on and remove any biases, perceptions, preconceptions, and

assumptions regarding the research environment, interactions and related activities prior to engaging in the analysis process” (as cited in Craig, 2009, p. 172). Though action oriented research has been adapted for use in the field of education, there is a fundamental difference between these two philosophical approaches regarding the role of the researcher and central to Lewin’s action-oriented research, therefore, this is important to mention here. For example, Craig’s question in the pre-study phase, in order to provide focus is, “What do *I* want to find out about these specific students or situations?” (p. 17). This is in contrast to Lewin’s “What shall *we* do?” This is important for the researcher must always be aware of the duality and nature of their relationship within the social context during the research process while conducting action oriented research.

Regarding the content analysis, the intended audience for this book appears to be primarily students of education, interested in the action oriented form of method inquiry for research. This is a timely source, and for the most part well written. The only examples given are from the field of education. This was disappointing, since according to the author this is a text meant to be used as a handbook across all fields. Providing examples which are well represented across areas of study in the social sciences should also be considered for inclusion.

The use of “epoche” is interesting and certainly reflects a different philosophical orientation of the writer of this book. Not that this is a bad thing; however, it does point toward a shift in a philosophical orientation which was not part of Lewin’s original framework for action oriented research. This philosophical orientation is also reflective of her professional training. She provides an overall good coverage of this type of approach for education research and her writing style is clear and easy to read. In conclusion, this is a good source for an online introductory undergraduate course in the field of education, in which an action oriented method of inquiry is used for research.

References

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Author Note

My name is Lisa Kaufman and I currently reside in Enterprise, Alabama. I received my undergraduate training at the University of Texas in Tyler, Texas and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Counseling Psychology. I received a Master of Science in Marriage and Family Studies at the University of Central Texas (presently under the Texas A&M University system) in Killen, Texas. Currently, I am a first year PhD student in the marriage and family therapy program at Amridge University in Montgomery, Alabama. I provide in-home family therapy, a family preservation service to families in the area and accept referrals from the Department of Human Services for counseling. I also provide individual counseling to our youth enrolled in Youth Educational Services. This is a program that helps students receive their GED. I am dedicated to the role of researcher and clinician and in the spirit of Kurt Lewin; I hope to create a bridge between social theory and social action in my community. Contact information: Phone: (334) 447-9895; for further inquiry or write to Lisa Kaufman, M.S., P.O. Box 311671, Enterprise, Alabama 36331-1671.

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