

Post-Colonial Theory and Action Research

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Abstract

This essay explores connections between post-colonial theory and action research. Post-colonial theory is committed to addressing the plague of colonialism. Action research, at its core, promises to problematize uncontested 'colonial' hegemonies of any form. Both post-colonial theory and action research engage dialogic, critically reflective and collaborative values to offer a fuller range of human wisdom. The authors contend that post-colonialism theory calls for justice and seeks to speak to social and psychological suffering, exploitation, violence and enslavement done to the powerless victims of colonization around the world by challenging the superiority of dominant perspectives and seeking to re-position and empower the marginalized and subordinated. In similar ways, action research works to eradicate oppression, powerlessness and worthlessness by affirming solidarity with the oppressed, helping humans move from passive to active and by fundamentally reshaping power. Because both post-colonial theory and action research position the insider or oppressed in an ethic of efficacy, it values community, relationships, communication and equality, and is committed to reciprocity, reflexivity and reflection. Thus, both hold the potential to help reconstruct conditions for a more democratic and just society.

Keywords: *Post-colonial theory; action research; colonialism; powerlessness; worthlessness*