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Interactive research for production and work development

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V I N N E x c e l l e n c e C e n t r e






Some research approaches

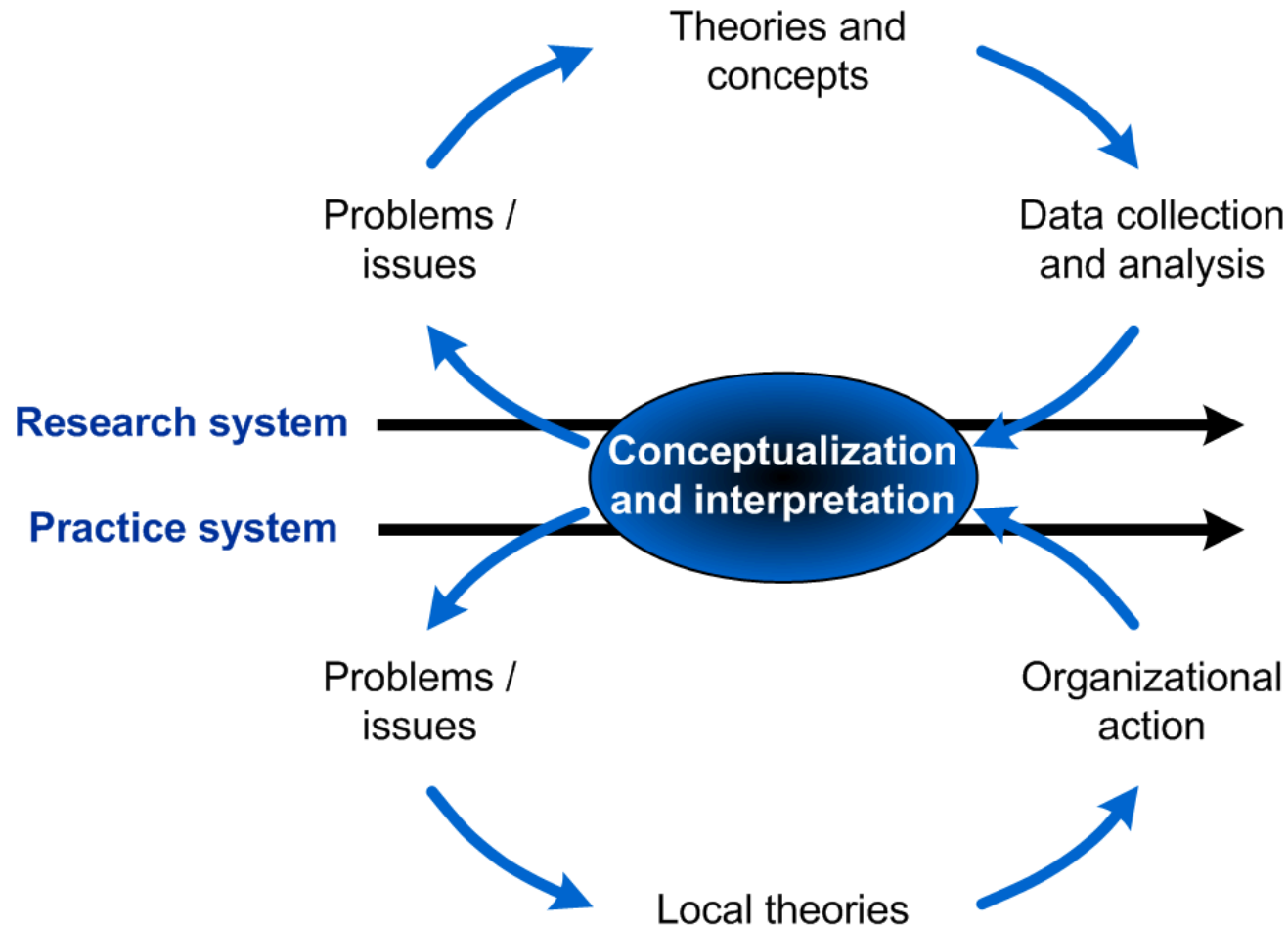
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- Case study research
 - Action research
 - Participative research
 - Interactive research



Research output

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- Practical useful basis for action
 - Research based knowledge
 - Theories and models

The CMTO model for interactive research



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Aims



- describe how interactive research could be used in the interaction between researchers and organizations when running projects to develop production systems and work performed in these systems
- identify advantages and disadvantages when applying interactive research




Methods



Two long term interactive research projects comprised the basis for this project. Data were collected from documentation of interactive seminars, from notes and from interviews with key actors.




The two projects



A joint seminar series, including e.g. aim / problem definition, literature seminars, benchmarking seminars, planning seminar, result discussion seminar, implementation seminar, evaluation seminar and dissemination seminar.



Characteristics of the seminars



The seminars included private and public organizations, management and union representatives. The collaboration was aimed to be performed on as equal power basis as possible, including an open dialogue and mutual respect. Discussions took place in an open climate and with high acceptance of differences in opinions.



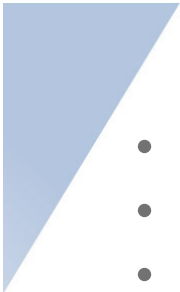
Advantages



- Creates a forum and a meeting point between different stakeholders which does normally not exist elsewhere
- Makes the perspectives of the local knowledge versus the generalised knowledge derived from research visible
- Offers opportunities to validate the joint knowledge that has been formed in the process
- Access to organisations are improved, since the research deals with issues of high interest for the stakeholders and feedback is built into the research process




Disadvantages and characteristics

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- Contradictory perspectives between practitioners and researchers
 - Time horizon is longer for the researcher than the practitioner
 - Demands on reliable and valid results have highest priority for the researcher
 - Focus on methods and methods usage is stronger for the researcher
 - Demands for actionable results are higher for the practitioner
 - Performance pressure is higher for the practitioner
 - Difficult to follow the projects on a long term basis
 - Limited opportunities to include new research issues during the course of the project
 - Difficult to get continuity among participating practitioners in the group



Further experience

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- Interactive research demands substantial time and economic resources
 - It is necessary and it takes time to build up mutual confidence, especially since the approach must be combined with critical discussions
 - Strong relations between researchers and participants may develop so that the researchers “go native” and lose their critical view
 - Personality and experience of the researcher is important for running this type of project



Conclusions



- Interactive research offers several advantages in comparison with traditional research approaches, foremost higher practitioner involvement and validation opportunities of the results
- The difficulties include the need of extensive resources and competencies for the research.
- The overall experience from participating practitioners was that they considered that the discussions had been useful, stimulating and interesting, and that the fast feedback from data collection was appreciated.
- One crucial issue is to what extent this interactive research approach may contribute to high quality research, or to what extent the pressure from the practitioners for actionable practical results will take over.