

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) for Career Guidance with Brazilian Students in Japan: Contextualizing Insights from Previous Research

Research Overview

This Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) focuses on building a career guidance model with Brazilian youth in Japan from learnt experiences from previous research to promote personal and social change in the path to understand their challenges, advocate for their needs, and facilitate their transition from school to society.

Purpose of Study

This study research ways to develop career readiness among Brazilian immigrant youth in Japan, which means helping them develop the agency “to navigate their paths through education and training accumulating qualifications, skills and experience that will enable progression towards sustained and fulfilling employment through adult life” (Covacevich et al., 2021, p. 1).

Considering that immigrant youth face extra difficulties in their transition from school to society, career guidance for them needs to take into consideration their intersectionality and vulnerabilities while backing away from the tendency to portray this group as just vulnerable and marginalized within their host society. It is critical to perceive these youth as those who could exercise agency to promote social change (Lenette 2022; Tokunaga, 2018).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to build a model of career guidance based on previous YPAR projects for career guidance and career readiness that can be implemented in the school curriculum *with* Brazilian youth instead of *for* them.

Research Methods

The present research is a Participatory Action Research, based on Paulo Freire’s (1970) ideas that emphasize that researchers should position themselves as learners rather than owners of knowledge. He argued that those who have traditionally been treated as subjects of research are, in fact, the ones who hold the knowledge about their own lives, experiences, and the social conditions that shape them.

Domínguez and Cammarota (2021) pose “YPAR as a critical and iterative process of youth driven inquiry that is informed by their lived experience.” (p. 3). It was also found that YPAR “can also serve as a bridge from the classroom to students’ lived realities” (Cammarota & Romero, 2009, p. 3 as cited in Domínguez and Cammarota, 2021, p. 3).

Through this lens and the previous built knowledge and experience of career guidance with immigrant youth (L. Cook et al., 2019; Magnano & Zammitti, 2020; McWhirter et al., 2021; McWhirter et al., 2019; Schuch, 2018; Shea et al., 2007; Van De Sande et al., 2019) the present YPAR for career guidance project is taking course in the year of 2026.

The project setting is a Brazilian school located in the Kanto region, where the researcher works as a high school teacher of humanities subjects. Participants are between 14 and 17 years old and come from the first, second, and third years of high school.

Results and Discussion

As many YPAR projects, much of the original ideal is constantly changing and being revised to reflect the decision process of the people involved. At first, it was envisioned to happen once a week after the regular class schedule. Following its formal incorporation into the school curriculum, the project now takes place on Fridays, occupying one to two 45-minute slots scheduled after regular classes. In addition to the in-school sessions, during which students are encouraged to engage actively and take their own field notes, we have established on-demand online meetings that allow students to have one-on-one conversations with the researcher.

It is structured around meetings that cover a variety of topics, including the exploration of career paths and professions, strategies for researching universities, the documentation required to access higher education, and hands-on workshops such as CV writing, among others. These topics were extracted by localising content from other YPAR projects for career guidance mentioned previously and meetings with the school principal and input from other teachers.

This ongoing research has been using approaches and strategies that worked in different YPAR projects for career guidance in other contexts and localizing them to the reality of the students currently involved. For instance, Magnano and Zammitti (2020) understood the importance of youth learning about the local labor market, in their case Italian, in the present research their activity was adapted to the Japanese labor market. By doing so, it can keep

documenting “working” strategies to be used in the future. Adapting these strategies allow for a broader connection of students with the different “homes” and the world, but to make them possible, participation of the students and other stakeholders, such as multiple school teachers are necessary.

Keywords: YPAR; Career Guidance; Immigrant Youth; Japan

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