

“The cup is half full” – Appreciating the positive present in research and in practical work in school.

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In this workshop we will present the background and the development of Participatory Appreciative Action Research (PAAR) as a research methodology and a school improvement process as well. This method has its roots in participatory action research which emphasizes the improvement of practice through involvement and participation. The new addition in PAAR is the appreciative aspect, this means for example working together and sharing the best practices and appreciating each other and our abilities. PAAR can be viewed as the opposite of problem-solving because it focuses on success and what works well instead of problems. Key concepts in PAAR are re-framing, positive questions, participation and positive present. These concepts will be discussed and explored.

PAAR offers an opportunity to take positive questions and turn them into positive actions. This can be compared to Antonovsky's way of looking at health and development driven by the positive, in other words what is healthy not what is ill. This perspective can also be used when building an educational setting that encourages co-operation and sharing which make possible a positive psychosocial culture enhancing the learning process.

We will give examples of how we as researchers have applied PAAR to our own research areas that include ethical perspectives on learning and health promotion *with* children in compulsory school in Sweden. Finally we raise questions of how educational research and school improvement relate to each other and if, in what way and when they can cooperate in building not only a better school but a better future.

Methodology or methods/research instruments or sources used:

We will focus on how to use PAAR methodology in the field of school improvement generally and specifically pertaining to educational research and health promotion, through giving the theoretical background and examples of how we have applied PAAR in our own research with students in compulsory school.

Conclusions or expected outcomes or findings:

This hour-long workshop seeks to introduce and explore PAAR as a method in educational research and in school improvement processes. After giving the background of PAAR, the participants in the workshop will have the opportunity to begin to explore how PAAR can be used in their own research and/or practice. This is done through interactive activities. We will present how we have used PAAR in our research and hope that this will inspire the participants to reflect on their own research and practice. We also want to address the issue of the relationship between research and improvement of a practice.

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